

The National Museum of the Pacific War
Nimitz Education and Research Center
Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with
Edward Sandini
8th Air Force – 369th Bomb Squadron
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My name is Richard Misenhimer and I am a volunteer oral historian for The National Museum of the Pacific War. Today I am interviewing Edward Zandini of Edmond, Oklahoma by telephone. This interview is in the support of the Nimitz Education and Research Center, National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission for the preservation of historical information related to World War II. Ed, I want to thank you for taking time to do this interview today and thank you for your service to our country during World War II as well as Korea and Viet Nam. Before we begin the interview, I would like to read the Oral History Agreement that we are required to obtain. (Read Oral History Agreement and Mr. Zandini verbally agreed to it.) Now, I would like to begin by asking you your birthdate.

Edward: June 6, 1925.

Richard: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

Edward: No.

Richard: Now, you were born during the Depression. How did the Depression affect you and your family?

Edward: We weren't very rich and born in Philadelphia and the first place that I recall, we lived, was over a bank in a one room apartment which was behind a dentist office. My mother cleaned the dentist's office in exchange for the rent of the one room. We had an old-style bathtub and an overhead water closet for the toilet. My mother hung the clothes to dry on a clothesline on the roof of the building. My father had a job as a truck driver. Later, my mother became a waitress in a bar. We never had an awful lot during that time. When I was six years old, we moved to another

place right down the street. We almost lost our lives there, because we didn't have any heat and she opened up the gas range on the oven and lit it. For some reason or other, the flame went out and we almost passed out from the fumes. Luckily, she became aware that we were passing out from the gas. We always had enough to eat. My father usually had a car and it was usually running, because he was a good mechanic. Then we moved up to another rental and it was a real house. Most of the people in that area were fairly poor. As I recall the rent was \$29.00 a month. I went to public schools.

Richard: Did you have a garden?

Edward: During the first seven years of my life, we didn't have a garden. When we moved to Girardville, Pennsylvania we didn't have a garden, but we had some grass in the yard but we didn't have a mower so I would be out there cutting the grass with lawn scissors. That kind of indicates that we weren't very well to-do. When I was eighteen, we moved from there to Lawndale, which is a suburb of Philadelphia. My grandmother had a pretty big garden and she grew all kinds of things and she had chickens. She also had an arbor that produced enough grapes that my grandfather made a lot of wine which was very good. After I went into the Air Force, the first house we bought in Columbus, Ohio, I had a garden. I always like to grow tomatoes and I would have up to eighty tomato plants. We moved from there to California and in California, we had a very small garden. I always had flowers. Later on, when we came to Oklahoma City, we had two and one-half acres which included a small garden and a fenced in orchard. After my divorce, I married Karen and we now grow vegetables of all kinds.

My name is Edward John Sandini. My parents were both born in Hungary. I was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Both of my parents were born in Hungary. Both of my grandfathers were Hungarians and both of my grandmothers were both German. My father was Nicolas Sandini and he was born November 13, 1905 in Tennisbar(Spl?), Hungary, which is now Romania. He was the son of John and Maria. His father was a shoemaker. I never met either of of my grandparents. They had five children and three of them died during the Plague (Cholera pandemic-1863-1875). So, my father came to the United States with a sister. My mother was Irene Nelsy Simon and she was born March 29, 1903 in Potolenic, (spl?) Hungary. After World War I, it was Czechoslovakia. She was one of eleven children of Thelma Diamond, and John Diamond. He was a railroad conductor. One of her brothers, Gaza, immigrated to Buffalo, New York, before she did. Her older sister, Velma Diamond Gesner, came before here. When she and her sister Helen immigrated to the United States, after my mother completed business school, they moved in with my Aunt Velma. That is where I was born. This was next door to my grandmother, who had remarried after my grandfather had died. He had an eighth-grade education and he tried the Navy when he was 14 years old and my grandmother got him out in about two years, because she didn't think he should be in the Navy. But he loved it. He was quite strong. In fact, I saw him pick a 360-pound barrel, from the floor, and put it on the tail-get of a truck. He also had a photographic memory. He had a guitar and a mandolin as well a very good singing voice. He was never in a formal group but he and a couple of other guys would play at weddings, etc.

After I was born, we lived in a one-room apartment over a bank behind a Dentist's office in Philadelphia, in a Jewish neighborhood. At that time, Philadelphia was filled with pockets of religious and ethnic groups, with similar values. It just so happened that, we were in a Jewish neighborhood. New door to us was an electric store, where my best buddy, Eddie Gravacheck worked and next to that was a movie house. Between the 7th Street East and the end of the movie house, there would usually be a gang of guys hanging around, and they were a gang. Sometimes they would baby-sit me, while my mother was at work as a waitress. My father was a truck driver, so he wasn't always around either. My first taste of gunfire was during a gang war out in front, during which one of our windows was shot out by bullets.

I went to integrated public schools from kindergarten through the 3rd grade at Ludlow. What I remember most about that is that the teacher gave all of us a ruler. On that ruler was "Do unto others and you would have others do unto you." That has been my savior many Grava check times during my life. I taught it to my kids and I taught it to my wife and I heartily believe in it. Applying that rule will get you way ahead.

We moved down the street to a rental house and lived there for about six months. I was in the 3rd grade and we moved to a rental house at 2113th Kennedy Street, Philadelphia. There, I attended Sullivan School. I attended there through the 8th grade. The 7th and 8th were departmental. But the 3rd through the 6th grade, we were stabilized with the same group of 35 boys and 7 girls. I was the shortest and youngest boy. Then I went to Harding

Junior High for the 9th grade. We went swimming in the Quarry, which was near the State Pen and my second experience with gunfire was when the guards would shoot over our heads to scare us away. During my 10th through 12th grades, I rode a trolley car to a Catholic High School and it was all boys. When I was 15, my step-grandfather died and we moved in with my grandmother at 639 Cooper Street. For several summers, I would vacation, with my mother's aunts house near Fort Nix, New Jersey. One time, me and two cousins found a large field and we were picking blackberries; all of a sudden, we heard machinegun fire. Bullets went over our heads. That was my third experience with gunfire.

The summer of 1941, I got my first job and I worked there at Eddie's and I worked there one and one-half years. I graduated from high school in January of 1943. Shortly thereafter; I enlisted into the Navy pilot training and the reason was that my father had been in the Navy. They gave me a call and I went down to the Recruiting Station and they said that I was not college qualified which I didn't realize tht was a requirement. When I was in high school, I always thought I was going to go to college and become a mechanical engineer. When I was told that I was not qualified, I asked what I could do. They said, "Go down the street and join the Army." On February 12, 1943, I enlisted into the US Army Reserves for pilot training. They wouldn't take me on active duty until I was 18, so I went to work Jones ship building, which had been converted into a war plant. While I was there, I worked as a blockman and we cut out parts and assembled them and welded them. The main things we were making were ramps for LSDs (Landing Ship Dock) and ship board anti-aircraft machineguns. One

day, a fellow came up and said, "Tell the boss that we want to work for you." I said, "Why?" And he said, "I think that you would be good to work for." They had always been supervised by somebody, usually a white man, and even though our schools were integrated, there was still a color line, in 1943. I said, "Ok" and they pulled me along to the office. We got an ok from the boss and I got a ten cent and hour raise. From forty cents an hour to fifty cents an hour. I quit the second week of June because I went on Active Duty on the 10th of June.

I took a one-day train ride to Keesler Field, Biloxi, Mississippi. It was supposed to be basic training for aircraft members. We had a mix of classmates from raw recruits to Master Sargent's who wanted to fly. Some of them wanted to fly and others wanted a change of duty location. A friend of mine had gone to Texas A&M and after his sophomore year, he enlisted and they sent him to Colorado for Pack Artillery training. Some of the guys transferred to get out of Alaska. They said that it was really bad up there. A PFC (Private First Class) was in charge of us and he thought he was God. When he gave an order, we had to react. It was a normal basic training in Biloxi and it was a hot summer. One day we were on the parade ground, going through a Dress Parade and two of the guys passed out. Somebody poured ice water on them which resulted in two dead soldiers. That was my first experience of having people die with me in the service.

After basic training, we took a train to a college training detachment at Texas Tech at Lubbock, Texas. It was supposed to be for five months, but we were there for only eight weeks. We took physical training and ten hours of school instruction in a Taylorcraft airplane (L-2). We flew out of a

field that had a gravel runway and the airplane was never loaded until we got into it. They would like of the instructors and students in invert weight proportions. The heaviest students went with the lightest instructors. They broke off tail wheels almost every time they landed. They said the length of the course was cut down because of the high casualty rate of air corp. flyers. While we were there, they told us that one out of every three would make it and they were right. Guys washed out, left and right. After basic, they washed out a lot of those who had transferred to the unit just to get out of where they were previously.

We took a train to Santa Anna, California, after completing training at Texas Tech for testing prior to pre-flight. At the end of testing, I had an interview for classification and they used a test grading from zero to nine. My interviewer said, "You have nine for Navigator, eight for Bombardier and four for Pilot. Do you want to be a Navigator or a Bombardier?" I said, "I want to be a pilot." He said, "Five is minimum for Pilot and you only have a four." I said, "I had trouble with two machines. Now I had a lot of machine-shop training in high school and the machines you have are backwards. Instead of moving it forward, you had to move it forward rather than counter clock-wise and I was getting befuddled with them. Now since I got an eight for Bombardier, there were a couple of those machine were probably indicating Bombardier." He said, "That's right. Wait a minute." He went in the back room and he came back and said, "If you don't go to pilot training, what do you want to do?" I said, "I want to wash out and become a flight engineer." He said, "Ok, but as you got a high score for pilot, we are going approve you for aircraft pilot training." I said,

“Great!” Then he asked, “What kind of plane do you want to fly?” I said, “Dive bombers or light bombers.” He said, “Bombers, Ok.” I ended up in heavy bombers.

In Pre-flight, we moved to another barracks, in pre-flight we took code and weather theory as well as map reading. In the beginning of January, we got transferred to Cranberry Flying School and I went to flying school aeronautics at Kami, California. One thing that they liked you to do was practice aerobatics. Lots of times, I would climb into a plane and keep on flying over the San Jacinto Mountains which rose to 16,000 feet. They kept saying, “Don’t fly South of the base.” We found out they was a nudist colony in that direction. The training was only nine weeks rather than the ten weeks that they had told us we were going to have. We had 65 hours of flying time. The PT-22 (Ryan monoplane trainer) was a low wing plane with no radio and the instructor gave us instructions a tube and you couldn’t talk back. On March 13, after competing Primary, we went to Basic flying school at Gardner Field at Canton, California. There we flew the Stearman PT-13A (Training plane) which was a low wing, single engine, closed cockpit airplane. It had a radio and we learned how to use it. We did some different kind of flying than we had done previously. We did some low altitude cross country and right adjacent to the base was a lake and the base Commander liked to out on the lake and fish. We use to fly high enough that he couldn’t read the planes identification numbers and drop coke bottles to see if we could hit him. I don’t think that ever got hit. I had my first accident there. I was night solo flight, after I landed, I went by a couple of rows of airplanes and turned into the row where I was

supposed to turn into and just as I turned in, my landing lights shown on a man in the middle of where I was to park. I slammed on my breaks and the plane spun to the right and hit another plane. I thought that that was going to be the end of it. I expected to have an Accident Investigation Board hearing but I did not. The only thing I can conclude, and somebody said that it was entirely possible; that the Commander was the man that was in front of me, when I slammed on the brakes. I did avoid whomever it was. That is the best reason that I can think of why they didn't have a hearing, because that is usually the result. Because, every time something was different, you were out.

