

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. Forest Hill

Date of Interview: July 7, 2015

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Interview in progress.

John Fargo: Today is July 7th, 2015. My name is John Fargo and I'm a volunteer at the National Museum of the Pacific War, Fredericksburg, Texas. Today I am interviewing Forest Hill concerning his experiences during World War II. This interview is taking place in Mr. Hill's home in Austin, Texas. This interview is in support of the Educational and Research Center for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Okay, Forest, with that out of the way...

Mr. Hill: Okay, thank you, John, for that...

John Fargo: ...let's start...

Mr. Hill: ...declination and...

John Fargo: ...and let me ask you a little bit about your early years. What date were you born?

Mr. Hill: I was...where...what state I born in Texas.

John Fargo: Date, date.

Mr. Hill: Oh, my dat...my birthdate is October 22nd, 1919.

John Fargo: 1919, and you were born in...Mills County, Texas?

Mr. Hill: In...central Texas, Mills County on the farm, I guess, near...near Goldthwaite, Texas; they...

John Fargo: Is that the largest town...Goldth...

Mr. Hill: Goldthwaite is the county seat and it's the largest town.

John Fargo: Okay.

Mr. Hill: And it's only about seventeen hundred even today (laughter).

John Fargo: Really?

Mr. Hill: Yeah.

John Fargo: Where'd you go to high school?

Mr. Hill: Uh, there.

John Fargo: At Goldthwaite?

Mr. Hill: Yes.

John Fargo: Uh huh.

Mr. Hill: Uh, early on, uh, living the farm for several years, I was in a one-teacher school.

John Fargo: Really?!

Mr. Hill: It became a two-teacher school at...some point. But then, thanks to the...New Deal shall we say, they...we began to have school buses (chuckles), and, so I did take...I...in high school I was in Goldthwaite High School.

John Fargo: Goldthwaite High School.

Mr. Hill: But rather...rather than...the one-teacher school.

John Fargo: What year did you graduate high school?

Mr. Hill: Uh, 1937...

John Fargo: 1937.

Mr. Hill: ...the year I came to the university... '37 Depression.

John Fargo: And you went on to the university.

Mr. Hill: Yes, here...

John Fargo: UT?

Mr. Hill: ...UT Austin, yes.

John Fargo: Yeah, did you graduate?

Mr. Hill: I have a bachelor's and a master's from UT. I majored in economics, and was...in...very rapidly I...I...I discovered I liked economics...the...the problem with the Depression, and the...the hardships that we had on the farm in the Depression; all of that...gave me a big interest in...economics. And I started taking loads of economics in the first year as a freshman, and by the time I was a junior, I was...grading papers. I was a student assistant for two different professors. And that actually gave me enough money for tuition, plus I think room and board. So, I was self-supporting.

John Fargo: Wow!

Mr. Hill: And the...the...in that period, '30... '37, 8 and 9, my dad had trouble sending me money for...when tuition was due.

John Fargo: Your dad was a farmer?

Mr. Hill: Yeah, yeah. We...we called ourselves farm poor, land poor. We weren't making any money in farming. The only cash that we were earning some years was...maybe a little bit cotton that we produced and a little bit for honey that my dad produced and would go out on the...on the road to sell some of it, and otherwise, we didn't use money. We...there was a produce merchant in town

where we could get flour and beans and things – staples, and we could take...possum skins (chuckles) in or eggs or...or milk or whatever, and it was all...kept on...on account and no money.

John Fargo: And no money changed hands, huh?

Mr. Hill: No money being...being used. There wasn't much money circulation...

John Fargo: Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Hill: ...in...in those kind of rural areas especially (chuckles).

John Fargo: So, did you graduate from UT before the war?

Mr. Hill: Uh, yes I graduated...my bachelors in 1941.

John Fargo: '41, okay.

Mr. Hill: But I was already taking...graduate courses in...in my senior year, maybe in the junior and senior years. So, in...in...in Pearl Harbor year, I was teaching part-time because some faculty members had left and I was plugged in as a graduate student to teach...sections of introductory...cour...of the introductory course in economics, and...which I could do. Uh, it's hard...it was hard work 'cause I was also taking graduate courses...

John Fargo: Uh hum.

Mr. Hill: ...at the same time. But...so, that's what I...my first teaching was the year of Pearl Harbor, believe it or not (chuckle).

John Fargo: Oh yeah.

Mr. Hill: Part-time, part-time, but...but real...real teaching.

John Fargo: Looking (unintelligible).

Mr. Hill: And then...I have a master's here which I had not finished before I was...the war, World War II, had...took me away...the draft.

John Fargo: How'd that...you got drafted?

Mr. Hill: Yeah.

John Fargo: Okay, what year was that?

Mr. Hill: It must have been, uh, '42.

John Fargo: '42?

Mr. Hill: Uh, could have been early '43, but I think, uh, somewhere along there. I...at...in January of...of '42, I decided that...I was going to be drafted and I took a job at the...at...with the Third Bomber Command headquartered in...in Louisiana, Bossier City, near Shreveport, Barksdale Field. And so, I had that civil service job with the military, but it was not enough...didn't make any difference to the draft board; I was drafted anyhow. And so, in late '42 or '43, I...I guess it's early '43, I was drafted, and (unintelligible).

John Fargo: Okay, you went to Biloxi?

Mr. Hill: Yes, I...I was sent initially...

John Fargo: (Unintelligible)

Mr. Hill: ...I was sent initially for just a day or two or three to Abilene as a...it's a processing center...

