

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

The Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview With
Harley D. Wright
Mansfield, Texas
February 18, 2016
Army Air Corps
Instructor – Airplane Mechanic

My name is Richard Misenhimer: Today is February 18, 2016. I am interviewing Mr. Harley D. Wright by telephone. His phone number is 817-996-4155. His address is 250 East Debbie Lane, Apt. 4312, Mansfield, TX 76063. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War, the Nimitz Education and Research Center for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Harley, I want to thank you for taking time to do this interview today and I want to thank you for your service to our country during World War II.

Mr. Wright:

You're welcome.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, the first thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the museum to make sure this is OK with you. So let me read this to you. (agreement read) Is that OK with you?

Mr. Wright:

Yes, it is.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now the next thing I'd like to do is get an alternative contact. We find out that sometimes several years down the road, we try to get back in contact with a veteran, he's moved or something. So do you have a son or daughter or some one we could contact if we needed to?

Mr. Wright:

Yes, I have a daughter.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What is her name?

Mr. Wright:

Judy McKee.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have an address for her?

Mr. Wright:

Yeah. Her cell phone number is 817-437-3678.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have an address?

Mr. Wright:

The address is 2904 Franciscan Drive, Apt. 1619, Arlington, TX 76015.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Hopefully we'll never need that but you never know.

Mr. Wright:

No, that's right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What is your birth date?

Mr. Wright:

My birth date is April 25, 1920.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you born?

Mr. Wright:

I was born on a farm in Floyd County, Texas and our little hometown was called Floydada.

That's in the southernmost part of the Texas panhandle and now today I would say it was north-northeast of Lubbock about 45-50 miles.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What were your mother's and father's first names?

Mr. Wright:

My mother's name was Bunnie and my dad's name was Noah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Wright:

I had one sister that was born in 1931 so she was about 11 years younger than me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's all?

Mr. Wright:

That's all.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was she involved in World War II work of any kind?

Mr. Wright:

No, not really. She was in high school I guess at that time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now you grew up during the Depression. How did the Depression affect you and your family?

Mr. Wright:

Well, it was tough. I mean I knew a lot of people who had some really, really hard times. We talk about hunger today but there were some hungry people then and by living on the farm, of course

we suffered drought at the same time and didn't make any crops in 1931 and 1932 and I guess '29 and '30. I can't remember exactly the first one we missed but anyway we didn't even gather any crops for a while but we did have windmills so we had water and we usually had a garden. Well we always had a garden and we always kept cows and chickens and hogs and such things. We never suffered for the lack of anything to eat. Didn't always have what we preferred maybe but we never went hungry. By today's standards I guess I would have been malnourished because you know we'd all carry a sack lunch, we didn't have cafeterias in school so we'd carry a sack lunch. Mine was usually mashed up pinto beans with pickles and mustard and we'd sit in the classroom behind our desk and eat. We didn't know we were malnourished but you know today that'd be terrible.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was your dad a farmer?

Mr. Wright:

Yeah, he was a farmer.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did he own the farm or rent it?

Mr. Wright:

Yeah, he owned it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you able to keep it during the Depression?

Mr. Wright:

Yeah, he kept it all through the Depression. He was behind on taxes and everything else but we got through, eventually got it all paid off.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Good, good.

Mr. Wright:

Never got wealthy but stayed with it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How large was his farm?

Mr. Wright:

Back then nearly everything was powered with horses and mules and we had a relatively new house at the time. But even then I remember those sandstorms would come through there and you couldn't see the color of the floor. Our house was built in 1927 so it wasn't that old and much better than most people had at that time but they built them sturdy but they didn't build them as air-tight as they do today.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How many acres were in his farm?

Mr. Wright:

Well, at that particular time during the Depression, we had, I can't remember how many acres. It was smaller and he farmed that and rented a bunch of land, too. About the end of the worst part of the Depression he bought a larger farm and it had 251 acres and 120 that he rented, so by the time I graduated from high school which was in 1937, we were doing OK.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Wright:

I went to Floydada High School. Graduated in 1937.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you finished high school, what did you do then?