After completing the training, on the 23rd of May, I went to advance flying school in Pecos, Texas. There we flew UC-78Bs (Cessna training plane) and AT-17 (Cessna training plane) which was a low wing, twin engine airplane with one door in the rear. They called it the "Bamboo Bomber". One interesting fact about the AT-17 was, it took 40 seconds to get out of it, from the front seat and if it caught on fire it took 17 seconds for it to burn up. It would fly at 40 knots so we would try to find a strong wind and lower our air-speed as low as we could and in some of the Texas winds, we would be flying backwards. And it worked. I flew backwards, a couple of times. We had been learning to do instrument flying, in the AT-17 and on my check-ride to see if I was ready to graduate, I was flying West of the base and they had a radio-beacon with the North Quadrant sounding out an N and the South Quadrant was also an N. The other two Quadrants sounded out an A. The beam that they transmitted overlapped and gave you a beam you would fly in on. If you were flying perfectly in-between you could hear

the key clicks in between. It sounds like Dah Dit- Dit Dah. We always strove to do that. On the instrument check, I was perfectly on that beam. I thought, man I got this made. It was a plus if you could do that. Unfortunately; the instructor pilot pulled my right engine. I didn't notice it, because I was concentrating on the instruments so much and flying on that beam, that we lost 2500 feet before I realized he had pulled an engine on me. When we got down on the ground, he said, "I guess you know that you didn't pass." I said, "I guess I know." He said, "We will have a recheck for you." That was my last flight. I never got a recheck. I didn't fly again.

When we graduated on the 4th of August, we were all seated in newly bought dress uniforms. We were seated alphabetically and they would call out your name and they would say, "Second Lieutenant or Flight Officer and the name and you would go up and get your wings and insignia. Several names were not called and I thought that I was being washed out because if your name was not called, you were being washed out. My buddy's name was not called and he got a 79 on his Navigational final exam and 80 was passing. He became a gunner because they didn't call his name out. I really sweated it out because he was sitting right in front of me. I can't explain why I didn't wash out, but they called my name as a 2nd Lieutenant. That was unusual and I couldn't believe that. One out of three were Flight Officers. Later on, when I got a crew, both my Navigator and Co-pilot were Flight Officers. I had 106 hours in Advanced flying school and I had 241 hours total, not including the 10 hours I got at Texas Tech, which they never did give me credit for.

After graduation, I got my first leave and I took a coal powered train to Philadelphia. When I finally got to Philadelphia, my uniform was black. I never did get all the black out. After my leave was over, I took a train back to Roswell, New Mexico for B-17 (Boeing bomber) transition. I reported in on August 22 and left in October 1944 after less than seven weeks of B-17 transition. We had formation flying, touch and go landings. During one night, as I was making a landing, I was about 50 feet off of the ground and all of a sudden, the plane just dropped down. I had never had that feeling in a plane before or since. Needless to say, it was a hard landing but we just continued down the runway and took off again. Ed Sanchez and I were flying buddies and we switch seats and just keep flying in the area, for about a half of an hour. He came in and made a smooth landing and the left landing gear collapsed. Two props were ruined and possibly the two left engines. During the accident board meeting, they said that one of us would have to washout. I said it was my fault and Sanchez said it was his. He said that it happened when he was in the pilot's seat and I said that it happened because of what I did. Now, I knew he had a personal problem, which was a woman, and that the best way to get rid of it was to get washed out and go overseas, quicker, as a co-pilot. So, he washed out, instead of me. I was lucky again.

He wanted to go overseas as soon as possible. I saw him again, later on. I had 105 hours flying time in a B-17, when I left there. We had another ten days leave plus travel time and I got to Florida on October 18 for crew assignment. I got to Tampa at the time, I saw my first tornado. One went through there, at the same time that I got there. I got there and was

unassigned and I asked to have my crew assigned. On the 20th of October, I got my full ten-man crew. My ball-turret gunner was too big to fit into the ball and I asked the crew if anybody wanted to trade with him and nobody would. So, I tried to see if they would trade him off to another crew. They did. Then, they gave me one that, later on, I wished they hadn't given me. On the 3rd of November we took a flight to Mc Dill Field, at Tampa Florida, for B-17 operational training. We flew formation, navigation, and gunnery, day and night. About this time, my replacement ball-turret gunner showed up and flew with us. My co-pilot was 24, one waist-gunner was 23, my navigator was 20, the ball-turret gunner was 22, who replaced one that was 18. My tail-gunner was 18 and the rest of the crew, including me, was 19. In operational training we flew all around the area. We dropped bombs on South Padre Island, Texas. I don't know how many 100 pounds of blue bellied bombs I dropped there. On a gunnery mission, we would go low altitude and my one waist gunner shot up some cows at low altitude. Several of us practiced using the Norden bombsight on the bomb simulator. This came in handy when my bombardier was removed from the crew and was told he had to repeat because he needed more training. My armorer waist-gunner was moved up to toggler which many of the airplanes, in the 8th Airforce, had. Many of the planes had togglers and they could handle it ok, because all they did was just dropped the bombs when the lead bombardier did. After losing my bombardier, I was down to a 9-man crew. Up to this point, I had had only a few dates as I could not dance. I could get fancy on roller skates though. I skated at various rinks on Davis Island whenever we could get some time off. One day a girl tripped me and we

started dating. On Christmas Day, my great second mother called me and said, "What's going on?" I told her that I had got engaged last night but that we wouldn't get married until much later. That satisfied her, as she didn't think I should get married while the war was still going on.

I flew 30 missions. If you take that 170 hour and add it to what I had in transition, I got 276 hours at operational training unit which made 517 hours total or 527 hours if you count the 10 hours taken at Texas Tech.

With 276 hours of B-17 time, it was pretty good because I thought I could fly pretty well. Later on, I proved I could.

I went to Savannah, Georgia to pick up a new B-17 and a fighter pilot that we had to fly to Europe. We took off on the 7th of February and flew to Bangor, Maine. I took time out in our route to buzz my house in

Philadelphia, at about 800 feet. Kids will be kids and I wasn't any different.

On the 17th of February we went to Goose Bay, Labrador and on the 18th to Bluie West One, Greenland. That was an interesting flight because the field was socked over and then sunny. This was because it was at the end of a fiord and the clouds would come down lower than the tops of the land on the sides of the fiord. We let down over the water at Bluie West One which was a radio beacon at the entrance of the fiord. So, we flew up the cloud covered fiord to the field. On the taxi-way, my brakes failed and we plowed into a snow drift. They cleaned up our plane, but when we taxied out to take-off a few days later, the right brake was frozen and I found out that my ball-turret gunner had urinated on it. His action was overt, because he didn't want to fly combat. I tried to get rid of him later but was unable to do so. He never got along with the rest of the crew.

Weather held us up until February 24 at which time we flew to Valley, Wales. We flew at about 13,000 feet and it was 55 below zero. It was so cold that it froze my can of peaches that I was really looking forward to eating. My navigator almost flew us to the British Isles but I homed in beacon and saved our butts. He was a pretty good navigator until he had to do something. On February 26, we flew to Stone, England and delivered our B-17 there. We caught a train on March 1, to Thurleigh, England the home of our combat unit, the 369th Bombardment Squadron (Hvy), 30th Bomb Group, 40th Bomb Wing, 1st Air Division, 8th Air Force. When asked about flying in combat, my answer was always, "Well it was always 3-D." When I looked out the window it was always like a three-dimensional movie. Peaceful and monotonous, sometimes. Like flying over a floor of flak, sometimes and terrifying for a 19-year-old, sometimes." I knew that nothing was going to happen to me and that is the way most of the guys were. Although, we had one fellow we all thought PTSD (Post traumatic stress disorder) before they really knew about that. He acted funny in that he would go up to the mission's board, look at it and scream and run out. We had all kinds. During the months of December 1944 and the months of January and February of 1945, the 369th Bomb Squadron lost 70 aircraft with the crews either being killed or taken as POWs. (Prisoner of War). Many aircraft were severely damaged with many of the crew members being either killed or wounded. Weather was a big problem at the base, for take-offs and landings. En-route to the target and return as well as at the target, you might find all kinds of weather. Many times, it was very bad. Many times, we had multi-layers of clouds, haze, thick plane contrails and

smoke at the target, from previous bomb drops. On many of the missions there would be a long bomber stream and you would be bombing close to where somebody else had bombed. The formations could get in to contrails or clouds and come out, spread all over. You could have a good formation, initially, but when you came out, you had to reform. I had three missions; where another formation would fly through our flight. It wasn't unusual for a formation not to drop their bombs, for whatever reason, and circle around for another bomb run. It always caused problems with the following group. I flew one mission where I was the only plane in position during the bomb run. In one instance, all the men in my crew had eaten something that caused severe diarrhea in everyone, at the same time. When we flew missions, we had cardboard boxes that were filled with silver strips, which we called Chaff. We had these chaff boxes on the plane and on this mission, they served a good purpose. It collected the results of what they had eaten. My co-pilot asked what we should do with the loaded boxes and I said, "It's your problem." He opened the bomb-bay doors and they threw out the boxes. After we landed, we had our usual walk around the airplane to check for anything unusual and there was a coating of crap all the way from the bomb-bay doors to the tail plus a real coating of the ball-turret. I told them to get it cleaned up and I would meet them at the de-briefing.

On a B-17, the pilot had a switch that opened the bomb-bay doors and another that salvoes the bombs. The bombardier had switches where he could open the bomb-bay doors and set the way the bombs would go out. He could either salvo them or he could drop them one at a time and in the

order that he wanted, because we carried mixed bomb loads sometimes. We might have some 500 pounders and some 1000 pounders. On one mission, I saw the lead aircraft open his bomb-bay doors and I opened mine and I dropped my bombs. I was the only one in position. Lieutenant Cheeves, who I was flying off of, later told me that his crew had the same problems that I did. He said that he was the only one in position with his airplane. I never asked him how he selected his target. On one mission. I know my Squadron Commander was the leader and he had a little trouble with something, so he dropped his bombs and everybody behind him dropped theirs.

