RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH FORREST S. CLARK

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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ORLANDO, FLORIDA
SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Mr. Forrest S. Clark on September 11, 2001, in Orlando, Florida, with Shaun Illingworth. Mr. Clark, thank you for traveling to Orlando today for this interview. [This interview was taken on the date of the attack on America, the terrorist attack on New York City and Washington, DC, September 11, 2001.] I would like to begin by asking you a few questions about your father, who was born in Newark. Do you know how his family came to settle in Newark?

Forrest Clark: My father was born in Newark in 1880. … Of course, the Clark family had come to that area from Long Island and, before that, from England, way back in the 1700s, perhaps as … early as the late … 1600s or early 1700s, and they settled in and around Newark and Elizabeth, what was called Elizabethtown, at that time. … My father was a person who believed, although it was never proven, … that his family was descended from some of the members of the family of … Abraham Clark, the signer of the Declaration of Independence from New Jersey. Anyone who studies New Jersey history will know that Abraham Clark was from the area that is now known as Clark Township, or Roselle, or what used to be known as the Wheat Sheaf area, not too far from Rahway, what's Rahway now, and Roselle. The old Clark homestead is still there, on Chestnut Street in Roselle. So, my father believed that that was his family background. They owned a lot of property down around … what is now Clark Township and he often believed that he came from that colonial Clark family from New Jersey.

SI: Where was your mother born?

FC: My mother was born in Newark, New Jersey, … 1890, I believe, and her background was that her father had come from Scotland. He came from Scotland, and his name was MacFee, and my mother believed that all of her ancestors went back into Scotland. So, on that side of my family, on my mother's side that is, I would say that it was all Scottish.

SI: What did your father do for a living?

FC: Well, for twenty years or twenty-five years, he worked for B. Altman and Company in New York City and he was in the delivery part of it. He covered a large area of Northern New Jersey, … out of New York, and that was his primary occupation when I was growing up. … Also, after that, he worked for the Buick … Motor Company in New York, around Columbus Circle, and drove some of the first Buick cars that were manufactured off the assembly line. He was a great one for driving cars and, also, for engineering, but, his main hobby was art. He was an artist and I still have many of his paintings hanging in my house and in my brother's house, up in New Hampshire. So, … as far as what he did, he worked for Altman, he worked for Buick, but, … all his life, [he] had a lifetime interest in painting, art, oil painting.

SI: You were born in Newark. Did you grow up in Newark?

FC: … I was born in the Clinton Hill section, up on Clinton Avenue, … in Newark, but, very near what was the border with Irvington, New Jersey. If you're familiar with Irvington, you'll know that that is … contiguous to Newark on the western side. I went to school, but, of course, I moved out of Newark. … I was born there in 1921. I think I moved out … of Newark in about 1927, 1928, and lived in Roseland, New Jersey. That's really where I grew up, I might say,

because that's where I spent my childhood and teenage years, in Roseland, in and around Roseland, New Jersey, where I went to grammar school and graduated from Roseland Grammar School in 1936, I believe it was, yeah, 1936, and then, I went to high school in Caldwell, Grover Cleveland High School in Caldwell, New Jersey, which is only a few miles from Roseland, and I graduated from Caldwell High School in June of 1940.

SI: How would you characterize the Roseland community in that era?

FC: It was a very rural country, all farms, big dairy farms, Becker's Dairy Farm; I don't know if you're familiar with … Becker's, but, anybody who lived in that part of New Jersey would know Becker's. It was a very huge dairy farm, like Borden's, practically, and it covered a large area of that town, of that area. My brother and I had a very wild, I should say, country, rural boyhood, because we had these open fields, a lot of fruit orchards, a lot of farms, a lot of produce farms, and we worked on some of those farms, you know, picking beans in the summertime. You've got to remember, this was during the Great Depression, [laughter] and, at that time, why, it was almost taken for granted that, in order for you to make a living, … we had to … grow a lot of our vegetables, and we had to pick vegetables on various farms in the area around where we lived, and that was a big occupation for my brother and I during those years.

