

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. William “Meade” Wheless, Jr.

Date of Interview: March, 25, 2010

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Interview in progress.

Mark Cunningham: This is Mark Cunningham; today is March 25th, 2010. I’m an oral...a volunteer oral historian for the Museum of the Pacific [War]...(cough)...in Fredericksburg, Texas. Today I’m at the home of Mr. William Meade Wheless, Jr. He was born on January 5th, 1922 in Beaumont, Texas; joined the Army Air Force in the summer of 1942, and he served in the Air Transport Command in the China/Burma/India theater of the war flying C-47s. He became a First Lieutenant...and we are at his home today doing a personal interview. (Recording momentarily stopped.)
Alright, Mr. Wheless, I’ve got most of the...the...pertinent information about your...birthday and when you joined the service.

Mr. Wheless: Alright.

Mark Cunningham: Now where...you were born in Beaumont; is that where you grew up?

Mr. Wheless: No, no. My mother had an uncle who was a doctor and we lived in Kerrville...she did, at the time, and she took me to Beaumont to have me and stayed in the doctor’s house...

Mark Cunningham: What was your mother’s...

Mr. Wheless: ...(unintelligible) no chances.

Mark Cunningham: ...what was your mother’s name?

Mr. Wheless: Megan (sp?) Heinan, H-e-i-n-a-n.

Mark Cunningham: And...and your father?

Mr. Wheless: We didn't...we...I'm...I'm a junior; he was William Meade the first.

Mark Cunningham: Alright. Where were you...when the war broke out?

Mr. Wheless: I was at the University of Texas.

Mark Cunningham: Alright; you remember which year?

Mr. Wheless: Uh, well...

Mark Cunningham: '41...'42?

Mr. Wheless: '41 and '42; I was a second year...bye, bye (saying goodbye to someone in the house).

Mrs. Wheless: (Unintelligible).

Mark Cunningham: Alright. How about...what do you remember about Pearl Harbor Day; where were you?

Mr. Wheless: We...we were at the fraternity house sitting around listening to the radio, and everybody was listening 'cause they knew it meant big trouble for us...

Mark Cunningham: Alright.

Mr. Wheless: ...when that...when that attack came...came on us, and that's...that's where I was. It was a Sunday afternoon if I remember right.

Mark Cunningham: That's right, it was, yeah. And you were at the University of Texas in Austin, Texas?

Mr. Wheless: Uh hum.

Mark Cunningham: Alright, now did you...you went into the Army in the summer of '42?

Mr. Wheless: Right.

Mark Cunningham: Is...was that after graduation or before?

Mr. Wheless: No, I never did graduate.

Mark Cunningham: Oh really?

Mr. Wheless: Only...I was in my second year there, and when I came back I had some other things I wanted to do and so I did (doorbell rings)...(unintelligible words). (Taping stopped momentarily.)

Mark Cunningham: Okay, so...where did you...do you remember where you took basic training?

Mr. Wheless: Uh...

Mrs. Wheless: (Unintelligible)...Selma, Alabama, Maxwell Field.

Mark Cunningham: It...it was at Selma?

Mrs. Wheless: Uh huh, it's on that picture.

Mark Cunningham: Okay.

Mrs. Wheless: Uh, (unintelligible words.)

Mark Cunningham: Yeah, Selma, Alabama in a...in a...in 1942. Tell me a little bit about that basic training; what do you remember?

Mr. Wheless: (Laughter), not much! I just sat in the co-pilot's seat and...we'd fly...I've got a...well, a little like this plane here.

Mark Cunningham: BT-13?

Mr. Wheless: B...13...BT-13; I didn't get in twin engines till I went to Advanced and I was trying to get into...what's the twin-engine fighter plane...that they had? I just loved them, so when we finished our basic training...

Mark Cunningham: P-38s?

