

Horace Thomas Edwards Oral History Interview

MIKE ZAMBRANO: This is Mike Zambrano, and today is February 16, 2015. Today I'm speaking to Mr. Horace Thomas Edwards at Lakeline Oaks in Cedar Park, Texas. This interview is in support of Nimitz Education and Research Center, Archives of the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, and the preservation of historical information related to this site. Good morning. Can you tell me where and when you were born?

HORACE THOMAS EDWARDS: I was born in Slaton, Texas, on June the 12th, 1923.

MZ: What were the names of your parents?

HTE: Ray Napoleon Edwards and Mary Sue Edwards.

MZ: And what did your father do for a living?

HTE: Farm and cotton gin.

MZ: And I assume your mother was a homemaker?

HTE: Yes.

MZ: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

HTE: I have a sister that was accidentally shot before I was born.

MZ: Oh. And that was it?

HTE: So I was raised alone.

MZ: I'm sorry. Did you stay in that town the entire time that you were growing up?

HTE: We lived in Clovis, New Mexico, until about 1935. Moved to Muleshoe, Texas, and I stayed there until about 1975, moving into Lubbock.

MZ: All the way until '75?

HTE: Yes.

MZ: You graduated from high school when you were in Clovis?

HTE: I graduated from high school in Muleshoe.

MZ: Oh, Muleshoe? OK, yes. So, you grew up during the Great Depression. Can you tell me how that affected you and your family?

HTE: Well, we lived on the farm north of Clovis, raising our own food. I don't remember that I was ever hungry. We always had plenty to eat, living on the farm. Transportation was not the best.

MZ: Did your father have a car or a wagon? What did he have for transportation?

HTE: Well, we first had a Model A Ford, and then later a truck, I think. Then later a car. (laughs)

MZ: Did your mother can a lot of the things that were on the farm?

HTE: Yes.

MZ: Do you happen to remember what you were doing, where you might have been, when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

HTE: Yes, I was in the mess hall at John Tarleton Junior College. The radio was on and I heard the announcement over the radio in the mess hall.

MZ: Was there some kind of general reaction? Were people angry? Where they anxious?

HTE: Well, it was rather late for the meal time, and I think I was probably in there eating alone. I was with friends later on...Sure, we discussed it, but I don't remember our reactions.

MZ: Now, you're 18 in 1941, so you don't go into the service immediately, or do you?

HTE: I entered the service in January of 1943.

MZ: What did you do in the meantime, in that one year after Pearl Harbor and before entering the service?

HTE: Well, my mother was ill and I left college to help take care of her. So I worked with my father in the cotton gin until I went into the service.

MZ: And what prompted you to go into the service at that time? Did your mother recuperate?

HTE: No, my mother died. Well, I went in a short time before I was drafted. They told me if I volunteer I'd have a choice of service, but that didn't materialize.

MZ: What service did you go into?

HTE: I went into the Army. Then I was assigned to the Army Air Corps. I had asked to be in the artillery, but they said they needed me in the Air Corps.

MZ: And what month was that, in 1943, do you recall?

HTE: Yes. See, I went into the service at Fort [Sail?], Arkansas, and then I went to Sheppard Field in February.

MZ: So, February of 1943.

HTE: Yes.

MZ: So, Fort Sail, Arkansas. How did you get there from Texas?

HTE: By bus.

MZ: Bus?

HTE: Yes.

MZ: And when you got there, I assume that they go through the procedure of getting your clothes and shots, and things like that?

HTE: Right. I don't remember how long we were there, but just less than a month.

MZ: And where did you take your basic training?

HTE: At Sheppard Field.

MZ: So, when you get to Sheppard Field, what are your thoughts? Did you ever have any thoughts about flying before?

HTE: Well, I didn't like the idea of flying, no.

MZ: No? (laughter) Why?

HTE: I don't know.

MZ: So, what did they have you do at Sheppard Field?

HTE: That was our basic training. I guess we were there till April. Just calisthenics and walking and hiking and running and getting in shape, I guess.

MZ: Did you have any kind of weapons training?

HTE: Very little.

MZ: Did you know what you were going to be assigned to?

HTE: Well, I just knew it was going to be a combat crew; that's what they said.

MZ: OK. What else do you remember about basic training?