Living conditions were about what I expected for England. The food was included powdered eggs and I didn't like the lumpy bread and potatoes, which we had occasionally. One of my crew members found a local farmer who would trade fresh eggs for candy and cigarettes. We cooked these with Spam on a stove in our huts. There were Nissen huts where three or four officers from a crew would sleep in a room with a pot-bellied stove for heat. That was, whenever you could get the coal. A favorite prank was for someone to get on the roof and drop a, readily available, flare down the chimney pipe. It could blow up the heater or scare the hell out of us. The enlisted crew members were in a barracks. Day cleaning and laundry service, for us, was taken care of by a guy that was detailed to serve several of the Nissen huts. One day we tried to wash our uniforms in 100 octane gasoline. When we wore them, we all broke out in a rash, so I learned that I was allergic to 100 octane gasoline. We bought bicycles to use for transportation and used a taxi for infrequent trips to town. The driver

always knew, even before we die, who would fly and what time they would go. I imagine that he even knew what the target was but he never told us that. We didn't know where we were going on a mission until they woke us up at some ungodly hour in the morning.

I drank beer until I discovered readily available hard apple cider. It was good and it was just recently that I found a source that has some just like it. Many of our off hours were taken on the Ouse River. The natives were friendly and whole families congregated at the taverns. One of the things that I liked about England was how friendly the people were. They always challenged you to a dart game and they always won. They had many years of experience, playing darts. The movies on base were better than those shown in town. Consequently; we seldom went to movies in town. I had three passes to London, which we went to by train, and stayed at the Region House at Oxford Circus. We usually toured London, especially the churches. The churches over there are full of history. One of the churches I went to was like a museum because numerous statues and I guess they had bones behind them. There were plaques saying who they were and when they had lived and what they were famous for so we had a touch of history while we were there.

I also saw some outstanding musical comedies in London. One I remember, in particular, they had about twenty guys in kilts with bagpipes and they were marching up and down the aisles and people were singing with them. They were having a great time. It was still war time but they wanted to laugh. I usually went to town with some of my enlisted crew rather than some of my officers. On our first pass, my co-pilot and navigator went

together and the morning of next day I was told to report to my commanding officer by our first sergeant. I reported and I was asked if I wanted a Court Martial or affix the punishment. I asked what they had done. My two officers got a partial pay from the London Finance Center. He asked, "Did you read the bulletin board?" I said, "I saw that notice not to do what they did.?" He said, "The punishment is for the whole crew and you will be censoring for the entire unit for three weeks. You will censor all of the outgoing mail." We didn't like doing this because it was an additional duty on top of what else we had to do. We had to laugh at some of the letters and wonder about some others, before we started cutting them up or blacking them out. It is hard to believe, some of the things we read. Some of the fellows had been over there three years and I don't know how they stayed out of trouble for what they were writing about. On V-E Day (Victory over Europe) we were in London and I got separated from my crew and I ended up getting inebriated. The crowd was thick, so I ended up climbing up a lamp post, to see better and I saw the King and Queen and then, I fell off of the lamppost. I dropped down on top of some of the spectators below. No one was hurt, except for my feelings. Soon after our arrival at Thurleigh a completed mission pilot extended. He wanted to fly fighters so they transferred him to a nearby fighter base. He got in touch with us and he wanted the entire squadron to gather by the runway to see him perform. Luckily, we weren't close to the runway. He made one low pass in a P-47 (Fighter) down the runway. He circled around for another pass and coming down on the pass, he rolled over upside down and he suddenly crashed. If we had been where he wanted us to be others

would have died as well as he. I knew him fairly well and he was a good guy. We were young then but we learned a lot, fast.

After arriving at Thurleigh on the 1st of March, we spent some time getting settled; getting our flying gear, orientation briefings and meeting. Our first flight was March 8th for a short transition flight to see if I could fly the B-17. The next day, I was scheduled to fly again. Our Group Commander, who was over the 369th, was a former instructor at West Point. He didn't think the group was flying close enough in formation so he scheduled us to fly formation on the 9th. We also had gunnery training. I thought this was ridiculous, for except for a bomb run, very close formation with the airplane, with your wingtips almost touching your leader's fuselage, with the prop-wash, it was difficult to fly. It put stress on the pilot and lowered the gunnery range as well as requiring more fuel, which on some of our longer missions, we really needed. In such a close formation if one plane got hit with flak or had problems, several planes could be lost instead of just one.

We took off with twelve planes in a tight formation and for gunnery practice another plane pulling a sleeve target was flying around the formation with our gunners' taking shots at it. All of sudden the B-17 that was towing the target for our gunners was shot down over the wash. We saw seven chutes but only three of them survived. If you landed in that water, it was very very cold. The wash is that stretch of water between England and Europe.

When you first went over there as a crew, they wanted an experience pilot in your plane for the first five missions. They would take your co-pilot off

and he would fly your first five mission with you. Robert E. Woods was the check-out co-pilot who flew with me and my crew on our first mission. On March 10, we flew our first mission. It was a seven hour and forty-minute mission to Dortmund, Germany. We made our drop through the cloud cover and endured anti-aircraft fire that was inaccurate. There were no enemy aircraft. Our second mission was on March 12 to bomb German submarine pens and the dock area. We flew at 23900 feet and there was no enemy aircraft and the anti-aircraft fire was low and inaccurate. It was possible for bombs to hang up in the bomb-bay area because they were hooked up with toggles and the bombardier would either salvo the bombs or drop the individually, sometimes the bomb would hang up. We had a 1000 pounder that got hung up, so what we did, after we cleared the target area, the engineer would go into the bomb bay with a screwdriver and when the word was given by the toggler, he would turn the toggle and the bomb would drop loose. Subsequently; after it was done a couple of more time, my toggler became very accurate doing this. He didn't even use the Norden bomb sight, because he didn't always have one. In one instance, when we were coming back, we had a 1000 pounder hang up and he was back there with the bomb and he said "Ok, "Pat, now!" Pat was our flight engineer and top turret gunner. So, Pat toggled it and ball turret gunner had a camera gun and he took pictures of it all the way down. He hit a building dead center and it caused a huge explosion. We could see it even through the pilot window. He said, "It must have been a munitions dump." Later on, they verified that it was.

A lot of the planes would get hit during their missions, so we would get quite a bit of time off. On the 13th of March, the day after one of my missions, we had a day off because we had lost an engine. On the 13th of March I had my 3rd mission to Hildesheim, Germany. I was sort of a milk run. There was no enemy action. No flak. On the 15th of March, we went to Ulzen, Germany, which was a German Army Headquarters, at the request of the American army. It was a fairly easy mission. We flew at 24,000 feet and it was visual. We the formation of twelve airplanes dropped their bombs with good results. Sometimes you are very fortunate that you could hit exactly what you were looking for, particularly when you are up at 25 or 26 thousand feet. Our next mission was over Berlin. Let me go back a bit. On our 1st mission, I was set to go with Lieutenant Woods, who was my co-pilot and they told me that he was getting another crew and you get to pick your co-pilot. From then on, I had Gary as my co-pilot.

On the 6th, we flew to Berlin and there our target was the Tempelhof Air Drome and we dropped by radar plus a little bit by visual. There was heavy flak which was very accurate for about ten minutes. We saw about twenty German airplanes in the area plus a lot of our own. By this time in the war, we were getting pretty good fighter escort. We saw two fighters and one B-17, not from our formation, go down in flames. We were flying high squadron when two German ME-262 Jet fighters hit the group behind us. After they hit the group, they flew under us and they were close enough that I could see both of the pilot's faces as they looked up at us. They hadn't fired at our group at all. When they got to the next group, they

knocked down an airplane. I will never forget the look on his face when the leader of the two looked up at us. After they hit the group in front of us and shot down a plane, they peeled off and they got hit by a bunch of P-51s (Mustang fighter). We saw both of them blow up. They were probably out of fuel by that time because they didn't have much range.

Another 262 fighter that made a pass at the lead squadron and he fired about ten bursts, from pretty far way, and then he broke off. When he broke off, the P-51s hit him and knocked him down. Then a ME-109 (Fighter plane) made a pass at our lead squadron and then turned back to the high squadron. He was coming in level at about the 3'oclock position and my ball turret gunner opened fire at about 300 yards and kept up a constant fire as the ME109 passed under us. The 109 started to climb and then blew up. My gunner got credit for shooting down the last fighter shot down by our group. When we got back and went to de-briefing he said "I shot down a 109." We just looked at him as he hadn't said a word while we were in the airplane. We reported how many fighters were coming at us in our normal combat conversation. Two other ball turret gunners said, "Yes, we saw him shoot him down." So, he got credit for the last one.

Some of the crew wore a lot of flak gear. I couldn't fly the flak helmet very well because it interfered with a lot of things. Evidently, the fellow before me, before I got in the unit, felt the same way and he didn't wear one either. An 88 (Anti-aircraft) shell came through the plane, just above the windshield and killed him. That is the plane that I flew my first mission in. They had a patch on the inside of the plane. When I asked about it, they said, "Oh, don't worry about it. That's where an 88-millimeter shell came

through and killed the pilot.” Most of the crew wore the flak gear and I didn’t even wear a flak-suit because I sweat enough flying. We had electric suits which I wore but never turned on because I sweat so much flying. I shorted out two suits, before I stopped wearing them. My radio operator said that if anybody had any extra flak-gear he would like to have it so he ended up practically covered up with flak suits. Over Berlin, someone said to him, “You have got to look out the window and see what is going on. You have got to say that you saw Berlin on a mission.” He said, “Ok” and took off his flak helmet. He then leaned forward and looked out the window. Shortly thereafter; he said, “I don’t know if anybody can hear me but I can’t hear you.” Later, I sent the flight-engineer back to see what was wrong with him. What had happened was, a machinegun bullet had come up through the floor of the plane, through the radio table and shot his head-set off. It didn’t touch him at all. It just shot the head-set off. On our next mission, the 36th Bomb Group had 36 aircraft on the mission. Thirty-three were damaged. Twelve were severely damaged and twenty-one were slightly damaged. Ours was just slightly damaged. On my 7th mission, on the 21st of March, was to Rheine Air Division. It was a visual mission with good results. You could see building burning and photos showed explosions occurring. We encountered not enemy aircraft or flak, on that mission. Our 8th mission was on March 22 to Dorsten, Germany and that was a military barracks. We flew at 23,500 feet and were the low squadron. The flak was meager and inaccurate on the leading low squadron but it was accurate on the high squadron. A fighter made a pass at the high squadron and severely damaged one airplane and three more

slightly. Our 9th mission was on March 23 to Cofield, Germany and this mission was very notable because this was the 3rd time, we had flown airplane number 600 and we flew the 98th, 99th and 100th mission on it. Thereafter; we flew it mostly. In fact, I think almost all of my remaining missions were in that airplane. Previously, I had put the 100th mission on another airplane. Plane number 287, as I recall. At Cofield, it was a marshalling yard and it was visual and there were no enemy aircraft or any anti-aircraft fire that hit anything. It was light, scattered and very inaccurate. Our 10th mission was on March 24th over (??) in Holland. It was an airdrome and it was visual with excellent results. When I point out it was visual, that was unusual, because the weather over Germany was really bad at that time of the year. As I said before, when you had the haze and all of the contrails and smoke, it is hard to pick out the target. If it was visual, you were happy about it. From March 26 through April 1, we did test hops after losing our engines. In fact, on that mission to Berlin, I lost part of an engine so we flew that mission on what was really three and one-half engines. I wasn't going to turn back just because I lost one-half of an engine.