John Fargo: Yeah.

Mr. Hill: ...but then to Biloxi...for my basic training. And I don't know whether that was three months or just six weeks. Uh, it...it was unpleasant because it was hot and...dusty and I didn't know anybody there, (chuckles) and having to get used

to GI food and all...all the rest. And Biloxi at that time in those circumstances was not a very (chuckles) a very pleasant place (chuckles).

John Fargo: How was...how it...(cough) organized; you organized into companies and you went through the...?

Mr. Hill: Yes, I guess they were temporary companies. There...there were Sergeants, of course, in charge of...of different groups.

John Fargo: Uh huh.

Mr. Hill: And...of course, we had actual...we had drill; they had to teach us (chuckles) how to march; indoctrinate us for...simple things as to which foot goes forward when (chuckles), you know...

John Fargo: (Chuckles)

Mr. Hill: ...when you're...when they'd say, "March," and so on. And...and more importantly, they gave us a whole slew of tests for what kind of training...training school, and...and Air Corps work; I...I was in the Air...Army Air Forces, the Air Corps.

John Fargo: Right. How...how did you wind up in the Army Air Corps...when you were drafted?

Mr. Hill: Well...

John Fargo: Did you get a choice or did they just assign you?

Mr. Hill: No, that's what they sent me, but interestingly enough, while I was in civil service in Louisiana, uh, I was given a letter saying that if I was drafted, I was to...uh, there was a notification to go to certain military...authority, and

that...would presumably (chuckle) do a...a Warrant Officer...something of that sort...of any of the work that I was doing as a civilian.

John Fargo: Oh.

Mr. Hill: Actually, it was (unintelligible) statistical work, but that letter never did catch up with me (chuckle); I never did see (chuckle) that...that let...that...let...that letter anymore in the office. But I just was actually...put into the Air Corps because that is where the big push was. We were not anywhere near ready to invade Europe...as far...and not Japan, and...the...the...so, what we really needed was...airplanes; people to fly these bombers especially and the fighters to accompany them. And of course, we converted Detroit and...other such facilities to...to making only aircraft, you know?

John Fargo: Sure.

Mr. Hill: And so we...we...that's where...that's where the needs were. So, it was accidental that I got into the Air Corps. And then there I opted to be...go to a Link Trainer School.

John Fargo: Now Link Trainer is a simulator...

Mr. Hill: Yes...

John Fargo: ...to be used for (unintelligible).

Mr. Hill: ...Link was a man's name; it was a kind of a Arthur Goldberg (sp?)...simulation of the cockpit of an airplane, and the training involved (chuckles) most of the instrument panel...by the...with the hood over, so that the cadet or the officer...taking the instruction could see nothing but the instruments and learn to think in terms of...uh, fly by the instruments and to visualize...what a...a

hundred and eighty degree turn or two hundred and...fifty turn would be. It...it is, in...in terms of say the dial of a clock.

John Fargo: So, you...you had to be trained in that.

Mr. Hill: I had to be trained.

John Fargo: Where...where did you get that training?

Mr. Hill: I...I shipped out...I took...these tests at Biloxi and was shipped out to...a...a very complicated training program in Illinois on the planes...Rantoul, Illinois, not terribly far from Champaign Urbana, the University of Illinois. And this was more or less in the...in the winter, and there were all kinds of schools there; it was a huge school complex for...with all sorts of training in radio repair, radio instruction, uh sheet metal work; all these things they that they needed, the Air Corps needed, including Link Trainer...

John Fargo: Link Trainers.

Mr. Hill: ...in...instruction.

John Fargo: The fact that you were a college graduate at that point though, I'm surprised they didn't send you to OCS.

Mr. Hill: Well, uh...went ahead to apply and I...didn't...did not apply until...I'd...months after I was...had the Link Trainer instruction myself...

John Fargo: Uh huh.

Mr. Hill: ...I...I opted...in opting for the Link Trainer instruction work, uh, then I guess my educational background work was of some help into getting to...into that.

John Fargo: Into that, yeah, sure.

Mr. Hill: And...and so many of the training fields were in the sunbelt, especially in Texas, and so my first station was Greenville, Texas, an airfield there.

John Fargo: You mean after a...an instructor?

Mr. Hill: Yes, after I became an instructor; that was my full-time instructor job, the first one.

John Fargo: How long did it take you to...be proficient in that in order to become an instructor?

Mr. Hill: Well, I think the program was probably three months long.

John Fargo: Three months long.

Mr. Hill: And...actually, it was a very intensive kind of program; eight hours a day for...for three months; eight at night, too. The...these schools were operated on a twenty-hour basis.

John Fargo: Uh hum.

Mr. Hill: And...I went to school at 8p.m.

John Fargo: Really?!

Mr. Hill: And...and...

John Fargo: Night shift!

Mr. Hill: Yeah, it was called...the...the day was divided into three segments – A, B and F. (Chuckles), you know what the military (chuckles), so the F was at...the night.

John Fargo: Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Hill: So, 8p.m. to 4a.m. was our schooling.

John Fargo: Uh huh.

Mr. Hill: And...then we were marched home...we were marched back to our barracks, and...and had calisthenics at about 6a.m. on the...on the cold plains of (chuckles)...

John Fargo: Illinois.

Mr. Hill: ...of southern Illinois, and (chuckles) it...it was...it was pretty rough in...in the wintertime, and it...and it snowed a good deal, too, while we were...were there. But...I think there were three months of that.

