

Clarence Wolgemuth Oral History Interview

FLOYD COX: This is Floyd Cox. I'm a volunteer at the National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Texas. Today is October the 14th, year 2011. I am interviewing Mr. Clarence Wolgemuth, otherwise known as [Woagy?], in the Riverwalk Holiday Inn in San Antonio, Texas. This interview is in support of the Nimitz Educational and Research Center for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site. Woagy, I'd like to shake your hand and tell you thank you for our service to our country.

CLARENCE WOLGEMUTH: Thank you, sir.

FC: I was a young boy, and you guys were my heroes. It's a pleasure to sit down and talk with you concerning your experiences during World War II. I'd like to start out, Woagy, by asking you a little bit about your background: when you were born, where you were born, where you went to school, little bit about your family. We'll just take it from there.

CW: All right. Thank you for having me and giving me this opportunity. I was born on April 25, 1921, in Mount Joy, Pennsylvania, which was a small town in southeastern

Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, the home of the Amish and Mennonite. My family was Brethren in Christ denomination, which was even more conservative than the Mennonites. In those days, they wore the plain garb, the nehru jackets. My mother wore a cap and a cape, as they did in those days in that denomination. My parents were very strict. That is to say, my father was very strict. They were farmers. And in the '20s they were very successful in farming. They owned two farms. My parents, I'm speaking of. Owned two farms, a wholesale fruit produce business, electrical contracting business, and we had two Wolgemuth homemade ice cream stores in the neighboring towns.

I was the eighth of nine children, eight boys and one girl. So these businesses that my parents became involved with, they put my older brothers in charge of. I went to a local grade school about a mile and a half from where our farm was located, walked to school -- uphill both ways, of course -- (laughter) and attended high school nearby. It was a township high school. And I graduated from high school 1939. At that point, I was hoping to go into college. But my parents, in their conservative background and religious convictions, felt that going to college was a frivolous activity that was not necessary to become a good

farmer. So, I had no support from them to go to college. Consequently, I did not go.

Now in the late '30s as the war clouds loomed over Europe, it was become evident that we were sooner or later going to get into World War II, whether our nation wanted to or not. And in 1941, I was able to get enrolled in Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. At that point, I just wanted to go to college. I wanted to get off the farm. Now, my parents might add that back in 1929 when the banks closed and Wall Street collapsed, my parents lost everything they had. And I was now nine years old. My parents were [sheriffed?]. Fortunately an uncle bought the farm and we were able to stay on the farm, and my parents were sharecroppers. So I grew up during the Depression in that environment. Things were tough. We were poor but really, I often say, I didn't know it. But we were poor. But we did have plenty to eat.

Now as the war clouds loomed over Europe and it looked like sooner or later we were going to get into it, that's when I started thinking about joining the service. I wanted to fly airplanes. Now, come December 7, 1941, of course, December 8th we declared war on Japan. Of course, we all

had to register for the draft in those days. And my daddy kept getting me farm deferments, which I didn't want. But he kept getting them for me. So, I went behind his back to the draft board and said, "Please draft me." (laughter) And finally in 1942, in early September I got my notice to report for induction. And September 8, 1942, I drove to the Harrisburg post office and took my aviation cadet exam, which you could do in post offices in those days. Passed it, got sworn into aviation cadets, and consequently I did not have to report for induction the following day for the Army. So that's how I got into the service to begin with.

FC: Worked out just like you wanted it to, didn't it?

CW: Yes, it did. (laughs)

FC: Once you're inducted, take us from there. Where did you go and how?

CW: I went to Fort Meade for basic training. I was told and the understanding was and my orders indicated that upon the completion of basic training, which I think was 60 days, I would go into the aviation cadet program. It so happened that before I completed my basic training, I was notified that instead of going to aviation cadets, I would be going into glider pilot training. Now, that's the last thing in the world that I had planned on doing, because all from the start I wanted to be a fighter pilot and I wanted to fly P-

38s. So I left Fort Meade, went to Roswell, New Mexico, for glider pilot training, all against my will, of course. Went through a month or two training there, a few weeks, and then to Fort Morgan, Colorado, for advanced glider pilot training. And I was within only several weeks of receiving my commission as a Second Lieutenant glider pilot.

Well, fortunately, one weekend notice showed up on the bulletin board that the glider pilot training program has been canceled. And so, at that point, after a big sigh of relief I was then able to get back into aviation cadets. At this time, we are into maybe February of 1943. And I rode that train from Fort Morgan, Colorado, to Santa Ana, California, to start aviation cadet pre-flight training.

FC: You were a happy camper.

CW: Oh, you betcha. I was a happy camper. That was a good train ride.

FC: So you took your ground school there.

CW: Pre-flight, yes.

FC: About how long did that last?

CW: That was two months. From there, I went to King City, California, for primary training, where I flew the Ryan. That was a PT-19, I believe.

FC: I think it was.

CW: That was two months. Following that, I went to Chico, California, for basic training. Flew the BT-13. That was two months. And from there I went to Williams Field, Arizona.

FC: Where is that located?

CW: Phoenix. Mesa, Arizona, just adjacent to Phoenix. Williams Field, where I received advanced training and my wings and commission. At Williams, flew the AT-6 and the AT-9, which was twin engine, to prepare you, to give you twin-engine training for the P-38, which of course was a twin-engine fighter. The AT-6 then was used for gunnery training at Ajo, Arizona, where I went for, I don't know, two weeks, gunnery training.

FC: Tell me a little bit about gunnery training. How did that work? Did you fire at live targets?

CW: Yes, it was strictly air-to-ground training. What we'd do is take off in that AT-6. They had a course we would fly. In the middle of this big, open field were these targets. They'd give you 100 rounds of ammunition. And you'd fly your pattern and home in on that target and fire a few bursts, and go around and do it again until you expended your 100 rounds. And then you'd be graded on that. And I did very well. I did very well because, being a good ol'

farm boy, I knew if you wanted to hit something you had to get your gunsight on it and then fire it. Consequently, I would take a lot more passes to use up my 100 rounds than most of them did. The Commandant of the school, one Captain [Filleeta?], decided that I was so good he was going to keep me as an instructor. He even sent one of his Second Lieutenant instructors to fly with me so that he could see how I would get 94 out of 100 rounds in that target. Looking back on it, I think I really shed tears in front of him, saying, "Please don't make me an instructor here. I want to go to the Pacific. I want to fly P-38s."
(laughs)

FC: Where the action is.