My 11th mission was on April 3 and our squadron lead the whole air division and we bombed Kiel, Germany. We bombed the dock area. It was over-cast and we bombed by radar. At that time, we had two different kinds of radar, about half the time neither one of them worked. It was a technical situation during that time of the war, if you had to use radar. We also had a system where you could drop on the inter-section of two low-frequency stations that were transmitting. That would be when you were trying to

blow up the rest of your bombs, rather than pinpointing them, because it was very inaccurate. Our next mission, our 12th was on April 4th and we went to Fassberg, Germany. It was an airfield and we were trying to knock out their buildings. It was visual but had 8 or 9 tenths cloud cover.

Sometimes you could see it and sometimes you couldn't. We were lucky that we saw it pretty well. During all these missions, my toggler would drop on lead airplane we were flying off of, in the formation. It made the bombs fairly close together, separated approximately by the width between two airplanes.

My 13th mission was on the 5th of April. We were the next to the last airplane to take-off on this mission. When we took-off, there were multi-layers of stratus clouds. We went to where we were supposed to go and there wasn't anybody there. The group had formed at a different altitude, above the clouds we were in and we couldn't see them. We did see another group. It was the 92nd and our group went to Weiden, Germany but we went to Ingolstadt. I didn't know what the target was, but it was an airfield. We tagged along with the group and flew in the "Coffin Corner" which was the low flight of the low squadron. We had seven 1000-pound bombs in our airplane in a stream. The tail-gunner of the plane next too us couldn't believe the explosions our bombs made. They were dropping smaller bombs and here we were dropping 1000 pounders and he didn't expect to see anything like that come out of our airplane. We saw pictures of our bomb strikes, that were taken by our ball-turret gunner. The picture shows that our bombs started right at the beginning of the airfield, across a runway and down another runway and right into the hanger area. We

knocked out two hangers. We were congratulated on our strike. We didn't face any anti-aircraft fire or enemy aircraft on that mission.

My 14th mission was on the 7th of April. We went to Aschendorf airdrome and we had satisfactory results. Three ME-262s hit the group ahead of us and knocked down a couple of planes. We got light flak and nobody hit us. On April 8th, we flew our 15th mission, we flew at 20,000 feet over Averstedt and hit the marshalling yards. We didn't get to drop on the number one target, because of the cloud cover so we went to the number two target. It was visual and we got good results. No enemy aircraft and slight flak.

On the 10th of April, I didn't fly, but the group hit Aran Enberg and they were forced into the Wittenberg area and they got heavy flak there. They were forced into the Wittenberg area, when one of the formations couldn't drop so they circled around and they were both going to the same target. They lost one airplane and another plane was hit in the tail section and it killed the tail gunner right away and the rest of them bailed out, at 3000 feet. The co-pilot was captured by the Germans who took his gun and hid him in the woods. When the Americans got close by, they returned his gun to him and became his prisoners. He turned them in. Four other crew members that were captured were taken to a hospital. On the 12th of April, about 60 Germans at the hospital surrendered to the crew members and were turned over to the American ground forces. At this point in the war, a lot of the Germans were not anxious to keep on fighting because they were afraid of the Russians.

On the 11th of April, my 16th mission, we went to (garbled) Ordinance Depot. It was visual with good results. You could see violent explosions taking place.

On my 17th mission on the 13th of April, we went to Nurmart, we saw an explosion in the air where two aircraft had collided. We could see five chutes. I guess they became POWs. On April 14, I flew my 18 mission and we went to France in support of the ground troops. My 19th mission was on the 17th of April. It was evident that we were flying our missions in a hurry. That mission was over Dresden, Germany over the marshalling yards. It was visual, but the results were obscured by the smoke from the bombs. I remember the mission well because we went into the contrails of the group in front of us. When we broke out, there was another group headed right toward us. Thankfully no accidents occurred. It was an unusual day as you could see groups all over the place flying different directions. One group flew into another, just like we had done, and we saw one 17 fly into two others and three planes were lost. We saw four chutes.

My 20th mission was on April 18th to Rosenheim, Germany to bomb the marshalling yards. There we had visual with excellent results. We flew at about 18,000 feet over the bomb run and we were letting down right after that and as we were descending a bunch of flak showed up. We found out that the mountains which were 7500 feet high and the Germans had put 75- millimeter cannons there and they were shooting at us. Luckily, they didn't hit us, but it sure gave us a scare. We were about 5000 feet above them. If they had been good gunners, they could have knocked all of us out.

My 21st mission was on April 19 and it was over Falkenberg, Germany. That was over marshalling yards. There again it was clear with no enemy aircraft or flak over the target. On that mission, we had to divert and do a 360 and when we were in that 360 had meager to very accurate anti-aircraft fire. I flew in the low squadron and on this mission one plane was severely damaged but we didn't lose it.

My 22nd mission was April 30th to Amsterdam. It was a single plane mission. By this time the war was pretty well over. Typically, we would drop leaflets at these places. They would put the leaflets into a cardboard cylinder which was about 8 feet long and they would put them into the bomb bays. The cylinders had wooden crosses on each end. When you got to a certain altitude, you would drop them and the wooden crosses would blow out and the leaflets would go all over the place. That was a three-hour mission and I got credit for a combat mission on that. On the 2nd of May I dropped leaflets over Rotterdam. On the 3rd of May was a mission that I knew we should have gotten credit for, because our target was close to Bargesgarten. We had fighter escort to the target and we had fighter escort coming back from the target and we completely flight planned ourselves, all the way. When we dropped the cannisters the wooden crosses blew out almost immediately and we could see the leaflets coming out of them. They were flying the wrong way and my navigator was looking out the window and he says, "They are going the wrong way. What are we going to do?" We circled down in a circle and tried to blow them back toward the target area. We kept going down and we got down on the deck. We were at about 1000 feet and I saw a swimming pool and there was a

guy on a diving board. I dropped down until I was about level with the diving board and almost went under it. Needless to say, the guy didn't stay on the board. I got credit for twenty-two combat missions plus two others. I also had 189 combat hours in a B-17 and I received an Air Medal with two or three clusters.

After V-E Day (Victory Europe) I had a meeting with the crew and I said, "Somebody is going back to the States for training in the B-29 (Bomber) for duty over Japan. What do you want to do?" They all told me of their preference and later on I told our Commander, Major McGinney, "All of the crew, except the navigator and ball-turret gunner want to go back to the states and train for B-29s so that we that can continue to fly. He said, "Come back and see me tomorrow." The next day, I went back to him and he said, "Some of the other crews are going back to train in the B-29." I said, "What about our crew?" He said, "I have a top-secret mission that I want you to fly in." I had no idea what he was talking about but it was the KC (garbled) mission project.

Richard: What was the secret mission?

Edward: They stripped down our airplane. They took stuff out of the bomb-bays, so that they were clean. They took off all of the excess weight that they could and they modified the airplane so that they could put two cameras in the plane. The mission was to photograph various areas and I guess it lasted a year and a half. I wasn't in it that long. The job was to photograph Europe, North Africa, England, Greenland and Iceland the Canary Islands. All over the place. During World War II, it was obvious that we didn't have maps that were good. On these missions, my crew consisted of a bombardier, two

navigators, a pilot, co-pilot, and an engineer. When we were flying, we would fly at 20,000 feet and it took pictures of a mile corridor and we could deviate one mile from the center-line. If there were clouds in the pictures, they were rejected. Later on, we would fly over the area again to take pictures of the area that had been covered by clouds. We made numerous runs over the Canary Islands. It was very stressful in that you could only be one mile off. The weather knocked out a lot of our flights over Europe. We had personnel changes every so often, because the guys had enough points to go home. We started out at Furleigh and from there we went to France and then to French Morocco from there we went to Germany. They had four squadrons and they broke them up into sections and flights and you might be anywhere. That wasn't only our group, the 305th was spread all over Germany, France and Belgium.

Besides flying the line, I have talked about, I got to do a lot of other flying too. Sometimes we would take personnel and equipment to one of the other bases, such as Gibraltar and we would pick up the exposed film and take it back to Furleigh. On one of those missions, I went down as Paymaster. I had two missions as Paymaster, so I had to go to all these bases and pay everybody that was in our group. That was fun. You had to use the local currency so I had to learn what the local currency was. Nobody was overpaid. I made 1st Lieutenant in December 1945 and I think I got \$180.00 a month. If we were flying out of Marrakesh, Morocco we could get the Marrakesh currency.

Periodically we would get three-day passes. If we got one, we could go to Cannes and we could fly across the Northern part of Africa to Tangiers. I

made two runs there. The only problem was that it was only a 1200-foot runway. Sometimes in landing you would run onto the grass. On take-off, you would start out on the grass. You would run the engines as high as you could and when you hit the runway, you would hit 20-degree flaps and hope that you could get off in the 1200 feet. We usually did. That was a lot easier than flying to Gibraltar. Gibraltar had a very short runway and what they did, that part of land between Gibraltar and Spain that had a runway that ran across there that went across there. They built piers, out of wood, and they extended the runway in both directions. They were approximately eight feet off the water. If you had to come in low, if you had dropped your wheels, you would tear a wheel off. That was quite interesting there.

Flying out of (garbled) we had trouble with what they call mist-rolls which are like our Santa Anna winds, here in the United States. High winds and dust. One time they told me I had to go. I said, "It is zero-zero visibility, how am I going to go?" They said, "You have got to go." So, I had them pull the plane to the center line on the runway. I locked the tail wheel and I started the engines. We took off, flying blind and we made it out of there. I don't remember what was so important, but it wasn't a pleasant flight at all.