John Fargo: (Unintelligible word)...calisthenics you were on your own?

Mr. Hill: Yeah. I just...uh, well, to sleep, yeah, with blinders on (chuckles).

John Fargo: Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Hill: (Chuckles), so we would...we would sleep from, oh, about 8a.m. till uh, early afternoon and had some free...some...little bit of free time there before we were...were marched off for the second half of schooling (laughter).

John Fargo: That's pretty...looked pretty complex schooling?

Mr. Hill: Oh yeah! This was...this was a rush. We...we needed to be...sending those bombers back over in...Germany.

John Fargo: Uh hum.

Mr. Hill: And there had to be bombardiers there to...navigators and pilots and co-pilots and all...all of that, so...uh, we were...this...this place was really geared up for a lot of activity.

John Fargo: Well, is a Link Trainer...specific to any one airplane?

Mr. Hill: No, no.

John Fargo: I mean, it just...

Mr. Hill: No, it was...uh, you could have...instrument flying...the...the instruments on the...panel of different planes would be somewhat different.

John Fargo: Ah.

Mr. Hill: But they would include all the basics, you know?

John Fargo: All the basics, I see.

Mr. Hill: Yeah. And...and...you...you had to learn to think in terms of instruments.

John Fargo: Yeah.

Mr. Hill: Quite different from...what they called dead reckoning or just flying visually, you know?

John Fargo: Right, yeah, uh huh.

Mr. Hill: So, that...and they had...we had to teach them how to fly...the radio beam, radio signals...

Mr. Hill: ...to stay on...on a path from one place to another, and to come in for a landing. And so, you...uh, there were signals to...to...when you were getting closer and closer to the aircr...uh, air...airfield, and when you would get certain signals that (chuckles) that you only fifty feet from the ground and so on. I...so, we had to simulate, the instructors did, the...the dot-dit-dit-dot...uh, radio signals to get...teach these people how to fly the beam as we called it...settle on a radio beam and to follow it into...to the airfield or across country or...or wherever. And...

John Fargo: So when...when you graduated from that program, you were sent from Illinois to an airfield in Texas?

Mr. Hill: Yes, in Greenville, Texas.

John Fargo: Greenville, Texas.

Mr. Hill: A cadet training facility.

John Fargo: (Unintelligible words)

Mr. Hill: But...very big, big school at that time...

John Fargo: So...

Mr. Hill: ...with a training field.

John Fargo: The Link Training was in addition to everything else that they were taught in terms of...flying?

Mr. Hill: Well, it was different from all these others...flying radio...like...

John Fargo: No, I meant...

Mr. Hill: ...radio repair and such.

John Fargo: No, I didn't mean that.

Mr. Hill: Right.

John Fargo: I mean, in terms of...a cadet would be trained in an airplane, okay?

Mr. Hill: Well, they...they were just basic trainers that...that...

John Fargo: Trainers?

Mr. Hill: ...that they were familiar with at that time, and those instruments were no more complicated than what was in the little...uh, Link Trainer device.

John Fargo: So, did you train these cadets on the Link prior to them getting into an airplane?

Mr. Hill: Yes, that was...this was ground training entirely.

John Fargo: Okay, I see.

Mr. Hill: I...I went up (cough) with a pilot a time or two just to see what it's like because it was felt that a...the...Link Trainer instructor should know (chuckles) what it feels like to be in the air...

John Fargo: Right, yeah, yeah.

Mr. Hill: (Chuckles), if you're instructing people who were in the air, you know?
So...but...

John Fargo: (Cough)

Mr. Hill: ...in this Link Trainer instructor program, we...we learned some navig...some...something about navigation; we...we learned something about...meteorology.

John Fargo: Uh hum.

Mr. Hill: Uh, just the basics, basics. Now, we didn't teach meteorology and that sort of thing, we just...taught...get...get them to be familiar with the different instruments. And we could give the instructions to...to them. They just look at their instruments to...make the one needle with turn...uh, of ninety degrees to the left and that sort of thing. And to...and to move from an elevation of...five thousand to ten thousand feet.

John Fargo: Ten thousand feet.

Mr. Hill: Oh, and something they...have to look at the...at the...see whether they were climbing...

John Fargo: Yeah.

Mr. Hill: ...too fast or too slow or you're going too far. And...all of that they had to think in terms of the instruments.

John Fargo: So, a typical cadet...how long would he be instructed by you before he went on to something else?

Mr. Hill: Well, actually, we had a whole bunch of instructors there and so I...did not have...just a group of my own cadets; it was whatever cadet came in and I was on duty.

John Fargo: I see.

Mr. Hill: And...and...and took him on.

John Fargo: And how long would you teach him?

Mr. Hill: Well, this might be a session of...two hours, something like that.

John Fargo: Two hours, did they have...

Mr. Hill: Maybe one hour. The...the cadets have pretty...pretty schedules of training themselves...

John Fargo: Sure.

Mr. Hill: in this...in these training program. And...they...they...and they were eager to learn; they were quite different from (chuckles) from the students I'd had for a few months (chuckles)...at...

John Fargo: Did you...

Mr. Hill: ...at UT (chuckles).

John Fargo: (Chuckle), did you ever have to wash somebody out...for (unintelligible)?

Mr. Hill: Oh, no, the...I...I, you know, I...I often had to spend some extra time with somebody...that sort of thing. We...we had...I had no capacity to wash anybody out, and I didn't give grades as such.

John Fargo: Okay.