Mr. Wheless: Yeah, P-38s! When I finished basic training, they...they said, "Well, you get your choice; you can go to single-engine advanced or twin-engine advanced." And I said, "Well, I want to fly the P-38," which is a twin-engine...single-engine plane (laughter), and so they sent me to Twin-Engine School, and that's how I wound up in DC-3s...'cause everything...everybody there they said, "Boy, don't...don't tell us about that!" And so I flew twin-engine and full-engine planes there. And then when we sent me overseas, well, I went with a...an Air Transport Command and that's why they sent me there.

Mark Cunningham: I want to back up a minute. What made you go into the Army Air Corps?

Mr. Wheless: That's just what I wanted to do, and I...I volunteered before I...I was going to get drafted I knew so I had to get into something I wanted, so that's what I...went to San Antone [s/b Antonio] from Austin when I was in college.

Mark Cunningham: Okay.

Mr. Wheless: And volunteered and they sent me to...where?

Mrs. Wheless: Well, it looked like Maxwell Field, honey.

Mr. Wheless: Yeah, 'cause it...

Mrs. Wheless: But before that, it...when you were seventeen or eighteen you took flying lessons.

Mr. Wheless: Oh, I...I was...already a pilot's license 'cause when I was at the University of Texas I took...

Mrs. Wheless: (Unintelligible words).

Mark Cunningham: Okay.

Mr. Wheless: And there wasn't here in Houston and...and two there in Austin.

Mark Cunningham: And then you were...two years under your belt in college so that qualified you for...Officers Candidate School and all that, is that right?

Mr. Wheless: Yeah, yeah.

Mark Cunningham: Okay. Okay, after...after you went to basic what did you do then?

Mr. Wheless: What did...the...Advanced.

Mrs. Wheless: (Unintelligible.)

Mark Cunningham: Went to...

Mr. Wheless: Let's see, if basic was the second...went to three different schools there. Uh, Lakeland, Florida was one of them and...and...after basic...to go to Advanced, that's when you got to choose...

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Wheless: ...whether you wanted to go single engine or twin-engine, and I wanted a twin-engine, single engine. I wound up with a twin engine, DC-3 and I was *very* disappointed! But...

Mark Cunningham: Why?

Mr. Wheless: Well, I wanted to...'cause I was real you...you wanted something hot.

Mrs. Wheless: Was that a fighter...?

Mr. Wheless: No, DC-3 was a...

Mrs. Wheless: No, I'm talking about a PT...

Mr. Wheless: ...they're still flying them.

Mrs. Wheless: ...the...what you wanted; was that a fighter plane?

Mr. Wheless: Yeah, all those single engines were fighter planes.

Mark Cunningham: Uh hum. Now, which...do you remember which four-engine planes you flew?

Mr. Wheless: I guess I flew most of them, but not much...and mainly...

Mark Cunningham: The B-24?

Mr. Wheless: Yeah, and...

Mark Cunningham: B...B-17?

Mr. Wheless: Not a B-17...uh, B-24 and a...a...B-25; that's a single, twin-engine.

Mark Cunningham: Okay, yeah. Alright, so...you had all that multi-engine...experience...

Mr. Wheless: And they said then, "You forget about that fighter business, and (laughter) and here we got you and we'll keep you!"

Mark Cunningham: Okay, and so...when you went overseas what do you...tell me...tell me about that.

Mr. Wheless: Well, I...when I got overseas, I went to Agra, India is where my first station was and I flew co-pilots on...on DC-3s there for, oh, for six months, I guess, and then...

Mark Cunningham: Now did you...did you fly the southern route?

Mr. Wheless: Over the hump?

Mark Cunningham: Uh huh.

Mr. Wheless: I didn't do that then; I did that after I'd...I'd been over there for over a year. And I went to Dinjan which...they transferred me there for some reason and we were right on the Burnese border.

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Wheless: And that's where, *occasionally*, we'd fly to China. But we wouldn't go over the high...round, we went to China in DC-3s so we went in between the mountains.

Mark Cunningham: Right, now the DC-3 was not a...you couldn't get up to the high altitudes.