CW: Where the action is. And he let me go. (laughs)

FC: So, you're through gunnery. Take us right along through; where do we go now?

FC: After I got my wings and commission on December 5, 1943, in class [43-K?], after 30 days' leave, which I spent back at home with my parents and family, I then went to San Jose, California. No...

FC: Let me interrupt just a minute. What did your parents think of you being in active military?

CW: My father was a deacon in the church when all this took place. Now, our preachers, our ministers in church, of

course preached that our young men should register as conscientious objectors because we're pacifists. I never was a conscientious objector, and my father knew I was not a conscientious objector. Consequently, my father did not press me to register as a conscientious objector. In fact, he disapproved of the conscientious program, in that he felt it should be like World War I. If you were truly a conscientious objector, then you should be willing to go to jail, because you're violating the law for a principle, as opposed to World War II, when you registered as a conscientious objector and they'd give you a job in a mental hospital, cleaning toilets or something, to where you were doing something but you were not going to jail. He disapproved of that. Consequently, he, without really saying it, supported me. All he said to me was, "I support you. I just hope you won't have to kill anybody."

FC: He was proud of you.

CW: He was really proud of me. And we went from there. Plus, I had a kid-brother, the youngest of the nine, who ended up in the tail end of World War II. He ended up as a Chaplain's Assistant down in South Carolina at a base. I'm not sure what base down there. I had a 36-year-old brother who volunteered, enlisted in the Navy as a Chief Petty Officer because of his prowess reading blueprints. He was

really good in the electrical field. So, he spent the entire war -- he got in right after Pearl Harbor -- on a destroyer escort, escorting our flotillas back and forth on the North Atlantic when we were on the lend-lease program to Russia during those days.

FC: Did your parents get any pressure from the church about --

CW: Oh, yeah. He lost his job as deacon. Yeah, he lost his job as deacon. And I also failed to mention that, as a result of all this, before I left, after my church elder knew that I was going into the service and not registered as a conscientious objector, three of them came out to see me one day at the farm and inform me that I was expelled from church. So, I left without the blessing of my church, which my father was just appalled at. He was ashamed at them. And several years ago, when I did the thing on my World War II experience up in my old hometown library, Mount Joy, Pennsylvania, one of the elders of the church, which is still going, Brethren in Christ Church -- I mentioned in my dissertation how I got kicked out of church, just three miles down the road here during World War II. And he stood up and gave a little five-minute dissertation, apologizing and saying for the congregation what a terrible mistake it was and how they regretted it.

(laughs)

FC: That's wonderful, to have an apology this late.

CW: Yeah. (laughs) Yes.

FC: You went home on leave, and...

CW: Then I went from there to Everett, Washington, to Paine Field. Up there we were flying P-39s.

FC: Air Cobra.

CW: Air Cobra. And I flew P-39s there four to six weeks before being transferred to Santa Maria, California.

Incidentally, at Payne Field -- Everett is the home of Bing Crosby, the Crosby family -- there were somewhere between 15 and 20 of us young fighter jocks just training in the P-39 up there in Everett. Payne Field was a small base, probably still is. And every evening after we'd finished our flying for the day, we'd go to the Officers' club and there would be Bing Crosby sitting there. We were his boys. He'd buy us drinks and dinner. We'd sit in a circle and chat with Bing Crosby.

Then from there, I went down to Santa Maria, where we got aerial gunnery training in the P-38. I failed to mention that in advanced training at Williams Field, the final phase was eight hours of flying in the RP-322, which was a P-38 without the super-charges. So it was a given that I was going into P-38s.

FC: Going back to the Air Cobra, P-39 -- how did you like flying that?

CW: Oh, I loved that. It was a pilot's airplane. It was small. The cockpit was small. And it had a 34-foot wingspan. And if you didn't keep the needle ball -- if you didn't keep coordinated, it would flip. You had to fly.

FC: You had to pilot it.

CW: You had to. It was a pilot's airplane. Loved it. It wasn't worth much, because (laughter) it had a 37-millimeter cannon. The engine was in back, and a 37-millimeter cannon, the barrel of which you'd straddle in the cockpit. And when you'd fire it, sometimes it would work; sometimes it wouldn't. (laughter) But it was a fun airplane for the weeks that I flew it up there.

FC: Quick reaction, was it not?

CW: Yes, yes. Yeah, yeah. You had to fly it all the time.
(laughs)

FC: Now you've left the P-39s, and you went to another base and you're in P-38s.

CW: Went to Santa Maria and got into P-38s. That was the first experience in P-38s, that is to say, the full P-38, with the turbo charges and guns configuration and so on. In addition to just getting transition training just flying it and getting familiar with it, we also had I don't know how

many days of aerial gunnery practice out over the Pacific Ocean. A C-47 would be towing a target, a sleeve target. And we'd go out there given a couple hundred rounds, and make our passes and try and hit that target, and then come back and get graded on that. I was not so hot on that. I was okay. I was just average. I thought I was better than that, but that's where you really had to learn to lead and do the old Kentucky windage thing. I believe that lasted, all in all, from the time I left home after my wings and commission were awarded, after I left my several weeks' leave at home and from that point going through Payne Field in Everett and Santa Maria... Probably encompassed 8 to 10 weeks.

And in early April, I was on my way to the Pacific. I was at the Presidio in California, from Santa Maria. We were given orders there to go to the Presidio. In the Presidio, I was told I couldn't talk to anyone. I could not call home. I had to stay practically on base. No outside communication. And I was given my orders. I was there maybe two days until I was given orders, handed orders -- "Don't open them until you're in the air" -- and was loaded aboard a C-82, which was a B-24 configured as a transport, and was on my way to New Guinea. I believe that would've

been in mid-April. I arrived in New Guinea, wee hours of the morning. And of course, we opened our orders in-flight. And I was assigned to the 80th Fighter Squadron. I knew nothing about the 80th. I learned later that it was one of the elite Fighter Squadrons, P-38 squadrons, in the entire US Army Air Corps, for that matter.

So, I got to Port Moresby, thinking, "Boy, in a day or two I'm going to be with a P-38 with the 80th Squadron," which at that time was at Nadzab, had just moved to Nadzab, I believe, from [Finchaven?]. But I'm not sure about that. At any rate, "Well, not so fast." I was told that I'm going to have to go through two weeks of Combat training at Port Moresby before I'm eligible or qualified to join the squadron in Nadzab. One day, Captain [Winkowski?], one of the instructors at this Combat training school in Port Moresby, led a flight three of us, a flight of four -- he was the leader -- on a training mission. And we were going across the Owen Stanleys and we're going to do some practice gunnery on some old Japanese targets out there that were long since dormant. He got us lost. We were in bad weather and he got us lost.