In the spring, my boss got a 60-day pass to go back to the United States to see his family. He appointed me the 40th Bomb Wing Flying Safety Officer. I said, "What is that?" He said, "I don't know. They just appointed me and they didn't give me any instructions. They gave me two French secretaries and a jeep that had been modified by German POWs who did a very good

job on it. I had two secretaries, but I didn't know what to do with them. I finally decided to make up new tech lists and new questioners so we could test the pilots. I kept trying to find out what I was supposed to do but they couldn't come up with anything. Then I left the district the first time and went back to Thurleigh, they said that they were moving to Germany. They left all the truck, jeeps and equipment that they had moved over to Germany. So, Don Smith and I were appointed co-directors of the convoy. So, we drove down to South Hampton then across to La Havre and through France and out to Germany. That was fun except for one night that we got raided by a bunch of Frenchmen who stole a lot of items. They cleaned out a lot of guys. I was smart, I had all my valuable stuff in a barracks-bag. My B-4 bag (Military Garment bag) and footlocker were in there and they weren't touched. The barracks-bag disappeared. I had all the Christmas presents that I wanted to send, when I could, in that barracks-bag. That episode certainly did not increase my liking for the French people. When Major McKinney came back, he was assigned as Area Commander and a lot of our senior people had disappeared; although there were a number of us 1st Lieutenants that had flown up- to 24 missions. He told me, "Ok. You are now my Squadron Operations Officer." It was an additional duty to my Safety Officer duty. As a 1st Lieutenant, I was a Squadron Operations Officer. That went along for a little bit, until they said, "Ok, you guys are going to be going home soon. Replacements are coming in so you have to train them. In addition to flying blind, we had to train our replacements. That was somewhat difficult, because some of them never had had B-17 experience. I had one guy who had 7000 hours in T-6's and

he was scared to death of that four-engine bird. Don Snook and I took two guys up and we had a little dog-fight and when I did a split-S with my plane that guy was holding on for dear life. When we got back down on the ground, he said, "That plane can fly." I said, "Yes, it can."

My last flight was June 3, 1945. I departed for the states on July 17 1945. We took a truck to La Havre and slept in tents with dirt floors and waited for a boat. The food was very poor and there were lots of rats. In fact, I woke up one night with a rat chewing on my hair. Me and another guy decided that we were going to take care of that. We had 45s and we put a candy bar in the middle of the tent between the rows of canvas cots we were sleeping on and when a rat would grab the candy bar and start pulling it away, we would start shooting at it with a 45. That was lots of fun and I believe we killed two rats by shooting at them.

We had the unfortunate experience of having enough numbers to return to the states and to get out and a lot of people were coming over. We were finally able to get on a boat and come back home. The ship only took seven days to come back. The weather was nice and we had a bunch of guys get sick but I was fortunate and I didn't. They had eleven scientists on board who were given extra extra extra special treatment and later on I found out that some of them were among those who worked on the Atom bomb.

Most of them were Rocket scientists.

Richard: What date did you get back to the states?

Edward: I don't remember the date exactly. We went to Fort Dix, for discharge. I think I was only there for two days. I left there on July 21st.

Richard: How many of those secret missions did you fly?

Edward: I can't find my records related to that, let me get back to you later.

Richard: Ok.

Edward: Since I didn't have college credits and it was too late to enroll in college after I got home, I went to Central University Tech school and took five subjects. I did that for a year because I wanted to qualify for college. Since I was 6 foot plus, I got on the basket-ball team and played center and as a result, I got three offers of scholarships. But since I was on the GI Bill, I said, "No, give them to somebody else that needs it more than I do. I ended up using all that was available under the GI Bill.

Richard: When you were released from active duty, did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life?

Edward: Yes. I learned I was in civilian life but I was in the inactive reserves. As I said, I started to school and I also got dis-engaged in the Spring. My prospective bride came up to see me and she said, "I don't want to live here." I told her I didn't want to live in Florida.

During May of 1946, I started flying T-6's and T-11s in the reserves. First at Reading, Pennsylvania. In April of 1947, I started as a Freshman at Penn State. On one occasion five of us were going out of town. One of them was a girl by the name of Barbara Mc Clerkin. She was my future wife, although I didn't know it. We gave her a bad time, by teasing her. In the summer of 1948, I had two weeks of active Reserve duty at Louisville, Kentucky. I flew T-6s there. That was quite an experience if you flew down there. It was so hot that you couldn't touch the airplane. You had to wear gloves to get into the plane. You weren't happy until you got about 3000 to 4000 feet, where you would have the wind blow in your face. Later that summer, I

became a Pinkerton guard for the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia. A good buddy of mine got me the job. It was short lived but it was fun. I fortunate to find out something about politics because I was outside the smoke-filled room, which you hear about, where Thomas E. Dewey (1902-1976) was nominated for President. I was happy when Harry S. Truman (1884-1972) was elected President. I think that he was one of the best presidents we have had because without the Marshall Plan and his plan of the G.I. Bill (Serviceman's Readjustment Act) we would be in a different world now. A lot of good guys got their education by means of the G.I. Bill after World War II. It wasn't available after previous wars, but it has helped since then.

I went into In-active Reserves and stopped flying because in September, I started Penn State. I was a walk-on, on the football team for by that time I was up to 190 pounds and in those days, it was two-way football. I played right guard and line-backer. Even though I went out as a walk-on, I wasn't very successful. We were like cannon fodder on the football field. If you went to Washington College for your Freshman year and then you transferred to Penn State and if you had a scholarship, then you would play. Anybody else could just forget about it. The team didn't have too many people on it. It only had eleven starters and very few replacements. Even though I was on the Junior Varsity team, I never got to play JV football because those on scholarship are the ones that got to play. I think that I only played five or six times while I was on the JV team. I stuck with it, until I pulled some muscles in my back. It was giving me some trouble and I went to see the team doctor and after he examined me, he said, "You have

Shingles.” I said, “What is Shingles?” I had had Chicken Pox, but that Shingles is something else. It is really something else. I had a week-end off so I went home and talked with my mother. She said, “Are you in school to become an engineer or are you in school or are you in school to play football?” I said, “I like to play football but I am in school to become an engineer.” She told me to get off the team. In my freshman year, while I was at the Center and the year that I was at Prep, I played semi-professional football, in Philadelphia. After I dropped out of playing College ball, I went home and played about four games with a semi-pro team. I enjoyed that. The only game that my father ever saw me play anywhere or any sport was one game on Thanksgiving when we were playing our bitter rivals. I was the starting right-guard. I got knocked out and after I recovered, I went back in. I got knocked out again, once again after I recovered, I went back in. I got knocked out a third time and I was ready to go back in and my father said, “I quit.” He went to his car and drove home. He couldn’t watch it. He thought I was crazy. I don’t think I had any bad results from it. I didn’t have a concussion I just got knocked out. With the equipment we had, you could get zinged but they weren’t as bad as some of them are now days. Although I played football, baseball and basketball, I never had a broken bone.

Richard: How long did you stay in the Reserves?

Edward: I was still in the Reserves, but I was in-active by that time. Just about that time, in December of 1948, I decided I needed a car. I had been driving Barbara’s car. She had a slight accident, so I did most of the driving of her car. She had a new Buick. I decided that I needed a car so I joined the

National Guard on December 16, 1948. When I joined, they said, "We can't enlist you as an officer." I said, "Why not?" They said, "We can have only so many officers for so many enlisted people." They were just starting the unit, it was the 112th AC&W, Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron. He said, "We have just started so we only have a few officers that are authorized, but we are going to build up. If you will come in as a Staff Sergeant, we will promote you up to 1st Lieutenant as soon as we can." I needed the money, so I said, "Ok" and I joined. They made me the Drill Sergeant. I had to set up parades and I did other things. They were still getting organized, so it was kind of a loose organization. We had a summer camp in Indiantown Gap in Pennsylvania where we all learned a lot of things. That is where we built the first Radar that we would be using. Then we took it back to State College. I mean it was old World War II gear. It was comprised of a TPS-1 and a TP-10P which is a height finder. That was basically what we had. During the Fall of 1949, I moved out of the dorms and joined a Fraternity. The main reason I joined was a buddy talked me into it. It was the only dry Fraternity on campus. Later on, the fellow brothers of the fraternity decided that they were going to start hazing. I was the only ex-GI of that pledge class and the president of the Fraternity had been a navigator. There were a number of the others had been in the service during the war but there were only two of us who had been officers. He called me in and said, "You are considered the head of the pledge class. We are going to start hazing." I said, "Ok, I am going to have a meeting of the pledges." I did and when I asked what they thought of it, they didn't like it. They asked what I was going to do and I told them that I

was leaving and consequently all twelve of us decided that we were going to leave. I went back to Ralph, the Frat President and I told him good luck on the hazing because all of us were going to leave. He said, "Wait a minute. Let me talk to the others." They talked it over and they did not have any hazing but they had a "Hell week" where the pledges did work for the community.

On March 23, I was promoted to 1st Lieutenant in the National Guard and was made a Controller Fighter Interceptor. On March 31, 1951 I went on flying status. We went down to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania where we flew T-6s and T-37s. I actually flew the Governor around in a T-37 a couple of times. He became a Senator later on.

The summer of 1950, I had two weeks of active duty at Twin Lakes, New Jersey. On the July 10, 1951 I got promoted to Captain. I was the Commanding Officer of GCI-2 which is Ground Control Inceptor number two. Our squadron had two GC-I's. One at Lake Charles and the other one was down in Reedsville, Pennsylvania. It was about a 20-minute drive from the college and that helped in the recruiting somewhat.

I graduated from Penn State in August 1951, with a BS in Mechanical Engineering and I got married to Barbara. We knew that I was going to be called up soon after we got married and we expected that it would be Korea, but we didn't know exactly when. So, I went job hunting and ended up with Westinghouse Electric in Pittsburg in the Engineer Training Program. They sent me to several other locations for training with the last being six weeks in the aircraft engine plant. We got word that we would be going on active duty on December 1 but I ended up going on active duty on

October 2nd. The unit was activated on December 1 and during February we were moved to Grenier Airforce Base, New Hampshire. I flew T-6's there. One of my interesting flights, I was sent North of the airport and there is a big lake there that is popular during the summer. This was in the winter and I looked down and they were having a horse race on the ice on the lake. When I got down, I asked how did those horses race on the ice and I was told that those special cleats were attached to their hooves to make them steadier on the ice. One thing that happened while we were in New Hampshire, my first daughter was born. I came down from a flight they told me that I was wanted at the hospital. I went there and it was a 12-bed hospital. It was quiet and peaceful and luckily, they had some good doctors there. Our daughter Katherine Lee was born February 29 at 3 pounds 9 ½ ounces.

Richard: What happened, when you got called up for Korea?

Edward: We had already been called up Korea and that is the reason I was at Grenier. In early 1952 we went to Willow Run, Michigan; the Headquarters of the 30th Air Division. We were there for reassignment. From there, they sent us out to various A C & W (Aircraft Control & Warning) Squadrons. Before they told us where we were going to go, we had an orientation in the block house which was their Operations Center. Major Taylor gave us a briefing. He said that they had two openings on the base and asked if there were any volunteers. I said, "I will." I figured that that would be a better assignment than going out to an A C & W Squadron because I knew three of them were in Canada and the only way you could get to them was by railroad and the towns weren't very big. The 30th Air Division took in six

states and they had some A C & W squadrons in some weird places. I volunteered and he said, "Ok". So, I was assigned as Surveillance Officer. A crew consisted of a Senior Controller, who oversaw everything including scrambles and everything else, and he usually had one other officer assigned to the crew and that was the Surveillance Officer. The Surveillance was responsible for the people who prepared the plotting boards and the people behind the boards who were tracking airplanes, whose positions were called in by other locations that had them on radar. We had other officers that were available to us such as a Weather Officer, a Fighter Interceptor Officer and a few other technicians like that. There were four crews which were composed of 18 to 20 people and they worked 24hours per day. If there was an exercise, two crews would be combined. I was at Willow Run for a little over two years.