Mr. Wheless: No, no, you couldn't.

Mark Cunningham: Okay. Now, you were dropping supplies...

Mr. Wheless: Well, that's when I started...was...was...Stillwell, when he started...that was towards the end of the war really...

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Wheless: ...and at least to my...service there...

Mrs. Wheless: Air.

Mr. Wheless: ...and we...Stillwell was making his march through the jungles and they had to go on foot and mules; they had some mules and...and they were walking all the way...and fighting the Japs all the way.

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Wheless: And so we would drop them supplies; we could talk to them on the radio...I don't know what those poor Japs ate; they...nobody dropped them any supplies.

Mark Cunningham: Right (chuckle).

Mr. Wheless: Ate each other I guess.

Mrs. Wheless: (Laughter).

Mark Cunningham: (Chuckle), okay...so...let's...I want to back up another minute. Uh, tell me about your trip when you actually went overseas. Now did you fly?

Mr. Wheless: Yeah. We flew to...this is...this is it right here (looking for data).

Mark Cunningham: Okay, so you're route from U.S. to India took you from Miami, Florida to Blem [s/b Belem]...

Mrs. Wheless: Belem.

Mr. Wheless: Belem.

Mark Cunningham: Blem, Brazil, Ascension Island, Ivory Coast, Africa, Khartoum, Sudan, Africa, Adan, Arabia...

Mr. Wheless: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: ... Masirah (sp?) Island...

Mr. Wheless: Masirah Island (different pronunciation).

Mark Cunningham: Masirah Island and Karachi.

Mr. Wheless: And Karachi. That was my first...base over there in India.

Mark Cunningham: Okay, now...were...did you go on a...with a group of...other pilots?

Mr. Wheless: Yes.

Mark Cunningham: Okay, did you fly any of that time yourself?

Mr. Wheless: No, no. We were...

Mark Cunningham: (Unintelligible words).

Mr. Wheless: ...they just hauled us; we were all passengers.

Mark Cunningham: So you were...you were just a rider.

Mr. Wheless: Yeah, we were all passengers.

Mark Cunningham: Yeah, okay. That's the exact...that's the...that's...I think that's the route that everybody went on...

Mr. Wheless: I think they did, too.

Mark Cunningham: ...to...to the CBI; that's the route that my dad took.

Mrs. Wheless: Describe the inside of that plane.

Mark Cunningham: Yeah, go ahead and do that.

Mr. Wheless: Well, it was just bucket seats; there wasn't any...any (laughter)...seats in the back...

Mrs. Wheless: (Laughter), (unintelligible words).

Mr. Wheless: ...yeah. That's all...it just the...two on each side.

Mark Cunningham: Get anything to eat?

Mr. Wheless: Yeah, they gave us something; I don't remember what it was. It was...

Mrs. Wheless: (Laughter).

Mr. Wheless: ...(laughter)...I...I guess it was nutritious 'cause we all survived.

Mrs. Wheless: (Laughter).

Mark Cunningham: Okay, now what about when you got to...to India; what were the qual... living conditions like?

Mr. Wheless: They weren't...they weren't too bad. I thought they were bad 'cause I was used to this, you see (chuckle). But it wasn't bad; we lived in tents and...had a bed and had a mess hall and...

Mrs. Wheless: You had a bearer.

Mr. Wheless: Yeah, had a bearer; each...each tent had a bearer that...go wash your clothes for you and...and...

Mark Cunningham: How about...how about the food?

Mr. Wheless: It's been so long now. I...I don't...did I ever complain about that in my letters?

Mrs. Wheless: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Wheless: We ate *lots* of spam.

Mrs. Wheless: And you talked about the...the dried duck eggs. I mean, that was (unintelligible words).

Mr. Wheless: (Laughter), maybe that's.....is more.

Mrs. Wheless: But I guess they were rationed, you know?

Mr. Wheless: Yeah, they...they had a lot of...yeah, they had just...