HTE: That it was hard. (laughter)

MZ: What were your living conditions like during basic training?

HTE: Oh, we were in a barracks; just typical Army life.

MZ: What did you think of the food?

HTE: Different. (laughter)

MZ: Did you like it? Not like it? It was OK?

HTE: It was not what I was used to, but it was OK, I guess.

MZ: So, when you finish up your basic training at Sheppard Field, do you stay there or do you move on?

HTE: To Harlingen Army Air Base.

MZ: Now where is that?

HTE: Harlingen, Texas.

MZ: Well, so you get closer to home, really.

HTE: No, it was farther away; that's the tip of Texas.

MZ: Well, where was Sheppard Field?

HTE: Wichita Falls.

MZ: Oh. Wichita Falls...?

HTE: Texas.

MZ: So, what happens when you get to Arlington?

HTE: Harlingen. H-A-R.

MZ: Oh, I'm sorry; Harlingen.

HTE: That's where we took our gunnery training. We would shoot skeet and trap and fly and shoot 50-calibre bullets at a target thrown by a plane.

MZ: Moving targets, I bet.

HTE: Yes.

MZ: I think I've seen a film of that. Was there any time when you would be in the back of a truck, and you'd be firing at something?

HTE: Yes, they did that also.

MZ: And how did you think you fared at that?

HTE: I did good. I shot guns all my life, so I was having a good time. (laughter)

MZ: Well, I can see; I mean, you're very familiar with them. Were what you were using different from what you had used before? Was it easy for you?

HTE: Well, we used a shotgun in skeet; I think 25 would be tops. I was usually shooting 23, 24. Trap, you used a shotgun, but that was a lot harder; probably 15, 16 out of 25. And then we had deals, like on this wall over here, plane would be flying around down like this and you'd be shooting at it with a BB gun. And then we would get in the back of the truck and go on a track, and every once in a while you'd see a skeet fly out. And that was basically our training.

MZ: Sounds like it was a lot of eye-hand-object coordination.

HTE: Yes.

MZ: What other type of training did you get into there?

HTE: That was it; just gunnery training, there at Harlingen.

MZ: So, at this point, you feel that you're going to be on a bomber or something.

HTE: Right, yeah.

MZ: OK. When your training comes to an end, what --

HTE: Then we went to Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

MZ: And what do you do there?

HTE: Radio. Study to be a radio operator. So, I was prepared to be a gunner, radio operator gunner.

MZ: How long were you there?

HTE: That's a long story. I was there 25 weeks. And I had made an application for cadets, and at the end of that 25 weeks I went down to [Buckley?] Field in Colorado. And I did not pass the exam because of eyesight. I was sent back to Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and went through that school again. So I went through radio school twice.

MZ: Wow. You said Buckley Field?

HTE: Buckley Field in Colorado; yes.

MZ: So you go through the school a second time. What did they teach you in radio school? Could you elaborate a little bit about that?

HTE: Well, mainly the things that we studied was the Morse code, and deciphering the codes and so forth.

MZ: Were you pretty good?

HTE: Well, yeah. I did OK. I could probably go about 25 words a minute. Some of them could use a typewriter by fingers, and would not coordinator for a typewriter, even though I did type well. I could type 60 words a minute, but I could not take the Morse code on the typewriter. The two didn't work together.

MZ: Yeah, you have to type a lot more for one letter, as opposed to the typewriter, you know, just one. So, when you finish up with radio school, where do you go there?

HTE: I go to Holyoke, Massachusetts.

MZ: Holyoke, Massachusetts.

HTE: That's where we were trained to be a radio operator gunner on a B-24.

MZ: Holyoke is in that airfield, also?

HTE: Yes.

MZ: That's a lot of traveling, to get to that point.

HTE: This'd be beside the point; you probably don't even want to record it. But while I was there, the Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus was in an adjoining town, in Hartford, Connecticut. And a buddy that I met there, we decided to hike down to Hartford to see the circus. And on the way down, we stopped at the USO and met a couple of girls. And they said, "Why don't you just stay, and we'll go to the movie tonight. The circus'll be here tomorrow." So that sounded good to us. That

afternoon, the circus caught on fire; 400 people were killed.

MZ: Wow. So if you'd have been there...

HTE: Might not have been here.

MZ: Wow, that's amazing.

HTE: Yeah. But then, I was permanently grounded there.