SI: How much of an impact did the Great Depression have on your family?

FC: It had a tremendous impact on our family. [laughter] My father … lost his job in New York and, of course, we owned property over in Roseland. … We always had this property, but, what we didn't have was, … actually, to be frank and honest about it, he didn't really have a steady income … during the height of the Depression. … He was with the Federal Arts Project in Newark and around there. He was … employed as an artist. During the Depression, under Roosevelt's Administration, as you probably know, there was a Federal Theater and a Federal Arts Project, and a lot of artists and theater people got jobs doing scenery, painting scenery, and working in the theater, and doing art work for posters, for theaters, work like that, and that was what he did during … the hardest years of the Depression.

SI: Since your father benefited from the New Deal, I assume that he had a high opinion of President Roosevelt.

FC: Well, let's put it this way, Roosevelt was looked at somewhat as a savior of the country at that time, … throughout the nation. I think that, although my father was not particularly a Democratic Party person, he did admire Roosevelt, because Roosevelt sort of pulled a lot of people out of the Depression, and then, Roosevelt, later on, of course, became the hero of World War II, which is something else, but, I think that my father, on the whole, regarded Roosevelt as a very great leader.

SI: Did your parents ever discuss politics around the dinner table? Did they hold any strong political beliefs?

FC: Well, they discussed politics from the standpoint of … getting jobs and getting help from the government. Of course, when the New Deal came in, there was all kinds of things, and then,

of course, shortly after that, Social Security and all those Roosevelt programs came in, the New Deal programs. We discussed Roosevelt quite a bit. My father was very much of an advocate of America First and, when they started talking about a third party, or a Communist Party, in the United States, why, he was opposed to that. He believed very strongly in the two-party system, the Republicans and the Democrats, and … he had no sympathies at all with a third party, or with these groups like, I keep thinking of Henry Wallace and people like that, who wanted, Socialism, I guess, was the word that they used during that time, Socialism, which was sort of a form of, in his mind, … Communism.

SI: How did the Great Depression affect the Roseland community?

FC: Well, we had a lot of unemployed people there. We had a lot of welfare people. We had a lot of people who owned small farms and made a living off of small farms. They either sold produce or they picked it for their own table, and, a lot of times, we would share. We often shared with other people in Roseland, because they had this production of vegetables, … and we often shared it. I do remember that, many times, we would work from morning until night picking beans, and then, at the end of the picking beans, [laughter] my brother and I were just young kids, of course, my parents, sometimes they picked, but, most of the time, when we picked, … at first, we thought, "Well, they're gonna pay us so much for these beans. We filled all these big … containers of beans," and then, they would say, "Well, you picked ten bushels today, so, you can keep two," and that was your pay. So, you kept the two that you farmed, but, … the land owner kept the eight, and you brought home two bushels of beans, string beans or pole beans, and that was your pay for maybe eight or ten hours work.

SI: How would you rate your education in the Roseland school system? What were your favorite subjects?

FC: My favorite subjects were English, literature, history and social studies. Of course, how would I rate it? Well, I thought it was very good. … I don't know what you mean, unless you mean how I'd rate it in comparison to … today's standards. Well, at that time, we had much more one-to-one relations with [our] teachers. I remember one teacher, Lou B. Powell, who made a lifetime impression on me, and I still feel impressed by her teaching, because she was the one who taught me the value of history, and so, I was always interested in history, from that time on, from about the fifth grade on, and she also taught me the value of reading, and so, I was a great … reader and won some prizes for reading the most books in any one grade. I remember that. Also, I was interested, considerably, in the arts, in art work and in drawing. … My brother and I painted some big murals, which they exhibited down at East Orange … during some Fourth of July celebration, I remember, and so, … those were my favorite subjects in school, history, art and English. … To answer your other question there, about the influences of my school, … I think I was also influenced by my parents, my father particularly, because he was the one who taught me the use of my imagination. We lived in a very austere [laughter] atmosphere at that time, in the height of the Great Depression, and we didn't have movies, we didn't have television. I don't remember ever going to any movies, even all during the time I was a teenager, it wasn't until later, but, he was a great storyteller, and he used to tell a lot of stories, which I still remember. So, that got me interested in writing and, from there, it was from that germ, in my

teenage years, … that bloomed or grew into my interest in journalism, which was my subject, which I took for my life, [my] entire life, journalism.