Mrs. Wheless: But one interesting thing about your tent was that, in extreme heat, the bearer would soak sheets in water and then just hang the sheet up over the doorway of the tent.

Mr. Wheless: In other words, you'd be surprised how that'd cool you off.

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mrs. Wheless: And it dried and evaporated; it would...that was their air conditioning.

Mark Cunningham: Right. Well tell me about flying a trip over the hump; did you go over the high mountains any?

Mr. Wheless: No, not...never because I was in a DC-3 and...

Mark Cunningham: Okay, so you stayed in a DC-3 the whole time that you were there?

Mr. Wheless: The whole time I was there.

Mark Cunningham: Did you lose any buddies?

Mr. Wheless: Yeah, we lost some, but it was...probably (unintelligible) the States mostly that...the only one that had an encounter with a Jap was in...we were out dropping supplies and the Japs made a raid on our air field, and I've (unintelligible) forgotten the name of which field that was there. And...and they bombed our...air...field where we kept our airplanes; I never did see any of them. But my tent mate...he was in another airplane...here comes a Jap Zero and flew wing tip to wing tip...and there was nothing but jungle down below and absolutely no place to land...he...for him to put it down, and he said, "Well, this is it; this is it." And that Jap just flew wing tip and they...and they looked at each...pretty soon that Jap left. And the only thing that...that you could figure out...that he used up all his ammunition shooting up our field. And...and that's the only way (laughter) that he (unintelligible); took him awhile to get over that!...when you...looking at death right there...out your window!

Mrs. Wheless: Well, you said...a lot of your friends flying...had... run into the mountain; they (unintelligible).

Mr. Wheless: Oh yeah, yeah. You get in bad weather that...that was...caused more accidents than anything...bad weather...

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Wheless: ...'cause you could...we flew in the monsoon season.

Mark Cunningham: And you flew night and day, right?

Mr. Wheless: Night and day; just whenever they had a load ready...they'd (unintelligible) go...go!

Mark Cunningham: Do you know how many flights you made?

Mr. Wheless: Have no idea.

Mark Cunningham: Did you keep a log?

Mr. Wheless: No.

Mark Cunningham: You didn't?

Mr. Wheless: If I did, I don't have it.

Mrs. Wheless: Yes, he did; it's under...it's back there under the bed; I'm going to get it for you.

Mr. Wheless: I have no idea what...I hadn't seen that since the war.

Mark Cunningham: Okay. So...what month did you come home; when did you...you went over in...?

Mr. Wheless: Came home to get married.

Mark Cunningham: Yeah, okay. You came home...'45, is that right?

Mr. Wheless: In...in December, wasn't it?

Mrs. Wheless: Uh, yes.

Mark Cunningham: Okay, that was before the war was over.

Mrs. Wheless: Uh, yes.

Mr. Wheless: Oh yeah, I'd just gotten my tour of duty.

Mark Cunningham: And how...so you were there from 1942 to 1945?

Mr. Wheless: I was in the air...in the air force.

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Wheless: I wasn't in India...' 42. When did I go to India?

Mrs. Wheless: (Unintelligible)...don't know when you left, but I guess, how long were you there...two more years?

Mr. Wheless: About two years.

Mark Cunningham: Two years?

Mr. Wheless: Uh hum.

Mark Cunningham: That's a long time.

Mr. Wheless: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: That's a lot of flights, too. Were you flying every day?

Mr. Wheless: Not every day, but whenever they needed you, you know? Whenever they had a load, they'd...you'd wait in line and away you'd go.

Mark Cunningham: Alright, now did you guys rotate on operational type duty? In other words, did you help...set up the flights or any of that kind of stuff?

Mr. Wheless: No, no.

Mark Cunningham: You were...just strictly flying?

Mr. Wheless: Just strictly pilot; they'd tell us where to go and...

Mark Cunningham: And you went.

Mr. Wheless: Uh hum.