MZ: Why?

HTE: I'm not sure. I know that, when I was applying for cadet, it was my eyesight. And that's probably the reason that I was grounded permanently.

MZ: Well, that's odd. I figured they would have recognized that, not put you through so many places just to tell you you couldn't fly. So then what happens?

HTE: Well after that, I was sent to Godman Field, Kentucky. And with my experience with radio gunnery school, I was radio instructor on the 477th Bomb Group, which was an all-black bomb group. Was part of their -- what do they call it -- Tuskegee?

MZ: Tuskegee?

HTE: Yeah.

MZ: What was that like?

HTE: Well, it was kind of strange for a corporal to be instructing a captain how to handle a radio. (laughter)

MZ: And you had to instruct each and every one of them how to do it?

HTE: Yes.

MZ: I guess, just in case some one or other was killed...

HTE: Right.

MZ: OK. And how long did -- was it classes or groups that would go through?

HTE: It was just one. They just did 477th Bomb Group, which was B-25 -- they were flying B-25 bombers. And that was just that one group that was there. They never -- I know they never did go overseas. So, I was there for -- I don't remember exactly how long, but a good while. And then, at the end of the war, towards the end, they was training in GCA, which was Ground Control Approach.

MZ: You mentioned that on the phone, GCA. That was, I guess, relatively new?

HTE: New, period. Yes. And I was sent to Trenton, New Jersey, where we was going to be trained. We were there for several weeks. And I noticed -- you mentioned Roosevelt - - I was in Trenton, New Jersey, when he died. And there was a walkway over the railroad track in Trenton, New Jersey, so we all gathered and watched his body on the train some through Trenton, New Jersey.

MZ: Really?

HTE: Yeah.

MZ: Wow.

HTE: There was two trains; we didn't know which one he was on. That was on purpose, I guess. So we watched both of them go by.

MZ: And what was the general sentiment?

HTE: Well, our president had died. Sorrow, I guess you would say. But he'd conducted the war thus far, and had to come to this end. So we, at Trenton, we were there for a good while, no equipment to train on, and we were sent to South Carolina. Columbia Army Air Base.

MZ: And you said there was no equipment to train on in Trenton?

HTE: Right.

MZ: So what did you do; you just waited?

HTE: Just loafed. (laughter)

MZ: When you get to Columbia, what unit are you with?

HTE: Well, it just a group that's doing the training to operate a GCA, Ground Control Approach.

MZ: OK, so you were moving as a group at this point.

HTE: Yes.

MZ: And how many are there in the group?

HTE: In each unit there was -- one, two -- four people that would be training as a group, but there were more than one group. Several people training.

MZ: And how did all that work; GCA?

HTE: Well, my job was to pick out the plane that we were going to land. And I would bring it around through the downwind leg, then another person would take over from the downwind leg, almost to the airport. And then two people

would take over, and they could know the elevation of the plane and guide it down to the runway.

MZ: And what are the advantages of using this?

HTE: Well, you could land an airplane in complete blackout.

MZ: Was it always just one at a time, or did that depend on how many ground units you had?

HTE: Well, it was only one unit per airport.

MZ: OK. So, it was just one at a time that you could land?

HTE: Yes.

MZ: So at this phase you were just training with it, you said?

HTE: Yes.

MZ: And was there anything else to it? Because I've seen some pictures of trucks with some kind of radar device on top...

HTE: Yes. That was it.

MZ: Would the unit sit in the truck?

HTE: Yes.

MZ: Then I guess it was mobile?

HTE: Right. Well, no. Well, it was mobile, but after it was located, it wouldn't be moved again. Unless they maybe moved to a different runway or something.

MZ: OK. And about how many planes did your unit land?

HTE: Well, after our training, we were told to go home on furlough. And my group was said, "When you go home on furlough, prepare to go overseas." And the war was

already over. And said, "Your group is going to England."

So when I got back, instead of going to England, I went to Wright-Patterson. And we never received a unit there, so I was just there until I was discharged.

MZ: And when you say you never received a unit there, a unit of G...

HTE: GCA unit. That was right at the -- well, the war was over at the time. In fact, the war ended while we were in training at Columbia.

MZ: I guess you were there when you heard about the atomic bomb being dropped, then.

HTE: Yes.