Mr. Wright:

I worked on the farm at first. I wanted to go to college but we didn't really have the money to go and a neighbor friend of ours had a son just about my age but he graduated from Lockney in 1938 and we managed to start college. We figured out between our parents how we could share an apartment and go to college. So we ended up going to Wayland Junior College. We started there in January 1939...

Mr. Misenhimer:

1939 or 1938?

Mr. Wright:

1939. Started at mid-year. It was second semester so we were always off schedule a little. But anyway we went there for a year and a half and then we transferred to West Texas State University. We pretty much worked our way through those places. I remember when we started West Texas State, the tuition was \$40 and some odd cents. I can't remember the cents. It was \$40 and some odd cents for the first semester and that included student paper, all of our classes, class books, health care, annual, the whole works. I had to borrow the money to get it. So people talk about student loans today, that's what inflation has done for us. But anyway he and I were sharing an apartment. It was a one-room apartment over a double garage that belonged to a couple of female school teachers. So we did some work for them like mowing their lawn, all that kind of stuff. Washing windows or whatever they needed done, to pay for that and we did various other odd jobs but we managed to get by and on December 7, I remember it well, we were at Canyon. He and I were on a Sunday afternoon and we had just gotten back from church

and we were tired and we both kind of lay down across the bed, taking a nap, and we heard a paperboy coming by out in the street. Now the paperboys in those days they were always yelling at people but not out in the residential areas like that. That was unusual and we heard the paperboy yelling "Extra, extra!" you know. We couldn't quite make it all out and we did have a little five dollar radio there and so we turned that on and then we found out about Pearl Harbor. We knew then we were both deferred because of being in college. I remember we went home and we were ready for Christmas vacation and it was kind of between semesters but usually we'd come back and take final tests, etc. in January and start a new semester. The college told us there that if we went home for Christmas vacation and signed up for the military we had, I don't remember just what grade average, why we'd be promoted to the next grade without taking the final test so we didn't have to come back. So I went over to Plainview and talked to the recruiting Sergeant there and I decided I would volunteer for the Army Air Corps. He promised me that I'd go to Wichita Falls and I would get my basic training there and go through aircraft mechanics school. So on December 30 I signed up and they sent us down to Lubbock and so we went to Lubbock and we were sent to Lawton, Oklahoma. They issued uniforms and gave us our shots and all that and then we went to Wichita Falls. It would be the 2nd of January I stepped out in six inches of snow in Wichita Falls. We got our basic and the next summer we graduated from the mechanics school. I remember quite well that on March 6 they got all us graduates together and told us we were shipping out. Back then they wouldn't tell you where you were shipping. Everybody had everything they owned in the duffle bag and go down to the train to where we were headed on the trains. They switched engines at the base there. We went down to the train and they start calling off names, one after another. After they had called everybody's name but I think there was twelve of us left standing there. The train pulled out and we were standing there

wondering what happened. The Sergeant came up and marched us back to where we'd come from except to another barracks. He said, "This will be your home for a while." Then they told us that we had been kept as instructors. So we got a little bit of instructions on that and we started teaching. I taught there for I don't remember now how many...it was a few months. One Friday afternoon a friend and I got a weekend leave and we went into town for the weekend there. We hadn't been off base for a while and so we went back in Sunday afternoon and our barracks was empty. We looked on the bulletin board and they had shipped everybody out but us. We hadn't violated anything. I mean we were off legally so then they told us they were having 13 of us go to a school. The others were all gone in what you call cattle cars. They sent us to aircraft engine specialist school in Chanute, Illinois. So the thirteen of us got put on a first-class coach and went to Chanute and we got there and all the others were housed in a tent city out there and it rained a lot. They were in the mud and everything but they had filled all their tents with those guys so they moved us over into what they called Buckingham Palace. It was a brick building built pre-World War II, really nice facility. We got stuck there which was, I don't know, one of those kind of humorous things that happened, you know. Everybody else was mad at us because while they were out there walking around and treading around in the mud and eating outside we were eating in a nice cafeteria in a brick building. But anyway we spent I think it was eight weeks in this specialists school. I don't remember how many classrooms they had but the one we had had as I remember twelve students, and we had classroom instruction on all kinds of engines that were being used at that time. I remember the last day which was kind of a final exam, our instructor had an air-cooled engine, a radial engine, built by Raytheon. Then he had an Allison liquid-cooled engine and had a long table there and he sat each engine on it and said, "I want these two engines disassembled. If there are two pieces that can be taken apart, take them