In July of 1952, we had an exercise with a combined two crews and a couple of strange things happened. General Tucker was our Division Commander and the block house and all of the activity of the people I was with, took place in a big room. Behind that big room and high up was a line of closed in offices, where people could observe things. General Tucker had a room up there where he had access to every telephone-line in the Division. He looked at a situation on the board and he scrambled a fighter squadron out of Selfridge Air Force Base to attack the simulated enemies that were coming in. A guy by the name of Wallenberg who was the Senior Senior Controller of the combined crews, cancelled the General's scramble. You can imagine the General's reaction. About the same time that Wallenberg cancelled the General's scramble my wife was at a tea party at

General Tuckers house and Wallenberg's wife accidently spilled tea on the General's wife. As a result of the two happenings the next day Wallenberg was the Surveillance Officer and I had his crew. I had no experience at all. It was blind leading the blind. The crew I got had three girls on it and two of the girls were sisters and they were senior on the job so I regarded them as technically in charge and I had a Staff Sergeant that was really good, who I depended on.

For flying time, I flew some C-47 (Transport plane) and some C-45s. I really liked the C-45's for we would fly them and try to find holes in the radar.

We would work with the radar stations to see if they had us and we would change altitudes to see if they would keep track of us. It was beneficial for them to know what their coverage was. We found out that if you flew down the middle of Lake Michigan, nobody would see you.

One day, General Tucker called me in and he said, "Ed, I have been getting some static from some of the other Controllers about the girls working for them." There were about three on each shift. I guess we had about 14 total including 2 seniors. He said, "How would you like to have all of the girls?" The General and I could talk pretty straight-forward because we were the only two people who had been bomber pilots and we had both flown B-17s. Everybody else had been fighter pilots. They had a different mentality in the way they approached a problem. I said, "General, I will take them all, but I want the two sisters, who are the Seniors, off of my crew. They were transferred and it worked fine. One day I got a call from General Tucker and he asked if I knew much about the Ground Service Squadron. I told him that I knew very little. That was the only separate

squadron on the base that housed the 30th Air Division. They were under the 30th Air Division but not under the normal operation. I asked him why he was asking and he said, "Well the Operations Officer is leaving and you are going to the Operations Officer for the Ground Observer Squadron." The Ground Observer Squadron had nine detachments and they were spread all over the South and Midwest. I said, "Ok" and started to learn about the Ground Observer Corps. The Ground Observer Squadron had 13 detachments and they had some officers and enlisted men at each detachment at various locations. Their job was to oversee the detachment and operate it. They had a lot of civilian volunteers that worked there and they had a plotting board in there. They would plot the movement of aircraft in their area. These reports would come from observation posts that were all over the country. They were located in places like fire towers and the like. They were put in places where ever they could find volunteers and a telephone with which they could report any aircraft that went over. All of the volunteers had some training, but you never knew how they were going to describe the aircraft that they saw, even though part of the training included aircraft recognition. At that time, airplanes weren't flying as high as they do now so we got a lot of low flying airplane calls. The volunteers at the detachment headquarters would plot the plane movements on the board and they would know the indicated path of the airplane so they would call it into the AC&W who would pick it up on radar and it would ultimately end up in Division.

One instance that I vividly remember was the time I got a call from General Tucker. He said, "Come on over." I did and he said, "Look at that plot." I said, "The call is a B-36 (Bomber)." He said, "Yes. I have already investigated it and several observers in the Green Bay (Wisconsin) area called it into the Green Bay plotting board and they called it into the AC & W Squadron in Wisconsin and they called it in here. What they see is a top-secret flight of B-36s (Strategic bomber) flying at low altitude with a P-84 (Fighter) strapped to the wing." What they would do was release it and it would fly off on its own. It was something they were trying out at Wright-Patterson Airforce Base, Ohio. We got the first calls on it since they were only flying about 2000 feet off of the ground.

After about a month after I was Op's Officer, I got a call from (garbled) and he said, "Come on over." I went over to see him and he said, "Did you know that your boss was going to leave?" I said, "No. I had not heard that." He said, "Well he leaving and you are taking over his squadron." I said, "I am a Captain, Sir." He said, "I know that." Not only did we have the nine detachments, each one of those detachments had either a Captain, that out-ranked me in tenure, the rest of them were Majors. Plus, if I was to be the Squadron Commander, I was also going to be the 30th Air Division Director of Civil Air Defense. I would have six State coordinators who were on the staffs of the Governors of six states that we had. Three of them were Majors and three of them were Lieutenant Colonels. He said, "No problem, Ed." He got the personnel officer on the phone and he said, "I want orders cut for Ed to be Director of Civil Air Defense and Squadron Commander of the 4671st Ground Service Squadron. It was then that I

found out I was everybody's boss. Most of them cooperated with me. I had troubles with quite a few of them for one thing or another but not because of the rank. I asked him, "Why are you giving me this job? Anyone of the Detachment Commanders could come in and do a good job." He said, "None of them have any experience in A C & W work. They know nothing about this block house nor do they know anything about air defense." I said, "You are right." He said, "Ok. That answers your question." The spot called for a Lieutenant Colonel and he said that he was putting me in for Major right away. Right about that time they changed the rules and they went with time in grade and I didn't have any time in grade, when I took the duty. Consequently; I didn't get promoted at that time. About a year and a half later, a Lieutenant Colonel showed up and he got the job. He was only there a short while and he got transferred out and another Lieutenant Colonel came in.

Soon after, I was made Commander, I went to a three weeks course at Colorado College, Colorado Springs, Colorado and it was to teach me how to do radio presentations, make a presentation on TV, how to prepare newspaper releases and how to conduct public relations, which was very important in the Ground Observers Corp. as we were working with civilian volunteers. It was very important because it didn't take much for them to decide not to volunteer any longer.

In 1956 they came out with a program that sent people back to the cockpit. I was transferred to a cockpit job. I was sent to James Connally Air Force Base, Waco, Texas, for bombardier, navigator, radar-observer training. We trained in B-29s (Bomber) and besides getting navigator training, we had to

get pilot training. We had to get flying time as a pilot to keep our qualifications. We flew B-25's (bomber) and they put guys that were going to be fighter back-seaters in with us. We flew practice intercepts where one B-25 would fly in a line and the others would follow the trainee's instructions on the intercept. That is the way we got our flying time. It looked like we were going to go to B-47s (Bomber) and the word-of-mouth got to me that to be a B-47 Aircraft Commander, you had to have 2000 hours flying time. I was close, but I was short, so I went to the B-29 Section head and asked if I could fly in some of the B-29s, as a third pilot, when they are flying and I am not doing anything else. He gave his approval and that is what I did. When I wasn't actually piloting, I would look around to see what they were doing. One time I was watching them as they simulated the dropping of bombs and I looked at their target, memorizing what it looked like. This came in handy because when I flew my missions for bomb variation, the target was the State Capitol building. It was the northwest corner of the Capitol building in Oklahoma City. I dropped my bombs and when I came back, they said, "You have a shack." Which was good. Little did they know that I had previous experience looking at that target. I ended up being number one in the class.

Before I was reassigned, they gave me a final physical. Everything checked out normal except that they found that I had a knot on my right pinky finger. I don't know how or where I got it. They said, "You are going to B-47s (Bomber). You can't go to U-2s (Lockheed reconnaissance plane) or U-78s (Transport) and you are not qualified to go into the Space Program,

(which was just beginning) because you would suffer from nitrogenation which cause extreme pain.”

In 1956, I was assigned to the 26th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing at Lockbourne Airforce Base Columbus, Ohio. When I got there, I started flying B-47s and they had RB-47s (Bomber). We didn't do too much because the guys that were qualified were flying their butts off. This was about the time we were having some political problems with a couple of countries. It wound up that they were afraid that Cuba was going to do something to us, so they had us out there, even the officers, in flying suits, with Garand rifles, guarding B-47s. I didn't understand it, but that is the way it was.

During April of 1957, they sent me to McConnell Airforce Base, Wichita, Kansas for B-47 transition. I was only there for two months. It was a concentrated course and they sent two of us to Tulsa to fly out of Tulsa. I shot a landing and went around and when I was half-way down the down-wind leg, the other guy would be touching down and visa versa. I was on the down wind leg and I looked over and he was touching down and there was another aircraft in the way. He pulled up but the other plane crashed and everybody aboard was killed. That ended our transition flying for that day.

I was given a crew. We had a three-man crew and we flew photo missions in an RB-47 and some of them were low altitude where we would take oblique pictures of everything in front of us. We would also take area pictures from high altitudes.

In June of 1958, they sent me back to flying in B-47s which had be altered for ECM (Electronic Counter Measures) missions. We no longer had the RBs. They took off the bomb-bay doors and put a capsule in there. That capsule held two men. An officer and an enlisted man. I had a 2nd Lieutenant and a Master Sergeant that would be in the capsule. One would be the ECM observer and the other was the ECM operator. While I was there, we would be on alert but we would be at home. They would call you and you go and get off the ground as quickly as possible. Once you got on the plane and on your radio, they would tell you what kind of alert it was. One kind of alert would stop right there. Another kind of alert, you had to start your engines and disconnect everything so that you were ready to roll. Another kind of alert was the Romeo. On this one, you taxied out and took off. Sometimes you would start your take off and get word that the mission was aborted and you would put on your brakes and taxi back to your stand. Sometimes you would take off and it would be an exercise. We had several of those.

I was supposed to fly a mission one day but my navigator was sick so we couldn't go. They substituted another Lieutenant in my place. When you flew a normal mission, you would end up at a very high altitude but as you approached the base, you would let down under Approach Control or Route Control and you would get down to 20,000 feet. You would come down at six or seven thousand feet per minute until you arrived at the altitude when you got down to your VOR, you would either hold or you would penetrate. If they said penetrate, you would come down at 6 or 7 thousand feet a minute down to whatever altitude they assigned you which

would be about 2500 feet over the airport. Well, when my replacement made his contact, he started to turn during his penetration his aircraft blew up. They could never could figure out what caused it and it was happening throughout the air force with B-47's. Well, we had a joint exercise with another wing one day and I was leading an element and Luke Kelly was leading an element. We were in the 26th Bomb Wing and they were in the 91st. We got together and flew the mission and did some ECM work and some navigation work and then we got together for air refueling. When we got together for air refueling, we went echelon and we wound alternating, with every other airplane refueling from our wing and the next one was his, with one plane leading the whole thing. We were at 20,000 feet and we started dropping down and they were stretched out behind me in a long formation and just about the time we rounded out, and they were taking pictures of this, not only for only the exercise but also for one of the movies they were making, they were taking pictures of it and they actually saw the wing coming off. His right wing just separated and went back and then the airplane exploded. Well, we were refueling from a KC-97 (Tanker). We were at the right altitude and we had to slow down to refuel and we had come from altitude and we were coming down pretty fast. But it didn't put that much strain on the airplane. There was more strain caused by other things we did. When they evaluated it and examined it all, each wing on a B-47 was held by two things that looked like a milk bottle. It looked like a metal milk bottle only a little bit bigger and a bit thicker and heavier. They ran some tests and found out they were failing, so they worked out a program where the planes would get to a base, such as Tinker, and they

would rework those. I got into several of those flights where I would drop off a plane and pick up another one. I had some interesting experiences there, which I won't go into here.