FC: In the Owen Stanley mountains?

CW: On the other side of the Owen Stanleys. And we flew around and flew around, flew around... Obviously he didn't know where we were. (laughs) And we kids -- you know, I'm 21 years old. (laughs) I had... And the other two of us, we were depending on him. He got us lost. And I had one engine that was using excessive fuel. We're coming up empty tanks, and I ran out of fuel first. It just so happened that up ahead we saw this clearing. Now, we're just flying over jungle, jungle, jungle. And up ahead we saw this clearance, cleared area. And it so happened that there was an old abandoned Japanese airstrip there. The three of them made it. I didn't. I crashed before I got there. They landed and had fuel flown into them and got them out of there. And I ended up with the natives taking care of me.

When I came to a halt after crashing with the gear up, the natives were all over me, and taking anything that was in that airplane they could find, and escorted me to their village. Turned out they were friendly. They'd say, "Nippon? No. Thumbs down. Americano? Sí, yes." So, they were friendly. But they did not let me stay in their village. And I did not see any women. They kept them hidden, for whatever reason. They took me perhaps a

quarter-mile from their village and put me up out there in a little bamboo lean-to type thing. I was there for three or four days. And you know what? I just can't remember exactly how many days it was.

FC: They fed you, of course.

CW: They fed me. I think I was a quarter-mile from their village. The reason they put me out there was that elements of the Japanese Army, which MacArthur had long since by-passed, they were there. They would come and raid the garden of the natives. And if they would've discovered they were hiding me, who knows what they would've done to that native village. Consequently, that was the reason they took me out away from camp. I slept how you can sleep on bare bamboo. But I did end up with the mosquito bites. It was all over, mosquito bites. Several months I came down with a bad case of malaria as a result of that.

Now, they knew where I was, of course. And a couple days later, three or four days later, they flew up with an L-3 or something with jerry cans of fuel underneath the wings to get up to where I was and loaded me up. And I ended up back at Moresby maybe a week or so after I took off.

FC: They picked you up in a Piper Cub?

CW: Yeah. In the meantime, I was reported as MIA to my parents. I don't know how that happened. (laughs) But I found out later they got notice I was MIA. Heck, I wasn't even in the war yet. (laughter)

FC: After they got you back to base, is that when you came down with malaria?

CW: No, that came months later. It came maybe four or five months later. We were at Numfoor in New Guinea getting new airplanes, and I came down with it down there. I couldn't fly my own airplane out of there until I got out of the hospital. That's another story, too. I almost ended up getting court martialed as a result of that.

FC: Let's go back. They picked you up and they got you to the base. Obviously, you get a new airplane.

CW: Yeah.

(break in audio)

FC: So take us from there.

CW: Okay. When I got back to Fort Moresby, I finished my Combat training, which took a few more days; I don't recall how many. I subsequently joined the 80th Fighter Squadron at Nadzab, New Guinea. They were just getting ready to move as I joined the squadron. They were getting ready to move to [Biak?], New Guinea, which was farther west up the line towards Tokyo. There only a few days, and they moved

us to Owi, which was just a little island of Biak. I think it was because Biak was just becoming overcrowded with B-24s, B-25s, P-47, everything. A-20s, Australian units... And so they cleared an area and built a strip in Owi Island, just a little island. And that's where I flew my first combat mission from.

FC: Who was your Commanding Officer at the time?

CW: Commanding Officer at that time was Major J. [Robins?], "Cock" Robins, who of course retired at the close of World War II. Had 22 victories, 22 kills. Not too many were ahead of him in the total victories. Major Robins ended up retiring as a Vice Commander of Military Airlift Command in 1973 or 1974, something like that. Funny thing: I hadn't seen him from 1944 until 1973 or 1972 when I was stationed at Torrejón, Spain. And here he comes, on his tour as the new Vice of Military Airlift Command. He got off the airplane, looked at me, took a second look, said, "Woagy." (laughs) He remembered me after all those years, yeah.

FC: How was he as a Commanding Officer?

CW: He was great. Soft spoken.

FC: Pilot's pilot.

CW: He was a pilot's pilot, yes. Soft spoken. I remember when I first joined the squadron. He said, "Let's get in our airplane. We're just going to go. I want to show you the

area." So we take off. And he says, "Now, down there, this and that; this, that, and the other thing. Down there is an..." And all of a sudden, he'd start doing some sharp maneuvers. And I'd stay with him. First thing you know, we're doing all kinds of acrobatics. He was testing me. We got on the ground. He said, "Welcome to the 80th." (laughter) So, I passed the test. But he was a great guy.

FC: So you flew your first combat missions off of this small island, Owi.

CW: Yeah, we were at Owi, O-W-I. Owi. Mm-hmm. Yes.

FC: Tell me about your first mission; can you remember it?

CW: Well, the first mission was on to the west of Numfoor, the very western tip of New Guinea. I want say Sansapor. At any rate, it was still Japanese held. It was a stronghold there. I believe we escorted B-25s on a bombing mission over Sansapor, if that was the name of it. Anyway, western, very tip of New Guinea. I was flying Major Robins's wing, because as a new kid on the block they made sure that you were inside the formation, where you wouldn't get hurt. As time went on, you graduated back to where you were tail end Charlie of the formation. And your job then was to keep looking behind you. (laughter)

At any rate, I remember that mission well because one of my friends that went with me across the Pacific at the same time, out of flying school, same class, Bob [Tate?], was on that mission. And on the way home, there were as I recall 16 of us in full, 16-squadron formation. I was in one flight of four. I was in the lead flight. And he was the wingman, second-flight leader. And all of a sudden, he peeled off. Peeled off and went into the drink. Was killed. Never knew why. Never knew what happened. We kind of think that maybe he got hit over the target. There was some antiaircraft fire. He may have got hit and lost his radio. No communication or anything. He did stay with the formation on the way home. And it wasn't too long after we started home that he just peeled over and plowed into the sea. Old Bob Tate. I corresponded for several months with his parents as to what happened. And we really didn't know. So that was my first mission.

From there, we started missions down to [Saram?], which was oil fields between New Guinea and Indonesia. Japanese oil fields -- refineries. We did escort bombers, B-24s and B-25s on there, bombing missions over the refineries and the oil fields down there.