apart and set them out on the table.” We did and then he says, “OK, switch teams and put them back together.” I remember that was our final exam. It took us a while but we did it. Then we all went back to Wichita Falls and I taught there for a while and I never did know why or how it happened but there was a Tech Sergeant came down and visited me one day and he said, “We need somebody to help us at the publication area. If you’d consider it, we’d like to have you join us.” I thought about it a little bit and why not, you know. Back then they were shipping these planes out as fast as getting them off the production line and sending them right into combat. They were always making changes in some kind of procedure or equipment or some modification of all kinds. So we had to kind of keep up with that and keep everybody informed and make sure they got the new instructions. So I worked up there for nearly a year at least and then one day there a Warrant Officer came in and he said, “A Colonel and he had been selected to start a school for B-29 pilots. They didn’t have the B-29 yet but they needed to get the school started and a B-29 wouldn’t be able to take off and land at Wichita Falls so we were going to Salina, Kansas. They had a 10,000 foot runway. So he wanted me to join them if I would. I said sure, it sounded like a good thing to me so I took off with him. You know in those days they didn’t have simulators like they do today. We didn’t have a B-29 but somehow we got some B-29 instrument panels and we mounted those, I think there was six of them in the back of each B-24. We had three B-24s. That gave us 18 panels that we mounted in B-24s in the back and rigged those up so that the pilot trainees could sit back there and feel like they were piloting a B-29 while they were riding in a B-24 that was piloted by another pilot. But anyway, that was our simulators you might say. We finally got a B-29 and it could take off and land in less space than the B-24 so we didn’t need to be in Salina, Kansas for that. So after a while they moved us to Denver, Colorado to Lowry Field and we hadn’t been there long until the General, base

commander, he was a two-star General, he didn't like the idea of having any organization in his space that he didn't have control over so he incorporated us into the base. They made me one of two base aircraft inspectors and I spent the rest of the war there as base aircraft inspector and made a lot of friends with the crew chiefs. We had all kinds of aircraft there and they gave me a permit so I could spot-check a plane and fly in it or check on the pilot or whatever and make sure that everything was according to the way it should be. I could spot-check them unannounced in the hangar or after they had finished maintenance on them but basically most of my inspections came as a result of a call from a Crew Chief. That was kind of, you know, their boss didn't know it but a lot of times they had to ride in those planes and they'd call me and say, "Can you come down here and spot-check this plane out. I didn't like this or that, you know." We would, and sometimes, a lot of times we'd ride in them and we'd just happen to find exactly what the crew chief was complaining about. Of course we did some spot-checking too. That was basically, primarily it. We were doing a lot of favors for crew chiefs and I do remember one incident that the crew chief called me down because he wasn't happy with the release of the plane. There were a lot of loose rivets in the wings and as I wrote up the report on it, we didn't have the facility there to do a repair job on them and so I checked it over pretty thoroughly and I wrote up the report and I said they could, on a calm day when the weather's good, they have the pilot, co-pilot and crew chief and fly directly to Ogden, Utah. It flew in here so we'll take it for granted it can fly out under careful conditions and get it repaired in Ogden, Utah where they have a facility there for that type of thing. Well, there was a Second Lieutenant that was an engineer, and he overruled me and ordered the pilot and co-pilot and crew chief to take it up and give it a flying test. Now why he wanted to do that when he could look at it and tell the problem but this pilot took it up there and did a nose dive which a B-24 shouldn't do in the first place, and broke both