MZ: Do you remember anything about that day?

HTE: No, but I do remember the war being over in Japan. I was in the movie theater; I came out and the cars were honking, and everything was going on. I asked somebody on the sidewalk what was taking place. He said, "The war is over." (laughter)

MZ: Wow. I heard a lot of people were doing just what you said; honking horns, happy...probably laughing and yelling.

HTE: Yeah.

MZ: Were they all in the street? Do you recall anything else?

HTE: Yeah, the streets were pretty well crowded.

MZ: Wow. That's certainly got to be one of those days when, worldwide, people are happy. You don't have too many of those.

HTE: That's right.

MZ: Let me go back a little bit to when you were at Godman and you were the radio instructor for this all-black bomber group. You said it was only for the 477th Bomber Group?

HTE: Yes.

MZ: And about how many were there in the bomber group, do you think? How many groups, I guess?

HTE: I don't remember, but it was more than one plane. I'm not sure how many was actually training. I know that, on the B-25, I think there was two, three...only about five or six, somewhere in that neighborhood. And I know that there was four or five groups there like that.

MZ: I'm assuming that there must have been other instructors there, right?

HTE: Yes.

MZ: What else were they being instructed in at this point?

HTE: Well, they had I guess what you'd kind of call a maintenance person. And then there would be the pilot and the co-pilot. And there was a rear gunner. And then the radio operator would be a side gunner. I don't remember if there was more than that or not.

MZ: So, these were just the various trainings that they offer there?

HTE: Yes.

MZ: Did they already -- well, no. I'm sure they already had some flight experience, these crews?

HTE: Yes. Well, see I was radio operator, and then they'd have a pilot there, training; maintenance person training. So there was several people training. In fact, on Godman Field, I think there was less than 50 white personnel; all the rest of them were black.

MZ: Really? So there were more black personnel than white?

HTE: Yeah. Because we were just the trainers, and they were the trainees.

MZ: Did that feel a little bit odd?

HTE: Well, yes it did. But it was a part of Fort Knox, so that was a pretty big place.

MZ: And how were they, as far as going through training? Were they pretty receptive to it?

HTE: Well, the enlisted people were, but the people that were pilots, they weren't too happy to be listening to a corporal talk about radio.

MZ: Well, it was your job, so...

HTE: That's right.

MZ: And how long were you there?

HTE: Oh, probably about six months.

MZ: You move around a lot. Did that bother you, that you were moved around so much?

HTE: I was on about 13 different bases.

MZ: Yeah, I think ...Let's see...Wait --

HTE: There's some I didn't even tell you about. (laughter)

MZ: Like which ones?

HTE: Well, what would you think about having to be stationed at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina?

MZ: Myrtle Beach, South Carolina...Was there an air base there at the time?

HTE: That's where we were doing some of our training.

MZ: Really? What kind of training?

HTE: For the GCA.

MZ: Oh. So, it wasn't only at...

HTE: Columbia.

MZ: At Columbia?

HTE: No, we went out to three different places for various types of training.

MZ: Was there a reason for that?

HTE: I guess they had a reason for it. I didn't understand it, but they probably had one.

MZ: Wow, you really move around a lot, here. And you were just -- because when I asked you on the phone what unit you were with, and you said, "Well, I moved around a lot." I guess you were probably attached to a lot of different units.

HTE: Yes.

MZ: So there's not one that ever really identified with, then.

HTE: Not really.

MZ: Wow. And this is all within, what -- you served, I think you said, from February '43 to '46?

HTE: Yes. A little over three years.

MZ: Wow. So you're averaging about four different locations a year. Did it bother you that you were moving around so much? How much did you want to go fly in combat? Because it seems like that's what you expected.

HTE: Well, I wasn't disappointed when I was grounded, I have to say.

MZ: OK, well that's fair to say. Tough question to ask, but, along the way here, do you make any close friends?

HTE: Not really, because you wasn't with anyone for a long period of time. I guess, at Kentucky I met one fellow that we corresponded for a year or so after service, and that was about it.

MZ: When you do get discharged from the service, where is that?

HTE: Sheppar-- no, not Sheppard, but Randolph Field.

MZ: Oh, so do you go there from Wright-Patterson, to Randolph Field?

HTE: In between Wright-Patterson and Randolph, I went to Scott Airfield. That's where we went to be separated, I guess you would say.