FC: Did you encounter any aerial combat?

CW: Yeah, there was some. But not like the good old days when all our aces were made. The dogfights were becoming history because at that point the ratio of victories that we enjoyed, our fighter jocks enjoyed, were such that the Japanese were losing their top-ranked pilots, to where they were having to put in their second-grade pilots, less experienced. And what with the serious losses that they were getting, they were pulling back and we all assumed would be preparing for defense of the homeland, which they surely knew by that time they would have to do. But, yeah, there were a few of them around. I'm not too sure if OJ Harris and Kenny Lloyd tangled with a nip over there, a Zero. I don't think they got him, but... Being young fighter jocks, everybody wanted to be an ace, right?

FC: That's right. You wanted to be where the action is.

CW: So, you'd lie, cheat, and anything to get on a mission where you thought there were going to be some Zeros. (laughs) From there, then we'd fly up to the Amhara, through the Morotai area, which was a 300-mile trip from our base in New Guinea. It was more than that; maybe about 400-mile.

FC: That was quite tiring, wasn't it?

CW: Yeah. At that point, our average length of mission was four and a half hours from start to finish. It was also an

alley where Charles Lindbergh showed up. As I recall, he spent at least a week with my squadron, with the 80th Squadron. He was there as a tech rep. At that time, if you recall, in reading history you find that Charles Lindbergh had already been stripped of his Brigadier General rank in the Reserves by President Roosevelt because of his pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic stance. He claimed, I believe, that he was not pro-Nazi. He had just spent time over there a few months and was wined and dined and showed all about the Luftwaffe. I believe Hermann Göring took him under his wing. And he came home and, as I understand history, he was telling our leaders what the Luftwaffe was -- what was happening, how they were building up, and how good they were, and was really mistaken when he was accused of being pro-Nazi.

At any rate, he came to New Guinea now as a civilian tech rep for Consolidated Aircraft. His job was to teach us young fighter jocks how to increase the range of our airplanes, of our P-38s. And all the fighters in the Pacific, at that time we were not using max power for takeoff, for example, because we were under the impression in going through our flight training that it just might damage those in-line engines. Might blow up. So, instead

of, I believe, 54 max inches of mercury for takeoff, we were using maybe 48. We also were told that we couldn't reduce the RPM below 2,200 or 2,100 RPM because backpressures would damage the engine. So, as a result, our average mission was four and a half hours. And that would be with drop tanks, where we'd fly to the target using our drop-tank fuel and drop them over the target, and use the main tanks for whatever over the target, and then come home. By the time he left, he almost doubled our range. The longest mission I had was 8 hours and 10 minutes. That's a long time. (laughs)

FC: Wow. With your drop tank and your regular tank.

CW: Yeah. But that would've been on escort missions. Like, we would fly from Owi into the East Indies, Borneo and Celebis, Celebi Islands, in that area, up to the Amharas and back. And then as we moved on up from Owi to Morotai and the Amharas, then we'd make regular runs to Borneo and... Formosa? Anyway, long overwater missions. We were at Morotai then for several months. And in August of 1944, we moved to Mindoro, Philippines. Or, no, I believe it was November, because in the beginning of October is when MacArthur's... "I have returned" speech at Leyte in the Philippines. And a week or so later, his forces captured Mindoro, which is south of Manila in the central

Philippines. So, it was early November -- I believe I am correct on this -- that we moved to Mindoro.

From there, we were now flying missions to Formosa, Hong Kong -- Formosa would be Taiwan, today -- Saigon... The longest mission I ever flew was from Mindoro to Palauan, which is an island on the very western side of the Philippines -- refuel and head for Saigon, meeting our bombers maybe 30 minutes out of the Indochina coast and then covering them while they went in to finish their bombing run over Saigon. And then escort them back out maybe 100 miles on their way home. And then, depending on the fuel we had left, we'd go back into Saigon and shoot up the town.

FC: Have a little fun. (laughs)

CW: And then come home. And of course, in those days, anything that was mechanized --

FC: You went after.

CW: -- was Japanese. That was the given thing. So, it was all legal. And of course, at that time we were also flying into the Philippines, doing a lot of strafing runs. Clark Field, still at that point under Japanese control, we made many strafing runs and got a bunch of airplanes on the ground up there. But they didn't count.

FC: They didn't give you credit.

CW: No, no. Europe, they got credit for aircraft destroyed on the ground. But no, there were no such things over there. At that point, we were now into '45. And Bataan, Corregidor been recaptured. But we were still flying along missions to Saigon, Formosa, and --

FC: Did you have a mission somewhere before '45 where you basically took on the Japanese Navy or some ships coming in?

CW: Yes, that was the night of December 26, 1944.

FC: Tell me about that, will you, Woagy?

CW: We had flown our daily mission. Our missions were all daytime. We were day-fighters, not night-fighters. Along about five o'clock, we always had our pilot meeting in the Commander's or Operations Officer's tent. We lived in tents all the way up through New Guinea and in the East Indies, and right on into the island of Mindoro. We had an Army folding cot with a blanket and no pillow. That was our bed. We had to make our own pillow. And the food was all dehydrated. Bully beef. Powdered milk. And very, very seldom would we get fresh vegetables.

At any rate, on this evening of December 26, 1944, about five o'clock we were alerted for a pilots' meeting. We

always had to get the next day's missions and who was going to fly, and what position you were going to fly. We were told that a reconnaissance plane discovered a Japanese taskforce of one heavy cruiser, one light cruiser, and six destroyers. It was 50 miles west of Mindoro, heading for Mindoro, obviously with the intent of recapturing the base where we were, which was just the tip of the island. We were told to man our airplanes and get ready to take off and strafe them. It so happened that two or three days before that I was standing on the beach one evening, looking out in the harbor or looking out offshore where we had a lot of our supply ships and ammunition ships. And all of a sudden, an ammunition ship blew up. I believe that it was torpedoed. It blew up to where it was -- must have been a mile or two offshore, but it almost knocked us over with the impact of it. So, we had no bombs. It turned out our bombs were on that ship. We had no bombs.

So, that night of December 26, we were told to take off. We'd go out and strafe this Jap taskforce. We got off just before dusk. And we were told and the base was told that if the Japs invaded us, they were going to have the trucks all loaded with supplies and all to take our personnel and head to the hills, if it came to that. But we were told to

get in our airplanes and take off and go strafe. We had no time to plan anything. There was no time, because now they're getting closer and closer. There were also P-47 groups, a couple squadrons of P-47s on the other side of the strip to where we were at Mindoro. They were given the same information. Consequently, just before dark, P-47 and P-38s were all taking off. No rhyme or reason. There was no control. Just runway open and you were there; get out and take off.