wings off and killed all three of them. Of course they started looking at the records and they saw what I had recommended so that cleared me. I never heard of that Second Lieutenant again. I never knew what happened. He obviously wasn't left there but we never knew, any of us never knew what happened to him. But other than that my experiences as a Specialist was all good. I got flying pay and the General liked to get his flying pay in and he flew an old B-18 that would lumber along at about 130 mph maximum. It was pre-World War II. I think it was used in World War I. That was the best that they could afford him because everything that was decent to fly was going to combat. But anyway we worked on the second floor of headquarters building and he'd stick his head in the door once in a while and say, "Harley would like to go with me to possibly Albuquerque or somewhere." Obviously he wanted to get his flying time in and I guess he liked to have somebody who knew something about the airplane to go with him. So we had a good, rather informal relationship in the Air Force there. My direct supervisor was a Major. We had (I always told people) I had the best job in the Air Force. After D-Day they had told us that a lot of people were shipping in from combat and we were going to have to go to the Pacific because it wasn't fair to bring all those people in who had all that experience and then make them go back into another war zone so they were going to send all of us that had not been in combat to the Pacific zone. But Harry Truman dropped the A-bomb before it happened so I was discharged on the 3rd of December, I got in on the 30th and I got out on the 3rd of December 1945. I never was interested in making a career of it but I had some good experiences while I was in. Felt like I did some good, enjoyed myself at the same time and that background came in handy a lot of time since then so it all worked together and did some good in many ways.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Let me go back and ask you some questions. Where did you go through your basic training at?

Mr. Wright:

At Wichita Falls.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Is that a separate field?

Mr. Wright:

Well, no, it was all combined. In fact we continued some of the basic training while we were in school. They were combining things as fast as they could at that time. But we did get quite a bit of training. We got some parachute training and all kinds of stuff just like we were going into combat. Got our range practice in where we fired our guns, all that but we really never put any of that to use as it turned out. Trained us for it. It was combat training for that matter.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all did you do in basic? Did you have weapons training?

Mr. Wright:

Yeah, we had some weapons training.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you train on?

Mr. Wright:

Well, I can't even remember now but it wasn't what they used in combat. They talked about some of them getting trained on wooden guns. We did better than that but anyway we was trained on mostly all World War I stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now in basic training, what did you live in?

Mr. Wright:

There in Wichita Falls we had two-story barracks. They were wooden barracks that had been thrown up in a hurry but they were pretty good. They were badly overcrowded. I remember there in Wichita Falls we had...I was on the second floor during the school time and we had those double bunks and you could just barely turn sideways and get between them. Boy, I mean we'd open all the windows and you thought it got hot in the summertime you know, it was hot. I remember they had Lake Wichita which was getting low and the water was terrible. It tasted awful and they finally told us we couldn't shower except between two and four o'clock in the morning. That eliminated a lot of showering because it was just getting cool enough by then that you could sleep. That water tasted so bad as it came out of those drinking fountains, it was kind of lukewarm you know. But at that time we could get Cokes. They had Coke machines and you could get Coke for a nickel in those days and while we were only getting twenty-one dollars a month, we had enough nickels. I almost lived on Coke. Wonder I didn't kill myself. That is if I was doing that today, I'd get diabetes I guess. Anyway we survived.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was the food there?

Mr. Wright:

It wasn't too bad after basic. At basic I hated that, because there they would give you a tray and they filled it for you and you were supposed to eat every bite of it or well, it was trouble. They had somebody waiting there at the garbage cans watching to see that you didn't throw anything away. And I would eat sometimes until I thought I was going to burst and I just almost couldn't

choke it all down. It wasn't that bad of food but man, they would just force it down you. I guess they just wanted everybody to gain weight. I did. I weighed more then than I ever weighed in my life. But after basic then we could pretty much get what we wanted and it wasn't all that bad.

You know, it was mass produced but it wasn't that bad.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then after basic what happened?

Mr. Wright:

It was much better. You know, they didn't force you to eat more than you felt like and you didn't...you could take what you wanted pretty much.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I mean, where did you go after basic?

Mr. Wright:

I stayed right there in the same location.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You went to some kind of a school, right?

Mr. Wright:

Yeah, it was...after basic and some of the basic, you know, kind of continued but we didn't change barracks from basic to the school as far as I remember. I can't remember changing barracks at all.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about that school.

Mr. Wright:

Well, it was a very good school as far as I was concerned. They taught us all things,

aerodynamics and all the mechanical aspects of planes. We didn't have up-to-date planes most of the time but any time they could they would get, you know if a part like an engine or whatever had some manufacturing defect, they'd give it to the school and so sometimes we'd have some pretty up-to-date equipment but for the most part we'd rely on written texts and things like that to really update us from what we had. But you know considering what they had to deal with it was really a good school. I learned the mechanics of an airplane pretty well by the time we got through there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now was this working on the engines or the entire plane?