MZ: To go through the process of separation?

HTE: Right.

MZ: And then you went to Randolph Field to be --

HTE: Discharged.

MZ: Is Scott here in Texas?

HTE: No, that would be in Illinois.

MZ: And Randolph Field?

HTE: It's in San Antonio.

MZ: OK. I know they have a lot of airbases there.

HTE: I was looking through some stuff that I had that really surprised me. I think this is the one that...

MZ: "List of posted camps in the 8th service command," and these are all the ones you went through?

HTE: No, I didn't go through those.

MZ: Ah, OK.

HTE: That's just how many there was in the state of Texas in comparison to the rest of them.

MZ: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 different camps or forts in Texas. It's a lot more than any of the other states.

HTE: More than all the others combined.

MZ: Wow. Do you remember what your pay was like? I mean (inaudible) back then?

HTE: Well, that was 60-something dollars.

MZ: And did you get any...You never received hazard pay, did you?

HTE: I did receive flight pay, when I was flying.

MZ: How much more was that?

HTE: Fifty percent more.

MZ: Wow. That's pretty good. Let's see...OK, we're looking over some papers at Mr. Edwards' house here. I'm looking at his...

HTE: My discharge.

MZ: Yeah. "Double D-A-G-(inaudible) dash five." So Army Air Force...So you left service as a corporal?

HTE: Yes.

MZ: "Separation Fort Sam Houston. Military occupational specialty: Aircraft Approach Controller." OK. Oh, I guess you were a marksman on -- was it? -- carbine, December 1943. I guess it must have been through...

HTE: That was gunnery school.

MZ: OK, all right. "American Theater Campaign Ribbon. Good Conduct Ribbon. Victory Ribbon. One service stripe." Let's see, "Ground Control Approach. Arial Gunnery. Radio." So I guess you could say you have three different military occupation skills. Most folks just have just one. (laughter) "Lapel button issued." I think they call these DD214s now. Oh, OK. "Military Education." OK, this is Separation Qualification Record. OK. "Aircraft

Approach Controller, served with 103rd Army [Airbase?] Communication System Squadron, Patterson Field, Ohio. Operating Position: Planned indicator scope used for blind landing of aircraft, located aircraft, directed into traffic pattern, directed around traffic pattern, and gave instructions for landing." Now just looking at the back of this: "Army Air Force Gunnery School. Army Air Force Technical School for radio, and Ground Control Approach School in Columbia." Oh, it says you had half a year of college here? Were you in college for just a little bit before going into the service?

HTE: Well, I was in college when the war started.

MZ: Oh, that's right; I'm sorry. You said John Tarleton. So it says you majored in Business Administration.

HTE: Yes.

MZ: Did you go back after the war?

HTE: No.

MZ: OK. So you didn't take advantage of the GI Bill at all?

HTE: No, I didn't.

MZ: "Was employed at Edwards Gin." Does that really mean cotton gin?

HTE: Yes.

MZ: Wow. "103rd Communication System Squadron." So what did you do when you got out of the service?

HTE: Well, my mother died without a will, so I inherited half of the cotton gin. So I ran that for a while, and then I went into sales, traveled internationally.

MZ: So you finally get to go overseas, after all. (laughter)

HTE: Yes, but not to the best part.

MZ: Oh. Where did you go?

HTE: The Middle East.

MZ: Ah, OK. What were you selling?

HTE: Water well equipment.

MZ: Oh, I guess that makes sense. (laughs)

HTE: I traveled overseas from '75 to '85 -- about 10 years.

MZ: And all the Middle East, or where else?

HTE: Well, I had customers in Sweden. Had some in France and Greece, Saudi Arabia, Libya.

MZ: Did you like traveling?

HTE: No, I liked being at home. (laughs)

MZ: You said you did that from '75 to '85?

HTE: Yes.

MZ: What did you do before that?

HTE: Well, I was in sales, but that's...

MZ: You never thought of going in the Army Reserves, or anything like that?

HTE: Well, I did -- when I got my discharge, I signed up in the Reserves for three years. Then got out just a few months before the Korean War.

MZ: Did you get recalled in for that?

HTE: No.

MZ: OK. So three years of reserves duty. Where did you do that?

HTE: We didn't do anything.