Our instructions were after we ran out of ammunition to fly to Leyte, which was 300 miles away. And it's night. And it turned out there was bad weather between Mindoro and Leyte. That night, there were 44 P-38s and 26 P-47s that took off and got into that action. I was right in the middle of that gaggle.

FC: You got 70 planes up there. (laughs)

CW: Yeah. Everybody had their lights on, the wing lights on. It's a miracle there were no mid-air collisions.

FC: And there were none.

CW: No, no. Those Japs, they had to wonder, "What the hell hit us? What did we get into?" They got into a real hornets' nest. And as one guy described it in the official history of that night, it looked like you were flying over a blast

furnace, because there were tracers. We were not fixed for nighttime, and we had no blinders on those guns. So, you had to deal with that. OJ Harris, that we spoke of, Orin, was making a pass at one of the Jap warships, a destroyer or whatever it was, cruiser. And in order to see to get that ship in his target, in his gunsight, you'd go as low to the water as possible, towards the enemy ship, till you get him in your gunsight. And then fire. And then pull up before you get to him, so you miss him.

In OJ Harris's case, he didn't pull up soon enough, apparently, and nipped the top of a mast or something of the Japanese destroyer. Caught on fire. Figured that he was going to have to ditch in the ocean. He heard over the radio a call that said, "P-38 on fire. You're high enough. Bail out." He did. He parachuted. He took about one swing and he was in the water, right between Japanese destroyers or whatever, right offshore. And he heard voices; he heard the Jap voices on-deck of the Jap warship. He was now in his one-man dingy that we carried in the bottom of our parachute. And so that the Japanese guys on-deck didn't see him, he turned his dingy over and tried to keep underwater and unseen. At that point, they were starting to move out. After all of the ships moved out

offshore and headed out away from Mindoro totally defeated, OJ got back up in his dingy. He spent the night there and was rescued the next day, I believe by local fishermen.

But that night, of 44 P-38s, there were 11 P-38s lost, 9 of which were MIA. They just flat got lost or suffered damage that nobody could verify or document and crashed unknown. Of the 26 P-47s, 11 were listed as MIA, 7 of which were later recovered in days following, floating around all over the place. But that night, after you ran out of ammo and headed for Leyte, they didn't know we were coming. So, you arrive at night, unannounced. They didn't know. But the majority made it into Leyte, except those 11 and 7 of the P-47s and P-38s. I read the official history of that night. It was written as the only air-Naval battle in which there were no US warships involved. Strictly fighters against enemy ships.

In my case, I ended up losing oil pressure and had to feather an engine. We had another one, Kenny Lloyd. He was a good friend of OJ Harris. He got his engine shot out. And he wasn't going to make that trip to Leyte. It was night and 300 miles on one engine. So, he elected to fly over camp or what he thought was camp. By that time,

camp is in blackout: no lights on the airstrip. So, he couldn't land. So, he bailed out at what he thought was over the camp. As he was floating down, they were shooting at him. Our boys were shooting at him, thinking it was Japanese invasion. Our perimeter gunners, 90-millimeter crews out there. Fortunately, they didn't hit him. The next day, they brought him back to camp.

In my case, I had to feather an engine. I got back in before they turned the lights out, just as everybody was cleared out. So, I was able to get back in. And I spent the next couple hours in a foxhole just off of the landing strip, listening to Naval shells whooshing overhead and exploding. Yeah, that'll set you free. (laughs)

FC: The Japanese were...

CW: Yeah, they were still shelling. And this, now, may have been nine o'clockish. And for the next couple hours, I was in the foxhole listening to this. Along about midnight, it stopped. Everything stopped. It turned out the Jap Taskforce Commander figured out, "Enough." They sailed out into the open sea. History says that two of the destroyers were sunk and severe damage to both the cruisers. Lots of enemy crewmen killed by the P-38 with .50-caliber. History recorded all .50-caliber machinegun fire. The historian

that wrote that obviously didn't know that the P-38 had a 20-millimeter cannon, which was also very good.

FC: If you can go back to that night, can you describe your personal actions, coming down on some of those ships?

CW: I made two passes. Of course, there were tracers, fire going both ways.

FC: Red stuff coming towards you. (laughs)

CW: Red stuff. I made one pass. I lost my engine as I was starting my pass. So, I made as short a pass as possible, to see what was going on. But hell, I was going to get down there and make a run at them. You never really knew what to expect, because there was nothing to base it on. No history, no past experience to base it on. So, these guys that were out there flying that night... Boy, oh boy. What a job. What a job.

FC: It was probably like trying to follow a flashlight in, wasn't it? Using your landing lights?

CW: Yeah. Well, you didn't use your landing lights. You kept your wing lights on, your wingtip lights, and tail. Wasn't any problem seeing what to shoot at. It was just a question of what are you going to pick out to home-in on your pass.

FC: I guess you could tell where the ships were because of the fire coming towards you.

CW: Oh, sure. And they were all close together. It turned out later we discovered there was a troop ship coming down the west side of the Philippines, en route to Mindoro to land troops there to support the attack. The cruisers and destroyers were supposed to soften it up and get it ready for their troops to land. Yeah, that was a night...

FC: You'll never forget, will you?

CW: Never forget. No, no.

FC: After that particular action, what happened? Take us from there.

CW: Now we are into the start of 1945. We continued our missions. Again, Saigon, Taiwan, Formosa... Made one run to Hong Kong and lots of missions to the Philippines, ending up all the way up north, northern tip of the Philippines. I was on several missions. Four of us would take off before daylight and fly close formation. You flew formation at night with the light of the super-charger. Red hot. We would fly up to the northern tip of the Philippines in anticipation of Japanese supply planes flying in supplies to their forces. But you know what, (laughs) I think I flew three or four of them and never did catch any Japanese transports flying in with supplies to shoot down. (laughter) Damn, another missed opportunity.