We not only pulled alerts on our own field; they did something they called Reflex. When you reflexed, you would go to another base and you would stay there and live on that base until you were cleared to return to your base. Sometimes it was two weeks and other times it was three weeks. If you went to England for example, you might send three airplanes over and stay there. Three of the original airplanes would go over and you might be on alert for a week and then have a week off and then go on alert again and after than you would come home. If you were a spare when you landed, you went on alert, right away, for a week and then you went on a week pass and after you returned from a week off, you would fly any airplane back to the states. We Reflexed in the states at Portland, Maine and in the winter time that was fun because they not only had squadrons of B-47s pulling alert, they had squadrons of B-52s(Bomber). When they would have an alert, you wanted to be at the front of the line, to take off, because it was real icy. The airfield was built in terraces and if you were back up the hill a little bit, you would be sliding all over the place and you may or may not make it back to your parking space. I was pretty lucky every time I went to Portland. My crew was really good and we could get moving really fast and I was never part of those behind on the runway. I personally went on Reflex to England to Chelveston which was one of the bases that the 40th Bomb Wing had had during World War II so that was like old home. It was

not far from Oxford and when we would have time off, we would go visit the college.

Coming back on New Year's Eve from a mission, I was leading two airplanes. We took off and one of the airplanes had hydraulic problems, so he just turned around went back to base. The mission went pretty good from there except we had strong head-winds. We were scheduled for an inflight refueling and I wasn't particularly worried but the other airplane called me and said he was going to land at Goose Bay, Labrador because his refueling system was' working. There was a door in front of the pilot and there was a receptacle there where the refueling boom from a KC-197 (tanker) or KC-135 (tanker) would fit into and you would fly that way. You would fly in formation with the tanker until he off loaded to your plane. Well, this left me all by myself and there were three KC-97s that needed to off-load 20,000 pound of fuel. I said, "I can't use 60,000 pounds of fuel." We dropped down in altitude and I took 20,000 pounds from each one of them and I climbed back to my prescribed altitude and headed for home. All of a sudden, the winds got stronger and stronger when I finally landed at my base, I had 6,000 pounds of fuel left and that was minimum. We had really burned up a lot of fuel. We were anxious to get home New Year's Eve. The missions we had were such that our crew was ready all of the time. I flew a spare one time with the crew and my ECM (Electronic Counter Measures) Observer had just got back on flying status and he was ready to fly. This was his first flight with him back in his position and we were flying spare and part of our mission was to do some ECM jamming on a couple of radios in the New York area. We set a pattern on the VOR's there at

Plattsburg. I got a call from my ECM Observer saying that they would like to change seats. The things that they did and the equipment they had was different for the Observer and the Assistant who was a Master Sergeant. I looked at my watch and then I waited for a call. I didn't get a call and still didn't get a call and I got on my intercom and said "Have you changed seats?". I still didn't get an answer. I then got on the Guard Channel, which goes out to everybody, and I still didn't get any answer. I immediately chopped the throttles and started an emergency decent and told the co-pilot to call Approach Control as we were making an emergency decent as we have a problem with some crew members. I told the Navigator to get his walk around bottle (Oxygen) and see what was going on back there. He went back to check on them. Approach Control called and asked "What is your emergency?" I said, "I'm not sure what the complete emergency is but I will let you know as soon as I know." I hadn't heard from my Navigator so I told my Co-Pilot, "John goes back and see what has happened back there. He climbed out of his seat and took his walk-around bottle and crawled back to the bomb-bay area. When he got there, he saw that one guy was coming back but all three of them had been unconscious. My Navigator apparently had put his oxygen mask on the ECM Operator and he was coming around. My Co-Pilot gave me a call and said that everybody should be ok. All three of them had passed out at one time or another. I called Approach Control and requested that I make an emergency landing at Plattsburg. They said "Ok". What's your problem?" I told him that I had three crew members that had passed out. I got approval to land at Plattsburg and everybody got back into their seat and

landed with 100% Oxygen. They took the four guys to the hospital and I went with them. The Wing Commander of the B-47s there and the Flying Safety Officer told me that I evidently did the right thing. I said, "Well what I did is not in any of the instructions that we have, but we figured out what happened. Behind and above the seat on the right there was a lever that gave you emergency decompression. They cleared everybody except the Observer that day and he had to spend a day or two getting over the sickness. I called the Home-base and talked to the Wing Commander about it and he said, "Take as long as you need." I told him that we were ready to come back and he said, "Ok. Come back and come back at 8000 feet as he didn't want any more Oxygen problems. We left Plattsburg and returned to our home base. When we landed, our Wing Commander told me "You did a good job. Congratulations." and he walked away. After he walked away, the Safety Officer started chewing me out and said, "How can you do such a thing? Why did you let this happen?" He went around and around. I was a Captain and he was a Lieutenant Colonel so that is the way it went.

Besides the ECM Missions, we would do some other things too. I had two missions where we in transition and there was an incident happened. On one got to Savanna, Georgia and they didn't want to feed us because it was after hours. I got to the Commanding General who was the Wing Commander and told him of the situation. He said, "No you will just have to eat in the Officer's Club." I had a couple of enlisted me with me. The ECM Operator was a Master Sergeant and a Crew Chief, enlisted man, had come along for the ride. I said, "Let me talk to my Wing Commander." I went to the phone and called my Wing Commander and he said, "What?

You are the crew of a B-47 and they won't treat you like a human being?" Let me talk to the General." To find out, they knew each other and we were provided sleeping accommodations and meals for the two days before we went back home.

The other time that I got into a situation, we went to a base in Indiana and the next day we were cleared for home. The next day I called up the minimum fuel rate because it wasn't that far from Columbus. We put a minimum fuel load on and it was a very very cold day in December. We got out on the runway and I said "Let's make a maximum effort take off. "My Co-pilot said," OK". We got to the end of the runway and we revved it up as much as we could and released the brakes and dropped the flaps and we were off the ground in about 1000 feet. In those days the B-47s couldn't take off that fast. The tower called and said, "Are you ok?" I said, "Yes". We were also in the position that things could be dispersed sometimes. If we went to war, they wanted to be sure that they had the correct number of airplanes on a particular base. Each base would have at least two Wings and they had a Super-H (Hydrogen) Bomb Base. I went to three different bases for dispersal. I went to Greater Pittsburg, Syracuse, New York and Wright-Patterson. The airport in Savannah is the one that they were worried about the most. I turned off the runway and followed the jeep to where I was supposed to park. I went to the taxi-way and I said, "We are not going to make it." It had rained a couple of days before and sure enough; the B-47 had the main landing gear in the fuselage plus two out-riggers on the end of the wings, when I turned on to the taxi-way we were ok until I hit a couple of soft spots. I saw the mud and I said, "We are not

clear the of runway.” So. they got some equipment and quickly fixed the problem.

Richard: What did you do in Viet Nam?

Edward: I was in another place before that.

Richard: Ok.

Edward: I made Senior Pilot about this time, toward the end of 1960. About the same time, we filled out cards about what we wanted to do to further your career. I put down that I wanted to use my engineering experience. I was hoping that I would get assigned to Edwards Air Force Base in California as a test pilot. About this time, I got a phone call from California and it said that I was reassigned as a Launch Officer on the mobile Minuteman (Missile) program. Later I was at a dance with my wife and my Wing Commanding said, “Congratulations on getting your Senior Pilot Wings.” I said, “Oh, I thought your meant about my transfer.” He said, “What transfer?” He was not happy about the transfer, but he finally said “Ok.” A few weeks before that he had said that he wanted me to become one of the people in the Control Center for the Wing where they had a Duty Officer that monitored what was going on with all of the flights. In fact, they had actually assigned me to that. After finding out that I was being transferred he said, “What do you want to do? I was hoping to build you up to be a Launch Officer and you could run a Squadron.” I said, “Thank you General but I am being reassigned but they don’t want me until January. If you give me another crew, I will get them checked out. Possibly be on lead status before. We had non-ready crews, ready crews, lead crews and select crews. Select crews were spot promotions and things like that. Some of us

were on the Standardization Board which would do instrument checks, operational checks and other various checks.

I picked up a new crew as they had given my crew to somebody else. Actually, my Co-pilot went to pilot RB-66s (light Jet bomber). I had a perfect Navigator. He had been a full Colonel who had been at Wright-Patterson and he had wanted to get back on flying status. I told him to do that he would have to go back to Lieutenant Colonel. He told me he would do that and he ended up on my crew. I was proud of him. He was an expert. Well, I picked up this new crew and every time one of the things that we had to check them out on was power assisted take-off. In this procedure, you activated 18 or 20 rockets from the cockpit which really gave you a really big push if you really wanted to get off the ground quickly. Every time I was scheduled for one of those, by the time I got to the end of the runway, to take-off with a student, the General would call up and come out and get into the backseat and he wanted to be there during the take-off and we would go up to a little island in Lake Erie and return to base and make a landing and the General would get out.

I did get the crew in pretty good shape. I got them ready and we wound up being runner-up Crew of the Quarter during the first quarter and during the second quarter, we wound up being Crew of the Quarter.

One day I got a phone call from Los Angeles and they said there has been an opening in the Minuteman Program and wanted to know if I would accept a transfer to Los Angeles where I would be working as an engineer on mobile Minuteman Program, in the office. I said, "Ok." They said that I

would be reporting in January. When I got to Vandenberg Air Force Base, I would have been launching Minuteman missiles.

Since my crew was Crew of the Quarter, we could fly anywhere we wanted to on a three-day pass. We would fly a mission there and a mission back which was ideal. My Navigator had some relatives who lived in California. One of them in Hollywood. While we were there, I went into the Los Angeles Personnel Office and I said, "I'm to be assigned out here." The fellow said, "Ok. I have your order right here. You are going to be in a ballistic missiles position." I said, "Ok.". He said I will take you to meet your new boss." He took me in and introduced me to a Lieutenant Colonel. I sat down and he started mumbling and I couldn't understand him. I got closer and closer to him and was practically sitting in his lap and I still couldn't understand a word he was saying. I excused myself and left here and got back to the Personnel Officer and I said, "I have a problem." He said, "What is it?" So, I told him that I couldn't understand the Colonel who was going to be my boss. He burst out laughing and said, "I thought I was the only one that had that problem. You report into me, when you report in January and I will take care of you." I said, "Ok." I went back to the base and in January.