MZ: Oh, well, yeah. But they generally assign you to a place to go. Did you do the one weekend a month?

HTE: No; nothing.

MZ: Really? Were you, I guess, Inactive Reserve?

HTE: I guess you would say "inactive" because I didn't do anything.

MZ: (laughter) OK. Let's see -- you know, at Cedar Park, they had that event for veterans, last December. Did you go to that?

HTE: Yes.

MZ: Can you tell me a little bit about that?

HTE: Well, I don't know how to explain that. But I think it was a great tribute for the city to honor the World War II veterans. And they said that they was presenting us a key to the city, which we received. And they had the part of the Army Band from Fort Hood there, playing, and it was a good ceremony. I was glad that I was able to attend.

MZ: So you say you got a key to the city, huh?

HTE: Yes.

MZ: That's great. It was nice that they, I thought, that they did that. It was in the paper, and that's how I found out

about all of the veterans in Cedar Park. Have you ever gone on one of the honor flights?

HTE: Yes.

MZ: Ah, OK. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

HTE: OK. Takes a long time to tell you about that. (laughter)

I went last year, in May. As we were leaving the airport here, they had the water salute to the planes as we were departing, which I thought was outstanding. When we landed in Washington, DC, we were saluted again with the water cannons. And getting off of the plane, I could not imagine the number of people that were there to greet us in the airport in Washington, DC. There was a lot of Girl Scouts there, wanting signatures, so I've got a lot of signatures in Washington, DC, somewhere. And the first -- my guardian turned out to be a Marine that was stationed in the Pentagon. And as we were having our evening meal, they said, "Does anyone here want to go to the Marine barracks?" That didn't mean anything to me, the Marine barracks. I thought, "What would I want to go to the Marine barracks?" Well, the Marine came around to me and said, "We're going." (laughter) And it was outstanding. It was really -- probably at least an hour parade. Had the band and a bugle corps and the silent presentation of arms. So that was our first night. Then the next day, we were up early, and everywhere that we went -- there were three busloads of us -- and we had a

police escort. And one day the lady that was up front, pointing out different points that we were passing, said, "Oh, my goodness! We're making a left turn. It says, 'No left turn available.'" (laughter) But, I mean, we went everywhere with the police escort and never stopped at a stoplight or anything. We were busy the whole time. Then we went to the Unknown Soldier's grave for the presentation, and it was a crowd we couldn't get in, so we did something else and then came back to that. But we went to all of the memorials: World War II War Memorial, Vietnam, Korean, the Lincoln Memorial. It's just...You've probably been through all of that. And we did it all in wheelchairs -- we did not walk anywhere. One of the things that was amazing to me: we stopped at the Navy, and they have that fountain, there, at the Navy museum. And they said, "All this water that you see flowing through here comes from the Seven Seas." So all of that water is imported that's going through that fountain there at the Navy.

MZ: Really? Wow. That's interesting.

HTE: And then when we came back, on the plane coming back that night, they had what they called "mail call," which was pretty sad, to think that -- all the letters that we had. And then we were greeted at the airport with probably -- at least 200 people, when we landed here. It was really

something outstanding. I gave my guardian my camera, and I have about 70-some odd pictures that we made.

MZ: Sounds like a really wonderful trip.

HTE: Yes. Really outstanding.

MZ: I'm glad you had a good time. I'm glad you enjoyed it. I couldn't help but notice the booklet you have there.

HTE: I had some notes in there, but they're not very complete.

MZ: OK. Is there anything else I might have not asked you, or might have not covered? Anything that really stands out about your time in service?

HTE: Not that I can think of.

MZ: Well, that pretty much covers all the questions I had for you. Unless there's anything else you'd like to add, because I'm sure there's something I haven't asked. Anything else?

HTE: Well, there's probably a lot that I can't think of right now, but...

MZ: Well, OK. I'm still amazed at all the places that you've been. The only place you didn't go was out west.

(laughter)

HTE: No, I didn't. I guess Buckley Field would be as far west as I went, and that's Denver, Colorado. Maybe Harlingen might be a little further west.

MZ: You mentioned Colorado earlier...You wanted to be an officer at one point?

HTE: Well, I was volunteering as a cadet to train as a pilot or a bombardier, navigator, whatever. That's where I was grounded the first time, because of my eyesight. Then got grounded permanently later on.