But the Battle of Manila was about to rage. There were, like, 100,000 casualties in the Battle of Manila. That went on for a few days. We were bombing Ipo Dam, which was the primary water supply source for the city of Manila. Ipo Dam was, I don't know, 50 miles north of Manila in the start of the mountain areas. That's where we first used napalm, because if I remember correctly our Intelligence people told us that they were holed up in caves. I believe I'm correct when I say that that was the first use of napalm, in that particular time of the war and in that particular area. I'm not saying that our good old 88th was the first to use napalm in World War II. But it was discovered or invented not too long before that, just months before. What it was, was a 300-gallon fuel tank loaded with... Well, the mixtures... Now I forget what was in a napalm bomb. We'd carry one underneath each wing and go in at treetop-level and drop them one at a time. It would drop and explode and just firebomb. It was effective something like 4,500 square yards. And then drop the other and, boy, you'd leave a string of fire. It was very effective. We did quite a bit of napalm bombing to get the Japs out of their caves and holes that they were using to defend themselves.

By that time, [Ramos?], the famous prison camp outside of Manila, was liberated by our forces. I believe British forces also were in on that. Freed a lot of the Bataan Death Marchers. And then Corregidor, Bataan were recaptured. Clark Field was eventually recaptured. We didn't move to Clark Field, but the Army did. Then most of our missions were in the northern Philippines, dive-bombing. Did a lot of dive-bombing everywhere, all through it. I mentioned escort missions, but we did a lot of strafing, dive-bombing missions.

FC: How big of bombs were you carrying?

CW: We would carry a couple of 500-pounders. Or if the range - - if it was close in, we'd carry a couple 1,000-pounders. The P-38 max gross weight on takeoff I believe was 17,000 pounds. So, we carried a full load of fuel, internal main tanks, and a couple of 1,000-pounders. I'm thinking that we were carrying 2,000-pounders, but I wouldn't want to claim that.

FC: Normally, all through your time in the warzone, how many missions would you fly a day?

CW: Well, I never flew more than one, because it was usually a long one. I had 108 combat missions while I was there. I was there about 16 months. My final Commander -- after Major Robins, Sy Homer was the 80th Squadron Commander. Sy

Homer had 17 or 16 aerial victories. He's the best fighter pilot I ever saw. He was amazing. If we came home from a mission and had extra fuel, he'd get us all lined up. If it were 16 of us, get us all lined up in echelon and then give the command. "Okay, feather number two," or, "Feather right engines," or whatever. So, now we're on single-engine. And then he'd start us into a Lufbery circle, meaning a big loop on the turn. Like, 30 degrees. So you're flying this way. And we'd make a circle and then fly around for 20 minutes or so on the single engine. His purpose was to prove that this bird will fly one engine. One day we were doing it and a Jap Zero flew right through it. Right through the circle. (laughter) He was motoring. He got out of there. He kept going.

During January, February of 1945, we ran out of airplanes. They were getting bombed. We got a lot of bombing over there. They'd come over every night. I was one of six pilots that were sent to Hickam to pick up P-38s. Not new, but P-38s off, I believe, 7th Air Force. It was supposed to take us two weeks. By the time we got to Hickam, we had to test-hop them and all that. A B-25 navigated us back to New Guinea. At that time, we were at Morotai in the East Indies. It took us six weeks to get home, because every

time we'd land -- we went from Hickam to Johnston Island, to [Torago?], to Fijis... Anyway, every time we'd land, there'd be one of the six, something would happen. I'm not so sure it was all legit because we were enjoying it. It took us six weeks to get back.

There were no liquor stores. You couldn't buy a beer or liquor. After every combat mission -- I'm getting ahead of myself -- you were awarded two ounces of whiskey. The theory was that you land and immediately you go through the Intelligence Officer's tent and get debriefed on your mission. And then he supervises, gives you two ounces of whiskey, supposedly to calm your nerves. Well, that and a cigarette would do it, because in those days everybody smoked. Well, we soon found out that the best way to handle that two ounces of whiskey was to have our own little private bottle in our little tent, Officers' club. We'd pour it in there until we had enough to have a party. But at any rate, it so happened that the .50-caliber ammunition trays, four of them, would hold a case of beer cans. So, we all left there with four cases of beer. And the 20-millimeter ammo tray would hold four or five bottles of whiskey. So, we'd fill it up with whiskey out of Hickam field and take it home, because that was premium stuff.

In my case, we got all the way back to Biak. We went all the way across into Australia, then up to Moresby and up to Biak. And it so happened we landed there. One more stop to Morotai, our home base. And Bob Hope USO show was going on at Biak that night. At that point, Biak was a rare echelon, a rare area. War had long since gone past Biak. And it so happened that the Bob Hope show was getting ready to put on its show. All of a sudden, here comes a Nip across a Betty Bomber, dropping bombs right across the area. Of course, everybody was screaming and running and hiding. That broke up the show. I saw from where I was that out in the flight line there were fires. Not knowing what it was, the next morning, we were alerted real early to say, "You'd better get down the flight line. See what's happened to your airplanes." I went down there. My airplane, with all that beer and whiskey, was flat. It got hit. It was gone. (laughter) One of their bombs done got my P-38 with all the beer and whiskey on it.

Another time, I told you I was coming down with malaria. This would've been in 1945. No, this was before we moved to Mindoro. We flew from Morotai to Numfoor to pick up brand new J-model P-38s, very latest and newest. We went

to Numfoor -- we had a base there in New Guinea -- to check them out because they were flown in from the States aboard ship. Check them out, get ready, and fly them back home. That's when I came down with malaria. After a few days, we were ready to go. All the airplanes were checked out and ready to fly up to our home base. My Commander, Sy Homer, came to the hospital. I'm in the hospital at Numfoor, tent hospital. He said, "We're leaving today. But we're going to leave your airplane." All of us that were sent down there had an airplane to bring back. He said, "We're going to leave you, leave your airplane here. When you get out of the hospital, tag along with another flight on up to Mindoro." Mindoro, yeah, we were all going to Mindoro. That was the day we were moving to Mindoro from Morotai, yes.

Knowing that when we got to Mindoro there was a chance of Nips, that there would be Zeros there that were going to try and engage us, I didn't want to miss that. So, after they left, I talked to the Hospital Commander. I was getting better. I was over the worst of it. But I was still DNIF, Duty Not Involved in Flying. And I talked the Hospital Commander into releasing me, in that I had a ride up north to the Philippines. And I wasn't going to be

flying, so please release me, which he did. Unbeknownst to him or anybody else, I went down to the flight line. My airplane was fueled, and I got in it and headed for Morotai, which was their first stop -- my squadron, the other guys' first stop -- figuring I could catch up to them while they were on the ground, and join them and say, "I just got released."