Mr. Hill: But...uh, after they got...after they got through in the...cock...in the hooded cockpit, they would come and sit with me and we would go over...uh, what they had done and see what their understanding of it was.

John Fargo: I see.

Mr. Hill: And especially about the...the radio sig...using radio signals...

John Fargo: Uh huh.

Mr. Hill: ...to fly by. And we had...at our desk, the...the instructors, a...a device that traced an...an ink tracing on a...on an actual...uh, map...a map, military map...their...their course, and they could see whether or not they were staying on the beam, off of it...

John Fargo: Ah, uh huh.

Mr. Hill: ...whether they descended too rapidly or not rapidly enough as they approached the airfield, and that sort of thing. But then...as part of their training...in the air with a pilot training, supervisor, uh, they would...would do some of these take offs and landings.

John Fargo: Uh huh.

Mr. Hill: Or at some point in their career, they...they would get that training. It...it might be after...when they go...went on to other programs for specific aircraft...like a bomber or a certain...fighter plane, you know?

John Fargo: So, was this pretty satisfying work for you?

Mr. Hill: It was, it was, yeah.

John Fargo: Alright.

Mr. Hill: Yeah.

John Fargo: And you did that for how long?

Mr. Hill: (Throat clearing)

John Fargo: In Greenville?

Mr. Hill: Well, I was at Greenville, uh...I guess about a year, and it was in that time that I did...go before a local com...committee of officers for a recommendation to go to...to...a...an officer training school. And I opted for one that...was...pretty, pretty high level, and...and it was school that was closed down about just the time I...I...I tried to get in it.

John Fargo: Oh.

Mr. Hill: And...they...the...then it came back to that officer committee and they...they asked me whether I wanted to put in for something else. And by that time my wife was living with me and we...we finally had an apartment in town, and...I...I just said, "Well, let's...let's not bother with it." But I was unhappy at that point anyhow and told the...the officer in charge of the Link Trainer section of the airfield that I thought he was...not doing a good job.

John Fargo: (Laughter)

Mr. Hill: I did it very diplomatically.

John Fargo: They did (laughter).

Mr. Hill: But the next day I was on orders to be shipped out which was what I was after (laughter).

John Fargo: (Laughter)

Mr. Hill: And I was...I was sent to a very small, privately-owned cadet training facility at Brady, Texas. Brady is a very small place.

John Fargo: Oh, yeah, I know Brady.

Mr. Hill: Okay, and...so, my wife and I had an apartment there, and...we were...we were members of the community there, and this didn't last very long. I was sent to San Antonio. At one point, they were...they were going to...commission some Link Trainer instructors. And I actually went through a training program for officer training in...in one of the fields in San Antonio, and the...that program didn't come through; Congress did not allocate the money or something. And...but I did...was...then...sent to an Advanced Link Trainer instruction program which...very few people were...were getting this, and uh, with...with that I came back to...Brady from San Antonio, and within weeks, got this order to go to the Pacific.

John Fargo: Well, the...the advanced training that you got...but...what did that teach you? You...you had been an instructor for over a year and...

Mr. Hill: Yeah, well I don't remember too well. It...it...

John Fargo: Yeah.

Mr. Hill: ...probably was more about...uh, navigation and the...the use of radio signals and sort of thing.

John Fargo: I see, okay, uh huh.

Mr. Hill: But...then (chuckle) with...with that investment in me, for some reason, they sent me to the Pacific and I never did see a Link Trainer machine again.

John Fargo: Is that right?!

Mr. Hill: And I was put in an office just to pound the typewriter. That's one of the things I...I did. But...I...was on a troop ship going out and it was...it was a comm...it

was a...it had been a commercial steamship and converted into being a troop ship, and it wasn't very satisfactory (laughter).

John Fargo: (Unintelligible words). They never are.

Mr. Hill: And I...we were in...on that ship though for six weeks or longer.

John Fargo: So, this...this was...old Army Air Corps people?

Mr. Hill: This was...uh, I think they all were Air Corps.

John Fargo: Uh huh.

Mr. Hill: But various...for various functions, uh...

John Fargo: Yeah.

Mr. Hill: ...various, you know, navigators and...and the like, and (chuckles) including cooks...including bakers and...cooks.

John Fargo: Cook...cooks and bakers?

Mr. Hill: Yeah, yeah. Uh, and so...we...we were...a boatload of replacements that were to go to different commands in the Pac...in the Pacific somewhere. And there must have been some place that I was going to go to, but (chuckle) I never did know what that was. Actually, we...we were...this was an unescorted...troop ship that went way south of the equator and just about to Australia; I guess to avoid the U-ship, the Japanese U-boats, as much as possible. And I'm glad we did that but we...we would zig zag all the time...in case they were...were...in case a submarine was sending...shots at us...underwater...what do you call them?

John Fargo: (Unintelligible)...torpedoes.

Mr. Hill: Torpedoes, yeah. And...on that troop ship, I was...in a forward part of the ship with...with a bunk...where the bunks were vertical, and I was the second one up

and there was somebody above me and somebody above that person, and we were crowded in. And...I could get out of my bunk onto this steel floor (chuckle) and...take about three steps; put my hands out like this...on the two sides of the bow of the ship...inside and could hear the waves lapping...way above me.

John Fargo: (Chuckles)

Mr. Hill: And for six weeks...there...I had to go to sleep at night; wondering whether...the torpedo is tonight or not (laughter).

John Fargo: Six weeks? Six weeks on that voyage?

Mr. Hill: Yeah, with poor...poor chow (chuckles).