Mr. Wright:

Well, at first we worked on the entire plane but then after I went to engine specialists' school, I taught engines only.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now where was this engine specialists' school at?

Mr. Wright:

It was at Chanute, Illinois.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all did you do there?

Mr. Wright:

Well, pretty much what I just told you earlier. We studied all there was to know about engines that they used at that time. We assembled them, disassembled them and did everything else.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About how long was that school?

Mr. Wright:

I think it was eight weeks.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then where did you go?

Mr. Wright:

I went back to Wichita Falls then.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you do back at Wichita Falls?

Mr. Wright:

I started teaching engines.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK, you taught back there, right. How was it to teach?

Mr. Wright:

Well, it was interesting. I think, you know, we always had students that wanted to learn. Their lives might depend on it one of these days, you know. We didn't have to do lots to motivate students. But I think the students were good. If they didn't understand anything they asked. We tried to make sure they understood everything before they left. Of course we'd graduate them and we even had engines mounted on frames, stationary frames, where we could start them and run them up, operate them on the frames. So we taught just about everything they needed to know in operating an engine.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About how long was that school?

Mr. Wright:

I'm trying to remember. I believe that that part of it, see there was a part of the overall school, I mean the students, they studied the main part of the airplane first and then they moved into the engine part. Overall, it was about...they spent about, I think it was four and a half months in the aircraft and engine school.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What rank did you have at that time?

Mr. Wright:

Well, let's see. I made Corporal pretty soon after I became an instructor and then I was Staff Sergeant when I was teaching engines there and after I went to B-29s, helped get that set up, I made Staff Sergeant and I stayed Staff Sergeant until I graduated.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was there ever any time when you felt frightened?

Mr. Wright:

No, not really.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Everything went well?

Mr. Wright:

Yeah, it did for me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, April 12, 1945 President Roosevelt died. Did you all hear about that?

Mr. Wright:

Oh, yeah, we heard about that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the reaction when people heard that?

Mr. Wright:

They were, I mean actually I saw grown men cry. You know, people didn't know how bad his health was at that time. I mean that was all kept secret and the way the war was going at the time, we didn't, you know, people were depending on him.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now on May 8, 1945 Germany surrendered. Did you have any kind of celebration then?

Mr. Wright:

Not a lot. You know but not anything really big time. Now when Japan surrendered we had celebrations. I was in Denver at that time and there's a long avenue called Colfax Avenue that goes all the way from Golden through Denver and all over through that area. Even then it was a six-lane street with a middle area where streetcar tracks ran around the center of it. There were two lanes on each side of that. That street was wall to wall people. I mean they were elbow to elbow as far as you could see in any direction on that street that night. I'm telling you if you had on a uniform the girls were kissing you and the men were patting your back and shaking your hand. It was a sight to behold. I'll never forget that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, you mentioned the atomic bombs. When they dropped the first one on August 6, did you hear about that?

Mr. Wright:

Oh, yeah, we heard about that. Now the one thing I didn't hear as I noticed in the museum. They were showing all of the cities that had been bombed by B-29s prior to the dropping of the A-

bomb. Now that was something even though we had worked on them and checked the B-29s from start to finish I never heard that. Evidently that was kept secret from us.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me again about that. You had never heard about all that fire-bombing and stuff?

Mr. Wright:

I had never heard about the extent of the bombing of the B-29s. It looked like there at the museum it looked like they bombed every city in Japan almost. I mean it was amazing to me how many cities had been bombed and I did not hear about that when I was in service. I don't know why that was secret but for some reason it was. Of course then when they dropped the A-bomb I heard about that and then we heard when they dropped it on Nagasaki and I didn't know that it was the ultimate choice there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You say you were being prepared to go to the Pacific when the war got over. Is that right?

Mr. Wright:

Yeah. Until it was over I was definitely going to go. I saw a lot of kissing going on that night.

Mr. Misenhimer:

The pictures are similar to the ones kissing in Times Square, huh? You never could hear Tokyo Rose, could you?

Mr. Wright:

We heard some. We heard some of it. I can't remember, I don't remember much about it but we knew about her anyway. Of course I don't think we were as concerned about her. We all knew better than to pay attention to it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was the morale in your various outfits?