Nobody knew at Numfoor knew I was leaving. Nobody in Morotai knew I was coming. And there I was. The most stupid thing I ever did in my life. It was 300 miles. I made that run many times. The only trouble is, this time I lost my radio. Brand new airplane. Lost my radio. Nothing. Had no radio. Nothing. And then I got in weather. And now it's time to arrive at Morotai, and I'm in the soup. And there are mountains around Morotai. So we did the wheel thing, the spoke of the wheel. When your estimated time of arrival is up, you mark that point on your clock. And now you go out on the heading for five minutes, see if you get in some weather where you can get down out of the stuff and see where you are. If not, you come back and you go out another 30 degrees. I did about three or four of those and never got out of the soup. I'm still in the soup. No radio.

All of a sudden, I saw a B-25 in the soup. He came right by me. It had to be an act of God, because I latched on. We were both flying generally in the same direction. I latched onto him. No way he was going to lose me. I kept making signs, "No radio." And he took me back down. It turned out I was over the area. He escorted me down out of the soup, where I saw the field and landed, only to be greeted by a Colonel that wanted to know what in the hell I was doing, who was I, and why was I there. It turned out he just took pity on a dumb, young fighter jock kid that obviously didn't have too much sense. And he let me go. (laughter) But in the meantime, my guys already were on their way up north to Mindoro. So I had to stay at Morotai there, waiting for another flight of 13th Air Force P-38s that were going to Leyte. And I latched onto them. As it turned out, before my guys arrived at Mindoro, they shot down six Nips before they ever landed. I missed it. (laughs) I missed it.

FC: Let me ask you this. Have you ever had any bouts of that malaria since then?

CW: Oh, yeah. I had that for about five years. Yeah, I'd come down with it at the craziest times. I'd come down about several times a month, or every week I came down.

Eventually, it went away. But it turned out, on that particular trip, the time when I ended up at Leyte, the Battle of Leyte Gulf was going on. I'm not sure exactly what was going on, except they commandeered me since I was a P-38 and I was there. The Commander there loaded me up with a bomb, along with another formation. Went out and dive-bombed the Japanese battleships down there.

FC: Did you hit it?

CW: I don't know, because they were all doing circles. They were all going in circles. Pretty hard to hit a moving circle. So you get down and then you dive-bomb. Our normal dive-bomb run, we'd start in about 15,000 feet. You get down at a real sharp angle, get your gunsight on the target, and then release it and pull up maybe at 3,000 feet. Enough to avoid the concussion. So, I did that. But I wasn't able to see where it went. I think at that time, I believe that I dropped a 2,000-pounder. One 2,000-pounder. But I'm not real sure.

FC: You were probably undergoing a lot of FLAK at this time, too, on this dive; were you not?

CW: Yeah. Oh, yeah. I flew a message with [Bong?], Major Bong, while I was there. Anybody that was there that had an airplane was out flying. I flew his wing on a run out east of Leyte. A day or so later, I got back to Mindoro.

My flight surgeon -- I'm still DNIF. I'm not supposed to be flying, so I went into my flight surgeon and talked to him as my father and told him what had happened. I said, "You can't tell my Commander. I'm in trouble already." So, I got away with it. My Commander never knew it. Never learned of it. (laughter) But that was dumb.

FC: Young people do take chances.

CW: We did a lot of dive-bombing and staffing of Japanese stronghold positions in the northern Philippines. General Yamashita, he was General MacArthur's counterpart, for the Japanese military. His headquarters was at Baguio, which was a pre-war and post-war R&R area for our troops, a very delightful summer resort area in the mountains of the Philippines. That was where his headquarters was. So, we did some dive-bombing of his headquarters. It so happened that as we all know, the Japanese Army took along with their travels Korean prostitutes, Korean women as prostitutes. We would be shown the complex at Baguio of his headquarters and the buildings. They'd point out where the girls were billeted. "Don't bomb that particular building." I was by then about the oldest in the squadron, time-wise, and getting ready to come home. I left in early August 1945. Twenty-two days, zigzag trip on a troop ship to the West Coast.

FC: You came back on a troop ship?

CW: Yeah, yeah. Six bunks stacked. (laughs) First one right on the floor. And then five above that. Twenty-two days. I was five days out of San Francisco, which is where I believe we docked, when they dropped the bomb on Hiroshima, atomic bomb on Hiroshima. That was, I believe, on August the 7th or 8th or 6th somewhere, when they dropped the big one. I came home. I got ahead of myself, here. My Commander when I left was a Major Robert [Hoakley?], who was my basic flying school Squadron Commander at Chico, California. I was a First Lieutenant. You didn't get promoted over there. Especially last year of the war, they were sending Captains over out of training school. Get them out of training school; let them get a little piece of the action. So, the Captains would fill up the Tech Order. The Tech Order called for so many Captains, so many First Lieutenants, so many Second Lieutenants, and so many Majors. I had 60-some missions before I was promoted to First Lieutenant, (laughs) because there was no room in the Tech Order for it. So, I came home as a First Lieutenant. Now, Major Hoakley, as I started to say, was the First Commander of the 80th, to my knowledge -- and I think I'm 100-percent accurate -- that was not given the job based on his combat experience. He had no combat experience. He

was brought over from Training Command, I assume because it was obvious the war was coming to an end, or at least the Philippine end of it. Anyway, they made him the Commander.

I could have stayed and made Captain if I would've extended. He promised me I could make Captain. But I was there 16 months. "No, I'll go home." We were told, however, "Expect to be back after your 30 days were up." Of course, the big bomb in Hiroshima changed all that. So, I came home and got out in the end of August or September 1945. So ended my World War II career. I had 108 combat missions. I had a total of 650 flying hours, most of it in a P-38. Something like that.

FC: Did you get discharged there on the West Coast, or...?

CW: No, I was given 30 days' leave, as was the practice. From there I was sent to Greensborough, North Carolina, which was a big base. All the boys from Europe are coming home. That was a processing center. They were going to be sent to the Pacific. I went down there with the idea of being reassigned as a fighter pilot somewhere, because I wanted to enjoy the good life now as an Officer in the US Army Air Corps.

FC: Officer and a gentleman.

CW: That's right. I'd been sleeping in folded cots with no mattress and all for the 16 months over there. I thought, "Well, I'll enjoy the good life for a while." I was one week into processing for reassignment. At that time, the war was over. "Get the boys out of uniform." That was the call. "Everybody, let's get them out of here and get them home." They were processing them out as fast as could be. I went for reassignment. The Sergeant at the desk said, "Where do you want to be assigned?" I said, "The East Coast. I'd been the West Coast and farther west all my career so far. So I'd like the East Coast." And I'll never forget, he said, "You're too little and too late. Now do you want to get out?" And I said, "Okay, I'll get out." So I got out. (laughter) It was discharge.