John Fargo: Poor chow?

Mr. Hill: We had...we had to eat standing up; they didn't have...

John Fargo: (Unintelligible words)

Mr. Hill: ...they didn't have table...they didn't have chairs and tables.

John Fargo: Were the ship's crew...uh, Navy people or were they...civilians?

Mr. Hill: I think they were probably Air Corps people; I don't...I'm not sure.

John Fargo: They were Air Corps people?

Mr. Hill: They may...they may have...there may have been some company that operated this ship that had a basic crew, but...but the food was handed out by...by fellow GIs (chuckle), and just dumped onto the big, big...had aluminum platters, you know (chuckles).

John Fargo: (Unintelligible words)

Mr. Hill: It was...that...that sort of thing.

John Fargo: That's strange.

Mr. Hill: It was a...a very, very, basic and the food was...it was usually...like...condensed (pause). Out Irish potatoes, you know, were ground up and powdery and they would...make something out of them and...and dump it onto...onto the...the great big aluminum platters, I mean...trays.

John Fargo: So, for six...six weeks you never landed anywhere?

Mr. Hill: Never landed anywhere. Never saw land.

John Fargo: Until your final destination?

Mr. Hill: Yeah. We...we were unloaded...we came back...sort of back...up...north again and were unloaded in Manila...on...on Luzon, I guess it is, and I remember we were unloaded (chuckles) on...into what amounted to being a cemetery, but it...we were...we could look and...from where...where we were there for a day or two only, and could see through the...the bombed out buildings in downtown Manila. We could just see it starkly there, you know, see light through...

John Fargo: Uh huh.

Mr. Hill: ...through the...the blown-out windows. But after two or three days, I was sent to Mindoro Island south of Manila to...a light bomber group, A-26s I think they were...attack...attack bombers.

John Fargo: (Unintelligible) B-25s, did you say?

Mr. Hill: A-26s I think they were.

John Fargo: A-26?

Mr. Hill: Yes, and...so...they didn't know what to do with me there, and that's where I pounded the typewriter...one of the...one of the places. And we were...there

only...two or three months. That group was ready to be...moved and it was moved...to Okinawa.

John Fargo: Uh huh.

Mr. Hill: And...I...we were on the LST, the landing craft, tied up...in Okinawa when the first nuclear bomb dropped.

John Fargo: Oh okay.

Mr. Hill: And...

John Fargo: So, you had...you went from...the...the Philippines...Luzon...

Mr. Hill: Yeah.

John Fargo: ...to Okinawa by LST?

Mr. Hill: To...we were...for a time on Mindoro Island.

John Fargo: Mindoro Island.

Mr. Hill: A smaller island south of Luzon, and that...that's where I got hooked up with the light bomber group. Uh, they didn't know what to do with me (chuckles); they...they didn't know what a Link Trainer instructor was (chuckle), but they knew what a typewriter was; they put me on...(chuckles) on one.

John Fargo: So, but...but the point is that you...shipped out from that island in the Philippines to Okinawa by LST?!

Mr. Hill: Well, the...our whole...that whole bomber group was on the LST.

John Fargo: They were? Okay.

Mr. Hill: There may have been more than one LST, I don't know. I just don't remember.

John Fargo: How long (unintelligible words) at?

Mr. Hill: And we were...we were...were...head...we were put into...a muddy sweet potato patch; that's where our tents had to go. I guess that was the only place...they were willing, the locals were willing to put us (chuckles); I don't know. But...before...before that we were on the beach when...in Okinawa when there was a...a...hurricane that came through and leveled...uh, I think we temporarily put up tents on the beach for some reason, but that...that must have been before we moved into the sweet potato patch; I'm not sure. But...for safety, the wind was so strong blowing splinters, you know, that would go through you, that I got into...the bed of what was...like a...a...a truck, a little truck today...that...that you just used for...on the farm or for deliveries.

John Fargo: Like...a pickup truck.

Mr. Hill: A pickup, yeah, and...for the reason that I could get really flat down low in the...in the bed of the...of the back of it, and so...anything moving laterally...uh, would...would not hit me. And we...we all had to find some place like that to...and I...as I recall, there were several people lying beside me (chuckle) in...in that pickup...the body of it. And as soon as it let us somewhat, we could...we were able to go to...three or four hundred yards to a...some sort of a...a barrack...just a temporary kind of barrack, but it...it was...it was...protected somewhat from the...small debris that were being...was being blown around. And I guess the...the hurricane was letting up. Well, in any event, uh, we were...on...uh, Okinawa...only three or four weeks maybe, and I said...I...I would go to a...a beach by myself in Okinawa. I guess I could borrow...a bea...a jeep or somebody took me...to do some...little swimming, and I had to be

careful of all the military equipment (chuckles) that was...was in the beach there.

John Fargo: On the beach.

Mr. Hill: It was...

John Fargo: Uh huh.

Mr. Hill: ...it was...very unusual; there were no...there were no tell-tale signs, you know, of what to be careful about. But we...the whole...light bomber group was ordered...after a few weeks in Okinawa...ordered to go on into Tokyo. And so, I was in Tokyo with this unit...within about a month of the end of the war...of the surrender.

John Fargo: What was your job...in Tokyo?

Mr. Hill: Well, I really had no job, and what was made for me was to run a little library that consisted of...these sort of give away books, the vest pocket...uh, pocket...paperbacks.

John Fargo: Yes.