Mr. Wright:

Oh, it was good overall. You know people complain. Everybody complains about something. You know, complain about something, complain about this one or this that or the other and there's always that. But the one thing that always interested me and I talked to a lot of people that had been in combat and come back and I think for the most part even when complaining, people were joking about it a lot and all the G.I.s that I knew even those that had been in combat they had a sense of humor and I think that had a lot to do with their victory. I have a feeling that the Japanese and the Germans didn't, probably didn't laugh too much. But seemed like the G.I.s, they could always find something funny in the worst situation they could be in. I'd hear them talk about it and even those that were in combat told a lot of jokes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see any U.S.O. shows?

Mr. Wright:

Oh, yeah, I did see some. I saw Bob Hope once in Wichita Falls. Of course we had local U.S.O.s there on base. At least we did at Wichita Falls and we did in Denver. At Salina, I don't remember having any there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Wright:

No, I never had any particular need there or had any experience with them. I knew people who did who had close relatives die or something like that and they'd get help for permission to go

home for emergencies so I've known people who did but I never had any direct dealings with them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did they ever serve you coffee or anything?

Mr. Wright:

No, not in the States. I don't think they did that there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get out of World War II with any souvenirs?

Mr. Wright:

No, not really.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you got out, did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life?

Mr. Wright:

Well, no, not really. When I got home, I married just before I left service. I met a girl there in Denver and we got married and I took her back home and then we couldn't find a place to live and you know at that time rental places that weren't falling down, they were gone. So we moved in with my parents for a short time and I got a temporary job working with a small Department Store there. Then one day and this is kind of the way things happened, I told people God knew where I was going a long time before I did, I guess, but one day there was a guy came in, and I had been in class with him right before the war but I never knew him very well. We'd been in the same classroom together and I knew his name but that was about all I knew about him. I never knew how and why he was interested in me but anyway he looked me up. I don't know how he knew where I was but he looked me up and he offered me a job at Wayland Baptist College

where I had first attended. He was dean at the college at that time and they wanted an assistant business manager to learn the business because the business manager was going to retire in about a year. They wanted me to take the job, learn the job from him and then take over when he left. I said, "Well, that sounds like a good job." We moved up there and turned out that they had to get a new president. The president got sick and wasn't able to come back. They hired a new president and he didn't honor verbal commitments, so he told me he was bringing in a new business manager and he'd like me to stay there and help get him situated and stay on as assistant manager. No, that wasn't the agreement I had, so I was ready to go. So I left and obviously I had saved up very little money. At that time I had a wife and daughter, a baby. That was in August and I thought, "Well, I don't quite have my degree" and I walked down to the courthouse there in Plainview and thinking maybe the county superintendent might have a country school where she could hire somebody without a degree. They'd do that sometimes in those days. So as it turns out, she knew my whole family and I had never heard of her but anyway she knew everybody and she talked to me a little bit and she said, "You know I've got a school vacancy out here at Prairie View School. We need two teachers for first through seventh grade. You can be the principal if you can hire a teacher." I said, "OK, I know one." We went out there and taught school for a year. Took some night courses and went to summer school and finished my degree. Then I got a job teaching business courses in Lockney High School. Taught there for five years. I'll back up...schoolteachers in those days didn't make a lot of money. I had a master's degree in school administration and it didn't look like I was ever going to get an administrative job. I enjoyed teaching but even in those days, \$2400 a year wasn't enough for you to make a lot of money. I got my master's degree and they raised me to \$2625 a year. Had a big raise! So after five years, I put my military experience back to work and I went to work at Amarillo Air Force