Mark Cunningham: Now did you fly any Chinese troops or any Burmese troops or...?

Mr. Wheless: Yeah, we flew a lot of...those, and...and just from one place to the other and where I don't remember that now, but...

Mark Cunningham: I read somewhere that the guys didn't like to fly the Chinese troops because they...

Mr. Wheless: Because they *smelt* bad!

Mark Cunningham: Well, they smelled bad and they all got air sick.

Mr. Wheless: (Chuckle), they did that, too!

Mrs. Wheless: Poor things, yeah.

Mark Cunningham: Yeah. Actually, they were a pretty good fighting force by the end of the war, weren't they?

Mr. Wheless: Oh yeah! They were; nobody complained about that.

Mark Cunningham: Yeah, yeah. Alright, so you came home in '45 but you were still in service?

Mr. Wheless: Uh hum, and we went to...I can't remember...

Mrs. Wheless: Love Field.

Mr. Wheless: ...Love Field, Dallas, and I was an Operations Officer there...'cause I'd just gotten married, and we got married on March the 17th...

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Wheless: ...and...and so I...I got that job; I wouldn't have to be flying all the time. 'Cause usually if...if you (unintelligible) part of it you flew...maybe every day somewhere and spent the night or...two or three days...wherever you were going.

Mark Cunningham: Now were you ever attacked in the air?

Mr. Wheless: Never.

Mark Cunningham: Never.

Mr. Wheless: Never, but I...sure watched for them.

Mark Cunningham: Did you?

Mr. Wheless: (Laughter).

Mark Cunningham: Now I'm (unintelligible) the DC-3...

Mr. Wheless: Uh hum?

Mark Cunningham: How many did you have in that crew?

Mr. Wheless: Oh, there was a...of course, a co-pilot, and a...an engineer, and I think that was all.

Mark Cunningham: So you did your own navigation?

Mr. Wheless: Oh yeah, yeah. I don't remember ever (unintelligible) on occasion...if we'd gone...going someplace, we may well have had a navigator, but I tell you the truth, I can't remember.

Mark Cunningham: Was a DC-3 a hard plane to fly?

Mr. Wheless: No, fact...they're still flying them today I know. (laughter)

Mrs. Wheless: Mexico?

Mark Cunningham: Right!

Mr. Wheless: Uh hum.

Mark Cunningham: Right, they used to have one out here at Hooks Airport.

Mr. Wheless: Well, in Mexico they're flying them...for real!

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Wheless: And not just for tourists either; they *use* them!

Mark Cunningham: Right, that thing's been in the air since...mid-'30s.

Mr. Wheless: Longer than any other airplane!

Mark Cunningham: Right, right.

Mrs. Wheless: I mean...sometimes that he would land to make a delivery instead of just dropping his supplies down...

Mr. Wheless: Oh yeah, we didn't...we...we only dropped supplies when we were in the jungle to...Stillwell...dropping his...

Mrs. Wheless: With...by parachutes.

Mr. Wheless: ...by parachute.

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Wheless: We'd land whenever we could because that dropping by parachute is, you know, that's not very...

Mark Cunningham: Not very accurate.

Mr. Wheless: No, not only that, but it's not very effective. We had to make fifteen passes maybe to get...get it all pushed out.

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Wheless: And then half of those things would wind up in those big trees, and they'd have to chop a tree down to get it and all that...because northern Burma is all, at that time, was all jungle.

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Wheless: And they'd have to make a clearing...we...we could have landed...if there was any place to land, we would have, you know, in a heartbeat.

Mark Cunningham: Okay, did you have any...any contact with any of the...Chennault's Flying Tigers?

Mr. Wheless: Not really; I probably knew them in the mess hall or something like that, but I...I don't remember it.

Mark Cunningham: Yeah. Now other than...than Dinjan, what...what other bases were you on?

Mr. Wheless: Agra...

Mrs. Wheless: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Wheless: Karichi...