Mr. Hill: Had a little different; they...they could be rolled up and they were smaller and could go into...duffel bag easily or into your pocket, but that's all...that's the only books that we had (chuckles) in that little library. So, it...occasionally somebody might come along and...and want one...something to read and I would...would help out. But I also...uh, was ordered to take the...the daily news off the radio; type it up and give it to an officer who took it to the...uh, the theater that...that night. There was an Ensign in charge of the movie and...and the officer would read the news...as a preliminary to...

John Fargo: To the movie.

Mr. Hill: ...and I guess the...the GIs were patient enough with knowing what the news was, you know, as long as they had...only two- or three-minutes' worth of it. I never...I...I never did go to that theater to...to see (chuckle) how...how it went with the...when my...my stuff was being read there. But I...I had to...just grab the stuff and...I didn't know shorthand but I could abbreviate a lot. I...I just had to write it down as best I could and then rewrite it in the form that the officer could read it...at...at the GI theater (chuckle). So, that...that library plus that...that news (chuckle) I...I was a...news report of sorts (chuckles).

John Fargo: Nice...nice.

Mr. Hill: I wouldn't have ever...and I did this...uh, for...I don't know just when we got to...to Tokyo with that unit, and we were in...in quarters that had been...quarters for...uh, navy trainees, Japanese navy trainees, and they...they were pretty decent quarters except there was no...no heat at night (chuckle). And the...and the showers were just as cold as you can imagine.

John Fargo: Uh huh.

Mr. Hill: And, why we had to sleep in...in...these...sleeping bags, body bags, that gave me feelings of claustrophobia as a matter of fact. I'd never...I'd never used anything like that. But we...we...things were so cold at night that we had to...we had to use them.

John Fargo: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Hill: But we...we crawled into these sleeping bags (chuckle). But I did this...I must have been in...in Tokyo...three months or so until I had enough points...for

discharge and to come home to...rather finish master's thesis at UT (laughter) which I did. But...there were some lackadaisical officer in...in charge of...of where I was, and he told me, "Now, if you'd like to get a promotion, write yourself up, (chuckle)...I'm not going to do it."

John Fargo: What was your rank at that time?

Mr. Hill: I was...I was Pfc or something.

John Fargo: I see.

Mr. Hill: Uh, no maybe I was a Corporal. So, finally it...that made me so angry though for...when this officer would...wouldn't do any...or just told me to do it myself. You know, I felt like that was a...improper some way (chuckle) to be recommending myself (chuckles) for an honorable....for...for a promotion. And...but I did it, and so I ended up with a...as a...as a Sergeant just right before I (chuckles) was discharged you might say.

John Fargo: (Unintelligible). Tell it...tell me about your experience in Tokyo. You did some sightseeing?

Mr. Hill: I did, I did; I took really...good advantage of it. We could ride the subways for free; we could ride the buses; we could ride trains; ride ever...all transportation...the GIs could use, and I don't know that many of them took advantage of that, but I certainly did. And I would take...go on a...a subway or a bus out as far into the...hinterlands as...as I could just to see what Japan was like, you know? But I remember driving through on a bus...on buses, these burned out areas where there were miles, literally miles, of burned out homes that were wood...wood and paper homes; nice homes but that was...the

construction material. And when...when...when our bombers would...would bomb...Tokyo with cluster bombs, it would start big fires or...in substantial areas and...the...the fires would suck in the air; the hot air would go up, and there...these...these fire storms...could be...ninety or a hundred miles an hour...sweeping through, and they would sweep...sweep through huge sections of the city as the result of one night's bombing. And so, everything was bombed out to...that I saw until you (chuckle) around the Emperor's Palace, a circle there, of large buildings. And I think the Air Corps was wanting to preserve these for office buildings when it would presume to be occupying Japan someday (laughter). But in any event...and I had R&R in the...about three or four months that I was in Tokyo...R&R, rest and recreation, a time or two. And one had been the...the building, a multi-story building, very nice; it was the headquarters for the Japanese Bankers Association (laughter).

John Fargo: Oh yeah.

Mr. Hill: And there...there was...plus they had a library, and they...they had...Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations in English (chuckle) and in German, and...and so on. So, it...it was...fun to have R&R there and to have...able to see some real books (laughter).

John Fargo: You had halfway decent food?

Mr. Hill: Uh better...better than...uh, in our barracks, yeah. But I was eager to have the points to...to come home, but I...I did...value this...well, it was...you know, disheartening to see the...the destruction...far worse really (unintelligible) including the number of the people than the result of the two nuclear bombs that

affected only a small area really, and a smaller number of people...although, in a way, that it was far worse I guess...although lots of people were burned to death in these fire storms...

John Fargo: I'm sure.

Mr. Hill: ...as well as loosing all their possessions. But...I could be...with this free transportation, I could be...at...the Tokyo...central point of their subway system at midnight...or I would go...be the only foreigner...to be seen anywhere.

John Fargo: Uh huh.

Mr. Hill: And did not feel unsafe at all. And of course, I was a foot or so higher...taller than anybody else.

John Fargo: Right.

Mr. Hill: So, I...I stood out, and they...they just sort of ignored me except...and...when I was to get on a...a car, they would push me on like everybody else (laughter). I was just another body to be pushed on it and out of the way, you know? Very crowded transportation for (unintelligible) even at...at midnight. So, I got to see all that sort of thing, yeah. And it...it occurred to me at the time that if the U.S. had lost the war, and a single Japanese soldier...was working...walking alone...at night on a street in west Texas, would he feel as safe as I felt? (laughter)

John Fargo: Probably not.