Base training instructors for that base. Ended up writing courses for Air University and various other things, on the job training manuals and training students on the job, especially in the summertime when they were having summer training for airplane mechanics. But anyway the Reserve people and National Guard got a lot of training on bases at that time so I taught a lot of courses for that. Did a lot of traveling then, too, going from base to base. But then I started writing manuals mainly for various kinds of training, on the job training, all that kind of stuff, Air University manuals, extension course manuals, etc. Amarillo Air Force Base was about to close and so I got a job with Martin-Marietta when they were building missiles out there, installing missiles out east of Denver, underground, you know. That was like building a city underground. So I edited manuals for that, maintenance manuals for those people, and kind of a go-between, between engineers and writers. It was an interesting job. That was designed so that people working underground could survive there for six months without coming up aboveground if there were a near-by attack or anything like that. So like I said, you had to prepare for everything. I mean it didn't matter if it was fixing a commode or an electric outlet or whatever. I mean it was all something that they had to do on their own if they got caught so that's the way it was. There was a lot of manuals written there so we did a lot of writing. When that contract was up I got a job with a company, Brown Engineering, in Huntsville, Alabama, and did pretty much the same job for them, working on the Saturn missile that went to the moon. When that contract was over, then I got a job with LTV here in Grand Prairie, doing pretty much the same thing on aircraft. All these things kind of worked together. One thing led to another. I always said every job I ever had was preparing me for one I didn't know existed so everything worked out. My business background helped me, too. When I was at Amarillo Air Force Base they elected me treasurer of the credit union. I taught accounting at the junior college at night over there and so it

seemed like everything I did and experience I had was always helping for something that came later. Anyway, we got here and my wife said she was tired of moving and this was as far north as she ever wanted to live and she'd like to stay here. So we saw an ad, and we investigated and it was a dry cleaning franchise. So we bought a dry cleaners, bought a new one and installed it as a new dry cleaners while I was still working at LVT. My wife started running it and I'd help out in the evenings and weekends. We would wind up with five of those before it was over so I used a little bit of business background again and some mechanics, too, because there was a lot of mechanical work to do on those things. So we sold all those and one thing led to another. I finally fully retired in 1987. My wife passed away in 2001. So it's been a long ride.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Sounds like you had a good time over the years.

Mr. Wright:

I did. I never got bored really and always worked on something that was exciting at the time.

Now I'm kind of technologically illiterate but I was on the cutting edge for a long time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now, I've got a couple of questions for you. When you were with that B-29 group, were you in a particular unit or anything like that?

Mr. Wright:

No, it was all in the training command. We had training squadrons. I can't even remember what it was called at that time but training command was a little different than all the other as far as the organization was concerned.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You didn't have a particular number or anything like that on your unit?

Mr. Wright:

No, I can't even remember ever having you know more than a patch on our sleeve that said training command.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Training command, OK. Now, what ribbons and medals did you get?

Mr. Wright:

Oh, I got, I can't even remember what they were called. I got some marksmanship medals and then I got, everybody got a Good Conduct Medal and let's see they called it a...I can't remember what it was called, for people that were in service. I can't even remember what they called it now. (The Ruptured Duck)

Mr. Misenhimer:

You probably got the World War II Victory Medal.

Mr. Wright:

Yeah, I guess.

Mr. Misenhimer:

The American Defense.

Mr. Wright:

Yeah. When we received those, we'd never been overseas, we didn't consider them much. They weren't much that we were highly proud of at the time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you ever had any reunions?

Mr. Wright:

No, I never did. I did, not an actual reunion, I did contact two or three friends that I had along the way but not as a group. Never had a group reunion.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you use your G.I. Bill for anything?

Mr. Wright:

Yeah, I did. I used it when I went back to college.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What year did you graduate from college?

Mr. Wright:

Well, I got my bachelor's degree in 1948 and got my master's degree in 1950.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your bachelor's in?

Mr. Wright:

It was basically business administration. My master's was in school administration.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's all the questions I have unless you've thought of something else.

Mr. Wright:

No, I've pretty well covered it as far as I can see.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well, Harley, that's all I've got and I want to thank you again for your time today. I want to thank you for your service to our country during World War II.

Mr. Wright:

I hope it provides some interest. I don't know if...or not.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh, yeah, everybody's story is important because I don't care what a person did, it was needed some way or another in the war effort. So without your training people to work on airplanes, how could airplanes get worked on. You know, so every job was important.

Mr. Wright:

As I said, I never knew how or when I impressed certain people but for some reason I got the jobs that were almost a miracle to me and provided me with a lot of, I guess, training and enjoyment at the same time. That's my story.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well, good-bye for now and thanks again.

Mr. Wright:

Enjoyed the time with you and enjoyed visiting with you and I hope you have a happy birthday and a lot of future ones.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Thank you. Good-bye now.

End of Interview

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