Mrs. Wheless: Calcutta.

Mr. Wheless: Calcutta...was there for awhile; they moved us around pretty good.

Mark Cunningham: And you said you flew into Johan (sp?)

Mr. Wheless: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: Went into Johan?

Mr. Wheless: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: Chaboi (sp?)

Mr. Wheless: I don't remember it; Cha...Chawbuoy...Chaboi, Chaboi.

Mark Cunningham: Chaboi.

Mr. Wheless: Yeah, yeah. In fact, I was stationed there, wasn't I?

Mrs. Wheless: I don't think so; it's not on this...but I...but I've heard you talk about Chaboi.

Mr. Wheless: Really, we...I know I've been in there many times and my...their...for some reason or another, they moved us around quite a bit and I...I, to this day, I don't know why. (Unintelligible) they decided they needed more supplies somewhere else and they'd move us.

Mark Cunningham: Right. Now where...what bases in China did you go to; do you remember?

Mr. Wheless: Kunming is the only one. No, there was another one somewhere...before you got to Kunming, and I can't remember what it was.

Mark Cunningham: Now wasn't the air transport...trans...uh, air transportation group...wasn't that under the...uh, direction of Chenault? Was that a part of the Fourteenth Air Port...Force or was that...outside of his command?

Mr. Wheless: I think it was outside of it...

Mark Cunningham: Okay.

Mr. Wheless: ...but I wouldn't swear to it.

Mark Cunningham: Yeah.

Mr. Wheless: I think it was, but...

Mrs. Wheless: (Unintelligible words), but you need...you wrote me and told me that something exciting and...and important was going to happen, you couldn't tell me what, but that's what it was...it was...maybe that trip, you know...the Flying Tigers (unintelligible). Something else...he could land; you told me that you all would run and dive into ditches.

Mr. Wheless: That was at Mitchenau (sp?); that's because the Japs had the town but it was two miles from the airstrip and...and they held it for two months after they...after we captured the airstrip and then we could land our planes there and get...get it unloaded and get out of there.

Mark Cunningham: So what would you do; you'd jump out of the plane and go...

Mr. Wheless: Jump in a... big...they had some ditches there (laughters).

Mark Cunningham: Beside the runway?

Mr. Wheless: Yeah! And that's what we did 'cause these snipers would get in these woods there...

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Wheless: ...and they'd try to pick the pilots off.

Mark Cunningham: And...and...and they wouldn't touch the other guys who were unloading?

Mr. Wheless: No (unintelligible words); what good would it do to kill one of them?
(Unintelligible)...(chuckles) had all they wanted; they never did shoot at them.

Mark Cunningham: So they'd shoot at the Americans?

Mr. Wheless: Un hum.

Mark Cunningham: Alright, and did your plane get shot?

Mr. Wheless: Uh, we had some...yes, we had some holes in it, but I'll tell you the truth, I never did know we'd been shot at until we got back and saw these holes in there.

Mark Cunningham: Right. Did you have any experiences where you thought you were going to have to jump out?

Mr. Wheless: No, uh uh.

Mark Cunningham: So you...

Mr. Wheless: I wasn't thinking about that.

Mrs. Wheless: (Laughter), but they had...they didn't use some...didn't they give something to take if you did jump out and were captured?

Mr. Wheless: They gave us a bunch of stuff, but...

Mrs. Wheless: Some pills to (unintelligible).

Mr. Wheless: ...yeah, all...all sorts of things but I never used them; never had the occasion to use them, and didn't know anybody that used them.

Mark Cunningham: Alright, now let me ask...when you left overseas, how'd you get home...boat...or did you fly home?

Mrs. Wheless: (Unintelligible words).

Mr. Wheless: Yeah, I flew, but I...

Mrs. Wheless: You flew to Egypt, remember? And you spent some time in Egypt?

Mr. Wheless: That's right; that's right...sure did; flew from...

Mark Cunningham: Now did you fly or were you riding?