Mr. Hill: (Laughter), but it was an interesting thought (laughter)...

John Fargo: Yes, yes.

Mr. Hill: ...that...that I had. I started meeting with...with some...Japanese students, ex-students. There was the old Tokyo Imperial University that was well known

and it...it had suffered very substantial damage during the war. Later on the word Imperial was taken out of it and it was...became Tokyo University. But I wanted to see that campus even if it was, you know, in...in poor shape with some war damage. And so, I...I was walking around the campus by myself and two...young men walked up to me and...wanted to...talk to me in English and it turns out that they had both been economics majors...

John Fargo: Ah!

Mr. Hill: ...at Tokyo Imperial University before the war and had been in...in the navy...headquartered in Tokyo; I guess they were from affluent...families with connections. But we...we, you know, talked and they asked me...they were very, very curious to learn what I thought about...Japan and what I thought the university...that...that the U.S. might do...in the occupation, and so they asked me whether I...I would come and meet...meet with them...with a few friends and I said yes I would...I would. And so I met with about ten of them and they'd say, "Let's have another meeting," and I think there...maybe about twenty of them the next time, and maybe it the a fourth or fifth time I met with them, it was at a...at a neighborhood campus that had not been...damaged so much, and that's where...that's where we...we met and there were a hundred and twenty of them.

John Fargo: Gee!

Mr. Hill: And...and I would talk...and...they would translate because not all of them understood English. And so, I would wait for them to (chuckle) to...to say in Japanese summarizing what I'd said. And we went back and forth this way in a

big discussion, and they...they were most curious what we were going to do about the...Emperorship...because the Emperor was...sort of sacred, you know?

John Fargo: Yes.

Mr. Hill: And they wondered what would happen to the Emperor...whether we would decapitate him or what, and so they had a...a...abiding kind of curiosity about what...what we might do, and I gave the assurance that we were...a somewhat democratic country (chuckles). And interestingly, some of them were Marxists; they'd been Marxists from their studies, pre-World War II, because...they did not like the militarism. In fact, the military was dominating the...and using the Emperorship for their purpose...for military empire building. And...and they only group that was, you know, really counter to that militaristic kind of thing, the establishment, was the communists, and I'm sure they were not large numbers, but the students academically, in terms of trying to understand what was happening to Japan as an empire, uh, really...studied Marxism as an analysis...

John Fargo: Uh hum.

Mr. Hill: ...for understanding. And I had a lot of fun talking with them. I'd had course...some courses along those lines myself and...and could...could deal with them. I (chuckle) left behind a...the book by John Dewey who's a philosopher...very...with a democratic mold who'd written a book, Theory Evaluation, a very interesting...uh, book and for the philosophy of it...Dewey was an advocate of...of experimentation of...he...he...a...pragmatism instrumentalism, naturalism that...that way of thinking, and that's...was really an

antidote and in my own training it was an...antidote to what Marxism I'd studied as a student...that it was...it...it made sense of...of...the...intellectual traditions that democracy permits and to experiment to take pragmatic approach to problem solving as...as opposed to just following tradition or following...just...extreme ideologies of some sort. Well, so that...that was interesting...all that in...in Japan. I...I saw...very unusual things. They...uh, these students took me to...what was the kind of Japanese...Hollywood!...Where they were really making a film, and I got to see some of what they were...were doing. And what I remember is that they were recording...singing by little Japanese girls, maybe eight to twelve of that age...something like that; very beautiful voices, closely in tune; they had obviously well trained and...uh, I...I've learned, quite recently as a matter of fact, that...that Japan was a leader in edu...uh, in...in music in the schools.

John Fargo: Uhm.

Mr. Hill: Ahead of anybody else, you know, ahead of the...ahead of the United States, and I guess I saw some of that when I was...I was...was seeing these...these children in...in...I think they were in uniforms, but their...their voices were...were great. And, you know, they (chuckles) everybody was on...on note (chuckle), in tune. And it...it was...it was...it was very impressive as a matter of fact. That music education obviously had been important in Japan...even before the war or else they couldn't have been doing that...just as the war ended (chuckles).

John Fargo: So, you took advantage of three and four months and really got a...

Mr. Hill: Uh, I...I, yes, yeah.

John Fargo: ...taste for Japanese culture.

Mr. Hill: Yeah. Some of my travels...were...and would go outside of Tokyo to see what the countryside is like. I went with...with a Lieutenant who was an artist and he would do sketches of things that he would later...later paint, and he...he knew of a lot of places to go. And one of the places that he and I went to was...a monastery well outside of Tokyo in a...in a setting where there'd been no war damage; where the grounds of the monastery, you know, were...picture perfect (chuckles)...still even at the end of the war.

John Fargo: Uh hum.

Mr. Hill: Just...it's just a beautiful place, you know, poetically; artistically beautiful.

John Fargo: Uh hum.

Mr. Hill: So, I got to see...a little of that sort of thing. On one occasion, I got on a train and got on the...uh, on the...locomotive...sort of way up front, outside, and we took a trip...a hundred miles or so across country, and that...that was...that was interesting, too. I did that only once or twice; I did various things (laughter).

John Fargo: Yeah, that was great. So, ultimately though, you...you left Japan and came back to the States. Come back by troop ship?

Mr. Hill: I...I dreaded coming back; I came back by troop ship. I dreaded coming because that...that...going over was...had been so terrible.

John Fargo: Right.

Mr. Hill: But actually, it was...it was (chuckle) more or less okay...coming back.