SI: Were you ever a Boy Scout or involved in any other youth clubs?

FC: … The Boy Scouts? [laughter] No. I do think I had a couple of forays in the Boy Scouts, but, you see, … we had a kind of a life where we were outdoors a lot, in the woods or in the fields, and I hate to put it this way, but, we didn't really need the Boy Scouts. [laughter] I think we could have probably taught the Boy Scouts something.

SI: During the war, you joined the Army Air Force. Growing up, were you interested in aviation?

FC: A great interest in aviation, … and that goes back to my studies, again, of history. I used to read all these World War I [books] about the World War I aerial battles, you know, … [von] Richthofen, the Red Baron, and all those. They had a whole series of pulp magazines in those days that were, when I was about fourteen, fifteen, about the battles in the war, … the First World War, and then, of course, … we used to go to, there was an airport near us, maybe you still know it, … Curtiss Wright Airport, down at West Caldwell, and they used to have old, vintage airplanes, … Fokkers, and Stearmans and those kinds of planes, there, and they used to have parachute jumps every weekend, and that got me interested in aviation very greatly, that and reading these stories. We used to go down to [Essex County Airport], I don't think the airport's still there, [it] may be still there; it was where John Kennedy, Jr., had his plane, where he took off on that ill-fated flight, where he crashed off of Martha's Vineyard, but, anyway, … that airport is a very historic one, … and we used to go up to Teterboro, which was a very old airport … and associated with some of the early flyers, like Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart. So, I got interested in aviation that way.

SI: You were also interested in journalism in high school. What other activities were you involved in?

FC: … In high school? Well, … in high school, I got interested in studying to … fly, but, the only problem I had was, in those days, [laughter] you had to have money for flying lessons and all that sort of thing. Not only that, but, … I guess, early on, my parents were pretty much opposed to flying. They thought it was a hazardous occupation, and I guess it was, but, when you look back at it, [it was] no more hazardous than it is today, [laughter] but, I think that what I did in high school was, I started to get very interested in girls, of course, and dating. …

SI: Were you enrolled in the college preparatory course in high school?

FC: Yeah, I took what was called the college prep course. They had another one called the commercial course, but, I was going to college, even though I didn't know where I was gonna get the money, … or my parents were gonna get the money, but, in the Depression, you see, the gang I hung around with in high school, … they were all planning to go to college. One would go to Hamilton College, I believe it was up in New York State. Another one went to McGill

University in Montreal, Canada, and … the group that I went around with, and my brother went around with, all seemed to be college-oriented.

SI: Did your parents encourage you to aim for college?

FC: Yes, they encouraged me to go to college, all right, but, the only thing was that, at that time, in the Depression years, even then, why, it cost a little bit to go to college, … but, I had the grades. I was an "A" student in high school. … Maybe I had a few "B"s, but, I remember getting a lot of "A"s in high school, all four years of high school. … So, I had the academic record by the time I graduated.

SI: Did your brother attend the same high school?

FC: Yeah. He went to the same school, but, a year behind me. He's a year younger, fourteen months younger.

SI: What was your first job after your high school graduation?