Mr. Wheless: I was riding.

Mark Cunningham: Riding?

Mr. Wheless: Uh hum.

Mrs. Wheless: 'Cause I was thinking you stayed at that...that famous hotel in Cairo.

Mr. Wheless: Shepard (sp?)?

Mrs. Wheless: (Unintelligible words), maybe yeah.

Mark Cunningham: But you got home; got married, and when did you get out of the service?

Mr. Wheless: Right...

Mrs. Wheless: At the end of the war.

Mark Cunningham: Right at the end of the war?

Mrs. Wheless: Uh huh.

Mark Cunningham: Okay.

Mrs. Wheless: We were in Dallas and...

Mr. Wheless: Stayed at Love Field.

Mrs. Wheless: ...and...and (unintelligible words)...V-E or V-J Day...(unintelligible words) and we all went down to downtown Dallas and people were

hanging from the...light posts...I mean, the whole...you couldn't...the street was jammed with celebrants. I mean, everybody was just...dancing and screaming.

Mark Cunningham: Alright, right. So what other...what else...what else you got that you want to tell me that we hadn't talked about...about your experiences?

Mr. Wheless: I can't really think of anything; it's just that...I never was in jeopardy except from weather; that was the only thing that worried me.

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Wheless: But my...my tent mate, I told you, had that run in with the Japs, but I never did and I didn't know anybody else (unintelligible) these things.

Mark Cunningham: Now did you...did I hear you...did you live in a tent for three...two years?

Mr. Wheless: Well, I was in so many different places; some places tents and some of them...bashes (sp?)...

Mark Cunningham: Yeah.

Mr. Wheless: ...they called them and...but...different places, like I say, different thing; nothing was very spectacular.

Mark Cunningham: Alright.

Mrs. Wheless: Did you want to talk about your being color blind and how you overcame that obstacle? (laughter)

Mr. Wheless: (Chuckles).

Mark Cunningham: Well, at least you could fly if you were color blind.

Mr. Wheless: You can't. I...I had a friend that was a doctor and he passed me (chuckles).

Mrs. Wheless: No, he...he...got you the book, a...a color blind book that they...that the officers used to...determine, you know, whose color blind and who isn't and so...

Mr. Wheless: I just memorized it (chuckles).

Mrs. Wheless: ...and so Jack would sit with him and tell him, "Now if you're color blind..." I mean, you know, "what do you see? Well, that's because you're color blind. What you're supposed to see here is the figure six."

Mr. Wheless: This is my doctor friend.

Mrs. Wheless: So he memorized the whole book, page by page, as to what he was supposed to be able to see...on each page.

Mr. Wheless: I *never knew* I was color blind till I went to take that test to get in the Army!

Mrs. Wheless: (Laughter).

Mr. Wheless: He told me, "Man, you...color blind!" So I said...

Mrs. Wheless: Yeah...,no, but he could see, I mean, he could make out red and green.

Mr. Wheless: Oh yeah, I wasn't really that color blind; I was just...a little bit.

Mark Cunningham: You were enough color blind as...lucky you got in, right?

Mr. Wheless: I was *very* lucky, yeah!

Mark Cunningham: Alright.

Mr. Wheless: Lucky I didn't carry a BAR (chuckles).

Mark Cunningham: Right. Uh, well that...is that...does that kind of cover it; do you got anything else you want to add?

Mr. Wheless: I wish you'd come two years ago; I'd of had a whole lot I could add, but I can't remember now.

Mark Cunningham: Okay. Well, that's a good...

Mrs. Wheless: (Unintelligible words)...

Mark Cunningham: ...I think we got a pretty good, pretty good view here. And if that's...if that's...if we can close it down...and I wanted to say thank you on be...part of the Museum for you taking the time to do this; it's great!

Mr. Wheless: Well, you certainly welcome!

Mark Cunningham: So thank you very much!

Mr. Wheless: Uh hum.

(end of interview)

FINAL copy
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