FC: Did you go back to college?

CW: I did. I went to Franklin & Marshall. I was there a few months. I went into pre-aeronautical engineering. And it was a mistake. I should not have gone right away. I wasn't prepared for it. After two months, I felt like, "No." Plus, I was getting married. And another dumb thing: I got out, got married, and went from there. It so happened that shortly thereafter they were giving guys like us refresher courses before we'd start into the main curriculum. And I did not -- I just got thrown in there

with kids out of high school. And it was a mistake to go. It was a mistake that they even accepted me. Even they realized. I wasn't the only one. There were some other. We said, "Oh, yeah, we ain't hacking it." So, I failed.

FC: But you still went on with your life.

CW: Oh, yeah.

FC: Let me ask you two questions. What was the worst day of your life while you were in the military, and what was the best day of your life?

CW: While I was in the military? Oh, boy. The worst day of my life? I would have to go to that December 26th. I remember that like it happened yesterday. I remember that pilots' meeting. I remember just about everybody that flew that night. I remember just about everything I did that night and right on into the next morning. I would have to say that was the most stressful and worst day.

One time on a mission over Saigon, escorted the bombers back offshore, heading home. Then we went back and shot up the place. I was going down the Saigon River, heading toward downtown Saigon, the old Majestic hotel in downtown Saigon, making a strafing run. And I got hit with a burst of ack-ack that flipped me over. I was less than 1,000 feet in altitude. And I got hit with a shot of ack-ack.

It exploded right onto my airplane and flipped me over. It damaged my engine coolant doors to where I couldn't open them. My engine was overheating and I couldn't open the coolant doors to lower the temperature. I got out of there and had to pull back power to where it was useless, just to keep the temperature down. So I was basically on one engine.

When something like that happens, somebody will stay with you, one guy, and the rest will go home. The other guy will stay with you, and Nick [Zeeny?] stayed with me. We came across the China Sea. It was a long ride across the China Sea. At that time, I didn't think we were going to get to Palauan, Philippines, with the fuel I had remaining, in one piece. But we did. The amazing thing over there was -- it's hard to conceive -- we had no navigation aids. Our primary means of navigation was our magnetic compass. We had a gyrocompass, but you'd have to reset it about every 20 minutes or every 30 minutes with your magnetic compass. That was our primary means and really the only means (laughs) of navigation. Our missions were all mostly over water. Flying from the Philippines to Saigon, that's a long haul over water. The China Sea is big down there. We got to the point where we could estimate wind direction

by putting your gunsight on a cloud up ahead, turning it on, and then flying. You'd keep your heading, and you could come up with the wind direction and then throw in corrections.

Boy, I tell you, our Commander, Major Robins, he never got us lost. We had a Group Commander that insisted he's a Group Commander -- come over to the States as a Colonel -- Group Commander, and he was going to lead these combat missions. And he got a flight of us lost. Overshot our home base. Almost ended in tragedy until one of the flight leaders in the flight said, "We're turning back, Colonel. We've already gone by," and took over and barely got him home. We had no radio, automatic ADF stations.

FC: Yeah, beacons.

CW: We had one at Palauan finally, but you couldn't tune it in till you were 50 miles near it. As soon as you could reach it or get it tuned in, by that time you could see the coast. (laughter) So they were pretty much useless. When I got lost going from Numfoor to Morotai, alone on that stupid flight I made, we had one ADF radio but nothing to tune into. And you always maintained radio silence. Always radio silence. So, just based on that, it's amazing that the fighters -- and all the P-47, 51s, they were all

the same. We had no [navage?] to work with. We had primarily a magnetic compass. It's amazing that there weren't more of the fighter jocks lost.

FC: Just because they didn't know where they were.

CW: Yeah. Just all that over-water. You think you're going to end up here, and you're not. And then you don't recognize where you are. Yeah, so it speaks well for the caliber of our leaders over there in the Fighter Squadrons. But we never worried about Major Robins or Major Homer, our two Commanders. If they were leading, yep, we knew they'd get us there and get us home.

FC: You know they have a P-38 out here, [Black Limb?] with his markings on it; do you not?

CW: Whose markings? Sy Homer's?

FC: One of those two.

CW: Is it a green checker tail?

FC: Mm-hmm.

CW: That's Sy Homer. Yep, that was his alone. And the Japanese knew who he was. Tokyo Rose knew who Sy Homer was.

FC: Well, is there anything you'd like to add before we conclude our discussion here?

CW: No, I don't think so. I can say that I was recalled in 1951.

FC: You stayed in the Reserves?

CW: I stayed in the Reserves and got recalled in 1951. Ended up at Donaldson Air Force Base getting checked out in the C-119s. Went to Ashiya, Japan, where I flew the 119s in the last three, four months of the Korean War. I was there a total of 30 months in Ashiya, Japan. I was able to bring my family over after the war ended, which now gets me back to not the best day of my life. But the best 30 months of my life in the military was in Ashiya, Japan, because it was a small base. There were six squadrons of C-119s there. To this day, we have reunions of my C-119 Squadron that I served with in Ashiya, Japan, for those 30 months. We have a reunion every year now. We had it every two years; now we're having it every year because the guys are getting old. Just had one at Branson, Missouri, last week. We're having one next year at Fort Worth which I'm hosting.

FC: It's quite a change from a P-38 to flying a boxcar.

CW: That, and then in Vietnam, I flew a year in Vietnam in the Caribou, C-78 Caribous, which were slower than the C-119. Lower and slower. But I got more bullet holes in my airplane in Vietnam than I did in World War II, because it was flying low and slow: 120. (laughter) We'd land in 500-foot strips. And wherever we landed, there was somebody

shooting at us from the boonies. I retired with 30 years,
26-and-some active, in 1973.

FC: What rank were you?

CW: I was a Lieutenant Colonel. My being out after World War
II made me -- I was, like, 46 when I was eligible for Bird
Colonel. And they weren't making 46-year-old Colonels.
(laughter) So I retired as a Lieutenant Colonel, happy.
Had a great career.

FC: Thank you very much.

CW: Thank you. Thank you.

FC: Certainly appreciate it.

CW: Thank you. Thank you.

END OF AUDIO FILE