MZ: Was that early on in the process -- the physical, where they discovered your eyesight?

HTE: When I went to Buckley, yes.

MZ: How did you feel about that?

HTE: I didn't know I had a problem. I had to talk to an eye doctor -- spent a lot of years in Lubbock, and talked to an eye doctor there and he says, "Well, that was something they dreamed up in the Army that really wasn't true."

MZ: Did he explain why?

HTE: He just said it was something else; he didn't call it that.

MZ: I imagine you were disappointed, especially having to go back to go through the same school you had just gone through.

HTE: Yeah.

MZ: Why did they make you go through it a second time?

HTE: I don't know.

MZ: Did you finish it the first time?

HTE: Well, I didn't get a diploma, but I went through...It was a 26-week school, and I went through 25 weeks.

MZ: That just doesn't seem right, to send you through it a second time. Especially since you already knew most of the course.

HTE: I just really goofed off the second time. There wasn't much that I could do. (laughter)

MZ: Ah, boy. Well, what else can I ask you here? All right, going back to Godman Airfield...just a few more questions about that. It's the 1940's; I'm assuming that there are separate black and white facilities.

HTE: Yes.

MZ: And what was your living situation on Godman? I mean -- well, I'll just leave that: what was your living situation?

HTE: Well, it was good. Since there was only about 40 or 50 enlisted men there, we all served KP, because there wasn't anybody else to do it. So we had to do that on top of our training.

MZ: And what kind of hours are we talking about for training of this bomb group?

HTE: Well, I was busy for a day, but not with the same group. Would be different groups.

MZ: They'd just be coming through?

HTE: Yes.

MZ: Was it generally eight to five?

HTE: I guess that's probably what you would say, but it probably wasn't that. It was probably more or less nine to four, or something.

MZ: OK. Was there ever any training involved at night?

HTE: No.

MZ: OK. I'm assuming you must have had weekends off. I mean, this is the military, but...

HTE: Yeah.

MZ: You know, when you're doing the GCA, I'm assuming there you probably did a lot of work at night, right?

HTE: No, we didn't do any training at night.

MZ: No?

HTE: No.

MZ: Because I would have figured that those would have been the type of conditions that GCA was set up for.

HTE: Well, we would be landing planes that would be assigned to us when we were training. They would never land; they would come in and then take off. Now, we trained some Navy pilots that they said were flying blind. Now, I don't know if that was true or not. But I know that the regular Air Force people that were flying were not flying blind. It was perfectly daylight. But they would still follow our instructions for landing.

MZ: What do you mean, "flying blind"?

HTE: I guess that they blackout their cockpit.

MZ: Hmm. Sounds a little dangerous.

HTE: Well, would be the same as landing in bad weather.

MZ: True. Was there every any accidents when you...?

HTE: No.

MZ: OK. Everything went pretty smooth?

HTE: Yes. The thing that, in my part, that was difficult was on the screen you would maybe find four or five planes on there, and you had to pick out the one that you were bringing in. So you would have them to make a right turn, left turn, or whatever, till you got them identified from the others. And then you would bring them around, get them started on their downwind leg.

MZ: So here you're looking at a scope the whole time?

HTE: Yes.

MZ: You know, I didn't ask, but how big is this trailer where you and the other men are situated?

HTE: Was not really too big. It was just a regular...I don't think it was a trailer; it was actually a truck. Might have been a trailer. But it was just four-wheel deal. Nothing big. Let's see, I was talking to a pilot here the other day, and he was not in World War II, but afterwards. And I said to him, "Did you ever hear of GCA?" And he says, "I sure did, because I have landed by GCA." (laughter) He said, "I was landing one time in Washington, DC and I could not see the runway, even after I landed; it was so bad." He said, "I wanted to go

congratulate those people, but they said, 'No, you can't do that.'"

MZ: Wow, so you come in right at the beginning of all that.

HTE: Yes. In fact, they wanted me to come back as a civilian, and I said, "No, I don't think I want to do that."

MZ: Why didn't you want to do it?

HTE: I don't know.

MZ: Well, I'll ask again: is there anything else you'd like to add, any interesting stories? Like the circus story was really interesting; that's kind of a twist of fate, there.

HTE: Yeah.

END OF AUDIO FILE