Let me back up a minute.

While I was on alert one day, I got a call that said that my wife was in the hospital and she was having a baby. On the 5th of May 1960, John Howard Sandini was born. He was my first child.

In January of 1961 I was assigned to the Ballistic Missiles Division. When I reported in to the Personnel Officer, he said, "Do you really want to be in the Minuteman Program?" I said, "Why are you raising that question?" He said, "Because they are moving to San Bernadino in July." I said, "I just bought a house here. I don't want to go to San Bernadino." He said, "Ok, we will transfer you from Ballistic Missiles Division to Air Force Systems Command and you will be the head of Space Systems in the Systems Program Office. I said, "Great!" So, on February 1, 1961 I was assigned to the Space Systems Division and I wound up in the Midas Missiles Program plus another program which was pretty hush hush at that time. It is still is but it is no longer a Midas Program but another program. I was an engineer and I worked with a civilian contracting officer and he had another civilian assistant. I was an engineer assigned to help them. My main job was to work on work abatements with the contractors. We worked mostly with Lockheed space program. I assisted on work on an Atlas booster. My flying time consisted of B-47s and I usually flew a maximum of eight hours a month. We had some interesting missions we got out of that. Lots of times we just flew personnel back and forth to various bases. For a while the Discover Program worked with the satellite that actually dropped part of the payload that they would pick-up over the ocean. They used C-119s (Military transport aircraft) that had framework on the front that would catch the payload. This did better than dropping them into the ocean and then have somebody try to find it. Now they had planes at Edwards Air Force Base that would pick up these dummy payloads, go up to 10,000 feet and then throw them out of the C-47s and a parachute would open and the

C-119 would fly by and try to pick it up. They trained this way. I flew several missions involving these payloads. To get our eight hours, one of our favorite ways was to fly to El Paso, Texas, go across the border in a taxi cab or rent a car and drive to the border. We would walk across and enjoy ourselves for a day by having a good Mexican meal and then we would spend the night in El Paso. The next day we would fly back to the base. I applied for a job reconfiguration and one day my boss called and he said, "You know the only way you are going to do this is become a regular officer." Now, I was still in the National Guard on Active Duty. He said, "I will give you a Regular Commission if you want it." I said, "Well, my problem is if I take a regular commission, I am going to lose all of the service time I had between the first of August of 1944 and the 6th of June when I was twenty-one." He said, "That is true but do you want to stay in the Air Force?" I said, "yes." He said "Then you will go Regular." I said, "Ok." And I went Regular after May 1962. In July of 1962, I made Major. I still had to get my Master's Degree so took courses at El Camino Junior College. That was some of the best instructors and training that I have ever had. They were better than any instructors that I have had anywhere. I applied again for my Master's Degree and the answer came back, "You haven't been in (garbled) for four years. So, I got an assignment to go CBI and I was sent to Florida in December 1964 for Air Commando training. I told my boss about it and he said, "I can get you an assignment to fly B-53s (Jet powered medium bomber)." I said, "I don't want to fly B-53s. One of the reasons I was glad to get out of B-47s was because they were going to B-53s." And they did. He said, "Ok. But I can get you an assignment to fly

B-53s out of Kirkland Airforce Base or Eglin Field, Florida.” I said, “I’ll take the assignment for Air Commando.” In October and November, I got my training as an Air Commando. I finished my training and I was certified as a 1st Pilot Aircraft Commander on the C-47 and on the fifteenth of December I flew to Viet Nam from Sacramento, California.

When I arrived in the Philippines, the crew that was going to be assigned to me, was waiting for me. They had heard that I was coming and they wanted to fly me to Viet Nam because they wanted to get rid of the boss they had. I said, “No. I have to go the way they routed me.” I got my shots and my briefing for Viet Nam. Then I got flown to Viet Nam by one of my future crew members when I joined the 3rd 1st Air Commando Squadron at Bien Hoa. The 1st Air Commando Squadron was comprised of three sections. One of them was 3-1G and A-1A which were single used as a two-seater and they were flying old Navy airplanes to teach the Vietnamese how to fly. Another section was the U 2nd which was Phycological Warfare where they dropped leaflets and had speakers. The 3rd section was the one that I was the Commander of. That was the one that had seven C-47s. Three of them were outfitted with three mini-guns as gunships and they were called AC-47s. One of them was sent to Bangkok, Thailand, on temporary duty. The types of missions they flew were transporting personnel and equipment and on occasion they would air drop materials to special operation bases.

The most important missions, I guess, was AC-47s with the mini-guns that would fire 6000 rounds of 7.16mm shells per minute. They had

tremendous fire power and they called them "Puff the Magic Dragon" as when they fired tracers it looked like fire coming out of a dragon.

On the 3rd of January of 1965, I got word that my daughter Christian Ann Sandini was born. I did not get to see her until December.

Some of the missions we flew were night flare drops which were the most common missions we flew. We would be available to fly around in an area that they knew there was enemy activity and if the enemy was attacking one of our outposts, we would drop flares so that the enemy could be seen.

My first mission was on Christmas day of 1964 and I flew in a gunship, it was one of three missions we flew that day. On another occasion, we were supposed to get a briefing on what the combined US and Vietnamese Armies were going to do. We were waiting for a helicopter to bring in some fighter pilots who were Squadron Commanders and Flight Commanders.

The aircraft was full of these guys. Apparently, the helicopter pilot decided that he was going to show these fighter pilots how to fly and he started maneuvering and the first thing you know, he ended up in the water. It was a horrible loss because I don't think they every recovered from losing all of those guys. Good, qualified and experienced pilots.

Sometimes we would not fly out of Bien Hau we would fly out various other bases. One time I was flying out of Ken Kue in a gunship and the Squadron Commander said, "Tomorrow is graduation day for a VC (Viet Cong) Non-commissioned Officers training camp. Would you like to attend it in the morning? If so, I will mark the target for you." We hit the target about the time they were graduating and created a lot of casualties. Another time I had just taken off and I got a call that an ARVN (Army of Republic of Viet

Nam Battalion) was driving on a main highway and they were bottled up by the VC who had taken out the first vehicle and the last vehicle. The VC was pouring the fire on the ARVN. There were two of us AC-47s in the area so the other one attacked one hill and I made several runs on the other hill until I ran out of ammunition. I went back to the base and this Staff Sergeant approached me and asked me if I was involved in assisting that ARVN Battalion. I said, "Yes." He said, "I was captured before that and they had me as a Prisoner of War along with several other G.I.s and they made us do anything that they wanted us to do. When you attacked, you killed over 100 VC in your passes and I was able to escape. I do thank you. You saved my life."

Another interesting mission that we had was: we would take a General up, he would be the Air Controller for B-52s (Jet bomber) and when those B-52s would drop their bombs, they would drop them in a string of fifty. They were very effective. There was usually a formation of three of them and they destroyed a lot of territory. Doing that was very interesting. We were also doing some air lifting of film back to the Philippines where they would be developed for use in the war plans. One day a Colonel, who was coordinating the program, said to me, "I hear you had a daughter born in January and you would like to see her." I said, "Yeah, I would." He said, "If you can get a leave, I will get you transportation back to the states and then back here." I said, "That's un-heard of Colonel." He said, "We know that when you are done here you are going back to SAC (Strategic Air Command) and we like to care of our own." I said, "Ok." I told my boss that I could get transportation to the states and he said, "Ok, if we can get

it approved by high headquarters.” I flew back to the states and saw my daughter.

We had the three airplanes with the guns in them and as time went by the gun barrels were burned out, we tried to get replacements and we couldn't, consequently we were down to one airplane. We got to a point that we had every thing that we needed except the gun barrels. They told us they couldn't replace them because we are having some squadrons come over here. In about September, two squadrons came and both of them had full Colonels as their Squadron Commanders while ours was a Lieutenant Colonel. Our Group Commander was a full Colonel. The two squadrons started flying immediately after they got there. In three days' time, they lost three airplanes. The only time that ever happened to any of my planes was one airplane going into (garbled) was hit by somebody's 22 rifle. That was the only thing that ever happened to any of my airplanes. None of my crews ever got hurt.

We would fly people on TDY (Temporary Duty) and R&R (Relax and Rehabilitation) and one of the places we flew was Bangkok, because I had a crew there full time. That way we could change crews and lots of times we would change airplanes. Another place we would go would be Hong Cong. I departed Vietnam on December 15 and had flown 252 missions and I had 639 Combat Hours in Vietnam. I got a DFC (Distinguished Flying Cross) for one of my missions that I didn't tell you about. I got eleven more Air Medals.

On the way to debriefing at Tan Son Nhut they said, “Why don't you come over here and we will give you a good assignment.” I said, “Goodbye.”

They didn't have anybody with my experience there and they had three squadrons of gun birds over there and they needed someone who knew something about it and I had done TDY there once in a while. If assigned, I would be their liaison. I told them, "No thanks. I think I will continue with my next assignment." Then I went to the Pentagon to be debriefed and it was the same thing. They said, "We don't have anybody that has your experience." I said, "Well, I have been through a lot and survived and I don't want to do it again." They said, "Well, how about going back to being an instructor?" I said, "No." So, I took an assignment in Oklahoma. To make it real brief, I flew C-47s, DC-54s, B-29s flight checking their Navigational aids. I went to a special operations school, Counter Insurgency training in 1968. I did a lot of missions at Nelis Air Force Base to check the navigational facilities at Area-51 which was a Top-secret location. I flew a mission there, refueled and came back to Nelis.

The third month, after I was assigned to the COM(Communications) Group, I was assigned to 1867th Facility Check Squadron. My job was to check the navigational aids of three mobile COM Groups in the United States. One of them was in (garbled), one of them was in Altus and one of them was at Warren Robbins. In addition, we had two National Guard Squadrons and one was in Minneapolis and one of them was at Warren Robbins. The idea of a Mobile COM Group was that if we had any kind of situation where we had to fly airplanes quickly and there were no regular facilities available that they would try to find a fair base that was abandoned and had concrete, they would use that. They would have a bare base and they would put in a GCA (Ground Control Approach) a mobile VOR (Omni

Directional Range Radio) and other communications that were necessary. A Tower, a mobile tower. We would check these. Why I was in that squadron we were also equipped to come out with a new VIRS, Instrument Landing System, that could be put on the end of a runway and work right away. This involved different airplanes than what we were flying. I idea was that we would fly a plane like a C-130 (Military Transport Aircraft) and pick up the gear and fly it to where it was needed. Headquarters agreed with me but they offered me old old old C-130s and I turned down the offer. We worked with what we had.

I made Lieutenant Colonel in May of 1967 and one day I got a call that told me that they were going to send me to the Philippines to serve in the squadron for a year and then be Squadron Commander for a year. Then I would come back to the States and be promoted to Colonel. I had been to the Philippines enough times that I knew what it was and there was no way that I was going to have my three children in the Philippines.

I retired from the Airforce in December 1970 and got a job with an employment service.

(Interview ends at this point)