John Fargo: Which way?

Mr. Hill: And it was...it was a much shorter trip...

John Fargo: Okay.

Mr. Hill: ...and...and we landed at...at Portland, I think...I think it was this time. We went out through San Francisco and when that troop ship left San Francisco, when I first went into the Pacific, uh, we had...been assembled in Utah at a place near Salt Lake City; that was the assembly point, a. And then we were put on a train and taken to...the river...that's part of...that's probably the San Juaquin or...or else the...what's the other river...that make...the big long central valley...and that...so then we reached the...port of embarkation on a riverboat; walked across the dock and got onto this converted troop ship I was tell you about and then sailed out. And that ship sailed out unescorted...at sunset at such a crazy time, you know, with...and with Japanese subs having been all over the place, and here we were going...west...and could...or blinded sort of, and they...they could...they could...well, see...a sub could well see us coming (chuckles) out, and that was probably the most dangerous point of...(chuckles)...

John Fargo: Yeah.

Mr. Hill: ...of being on that troop ship. But I thought that was so funny...going out at sunset at...at a time...

John Fargo: (Cough)

Mr. Hill: ...when we were...visually most exposed (laughter), but I guess they wanted to get us out of there, so...that's we way we did it.

John Fargo: So, where did you get discharge?

Mr. Hill: Uh...

John Fargo: San...San Antonio?

Mr. Hill: It may have been at...at Portland.

John Fargo: Portland?

Mr. Hill: May...may have been San Antonio. I'm...I'm not sure; I'm not sure right now of that. I was brought back all the way in and (chuckles) let out so to speak in Texas, so may...maybe I was released in San Antonio.

John Fargo: That was 1946?

Mr. Hill: That was 1946; January of 1946. I was able to get here...back here in time to be enrolled at the university...that spring term.

John Fargo: So, you...you...spent...about three full years in the Army Air Force?

Mr. Hill: I was, uh, parts of four years – '43, '44, '45, '46, yeah.

John Fargo: Okay. And then you came back to UT.

Mr. Hill: I finished my masters in a...in a semester.

John Fargo: What did you do in civilian life after that?

Mr. Hill: I went on to Columbia for the PhD.

John Fargo: Oh, you got a PhD?!

Mr. Hill: I...I was at Columbia...'40...1946 to '49. I taught half time at Columbia as sort of...as a...cub instructor, but it helped me to pay my way through the place...other...and I had the GI Bill and a working wife, so I was able to barely do it (chuckles). And so I was three years at Columbia. I took a job, my first full-time teaching job was at Berkeley where I was for a decade, UC Berkeley, and I was...I went to...to Berkeley...to California as a '49er...1949, not 1849 (laughter). And as I say, I was there...about a decade at Berkeley. I taught then at the University of Buffalo which now is SUNY Buffalo, State University of

New York at Buffalo, and in 1960 had a chance to take a job at UT...to come back to the university...come back to Austin...come back to kinfolks in the area; my wife had kinfolks here. My kinfolks were Mills County and not Austin, but her...she had...kin here in Austin, so we were glad to come back here in 1960. So, my last teaching stand...1960 to '86 was at UT, my alma mater.

John Fargo: Well, that's great! So, in economics?

Mr. Hill: Taught economics, yeah. Uh, I came here as a full professor and...then became professor emeritus...

John Fargo: Retired in 19...?

Mr. Hill: ...when...when I retired, and so that was '86. Then...in '96 is when I moved right here into Westminster Manor where I've been for...twenty years.

John Fargo: Yeah, that's amazing.

Mr. Hill: But in '86 through now, that is nearly a third of my life.

John Fargo: Uh huh.

Mr. Hill: So, a third of my life were public schooling...through university, and third for working career...at several places.

John Fargo: Yeah.

Mr. Hill: And a third of...in retirement...of...of...a big chunk of it right here in this (chuckles) very dirty, crowded...jumbled apartment.

John Fargo: (Laughter)

Mr. Hill: My wife was diabetic is the reason we moved in this twenty years ago.

John Fargo: She was alive when you moved in here?

Mr. Hill: Yeah, yeah.

John Fargo: Uh huh.

Mr. Hill: She lasted for three years and...in...and benefited from it and died suddenly of a heart attack...she...being diabetic...that's one of the possibilities...that...(chuckle) I wasn't sufficiently aware of, and so it came as a kind of a surprise when she...suddenly had a heart attack. But she in three years had gotten very active here and became...had become president of the...of the residents association here.

John Fargo: Oh great.

Mr. Hill: So, she...she was really on the move here.

John Fargo: Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Hill: I guess she was trying to live it up...

John Fargo: Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Hill: ...knowing...knowing her circumstance. But then...that was the three years and then so another seventeen years, I've lived right here by myself...

John Fargo: By yourself?

Mr. Hill: ...as a bachelor.

John Fargo: Well, Forest, I appreciate your...talking to me today.

Mr. Hill: Yeah.

John Fargo: It was very interesting and enlightening.

Mr. Hill: We could have done more (laughter)!

John Fargo: I'm sure, but...

Mr. Hill: And...(unintelligible) later life, but I guess you were more interested in that...which had some relation...

John Fargo: War years, yeah.

Mr. Hill: ...to...to the war.

John Fargo: Yeah.

Mr. Hill: ...to...to the war.

John Fargo: But again, that...that pretty much concludes the interview. I want to thank you
for your service.

Mr. Hill: Yeah.

John Fargo: And also, your time today.

(end of interview)

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