FC: Well, the first job I had was working for a very interesting company called the *Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij*, which was the Netherlands Trading Society in New York; as a matter-of-fact, not too far from the World Trade Center. I hate to bring that up today, but, I guess everybody's thoughts are on that today. We were on 40 Wall Street and I worked there … in the Summer of 1940. Now, you [have] got to remember, in the Summer of 1940, the Dutch, … this company, had just evacuated Amsterdam, because the Germans had marched into … the Low Countries in May, May the 10th, 1940, as you remember. I believe it was May the 10th, yeah. Anyway, … when I went to work with this company over in New York, … their headquarters had just recently, very recently, been moved from Amsterdam to New York, and that was a very interesting job for me, because I got to associate there with a lot of Dutch … refugees, you might say, from Europe who were fleeing from Nazi Europe and didn't want to stay in that country. So, for all intents and purposes, 40 Wall Street, which is the Bank of Manhattan, was the headquarters for this Netherlands Trading Society, and I went to work there in about June of 1940, and I remember, about six months or a few months later, why, one of the managers … got out of Europe, and he came over, and he wanted to move the headquarters down to the … Dutch East Indies, Surabaya. I believe it was Surabaya, anyway, but, then, of course, before that could come to pass, and he offered to take me; I was supposed to go with him, you know, as a sort of an assistant office manager; … but, before that could be carried out, of course, the Japanese went wild in the Pacific, and the Dutch East Indies was threatened by the Japanese occupation. As a matter-of-fact, I think they did occupy some of it, and so, we had to stay in New York. … I was working there when, let's see, Wendell Willkie was running for president. He worked in the Commonwealth and Southern, … well, it's now the Chase Manhattan Bank, but, the Chase Bank was separate then. They've … merged since then, but, I often saw Wendell Willkie down there, because he came in and out of the buildings, the same buildings, I did. … What I did on Wall Street [was], aside from working for the Dutch Netherlands Trading Society, I took secret, or not so secret, [laughter] documents, mostly checks … for the company, to places like JP Morgan and Company, the stock market across the street, on Broad Street, and then, …

Guaranteed Trust Company, Irving Trust Company, US Bank, and all those places, the Federal Reserve Bank, and I carried a portfolio with all these documents in it.

SI: Did you work anywhere else during this period?

FC: … Then, what happened was, the Netherlands Trading Society, … I had a boss by the name of Jan Hoven, he smoked a big, Dutch cigar, and he decided that he was going to spread the company out throughout the country, in different offices, to Chicago, St. Louis and some other places like that, and so, I left the Netherlands Trading Society and went to work, believe it or not, over in Kearny, New Jersey, right next to the Kearny Shipyards, where they were making the so-called Liberty ships, the shipyards, and worked for [the] Coca-Cola Company. It's right … next to the Kearny Shipyard in Kearny, New Jersey, and I worked there as a laboratory assistant, testing Coca-Cola. Now, you [have] got to remember, I hadn't gone to college yet, you see. I had just graduated from high school. So, along came Pearl Harbor and that changed everything. … I remember the day very well. You know, it's like today, … something like today. We were all sitting around and we had company that day in Caldwell. I was living in Caldwell, Brookside Avenue, but, we had company. … It was like in the early afternoon, I believe. Anyway, … all we had was the radio and we got the notice about the attack on Pearl Harbor. … Everybody ran out in the streets. I don't know why they did that. They seemed to all run out in the streets, [laughter] and Bloomfield Avenue was filled with people, and … the trolley cars stopped. They stopped all the trolley cars. They weren't running to Newark. So, everybody said, "What does this mean? What does it mean?" My father came out and said, "It means war." … So, everybody was saying, on that particular afternoon, it was a Sunday afternoon, "What does it mean for us?" you know, "What does it mean?" and some guys were already saying, "I'm going down and I'm gonna sign up," you know, … but, we didn't have to wait long, because, about a day later … or maybe two days later, Roosevelt made his famous announcement about the "Day of Infamy," you know, and we were in it. … So, another guy and I, who graduated with me from high school, we went down to Newark, in the Federal Building, and signed up to register to take the test for the aviation cadets. I don't know … whether you know what the aviation cadets were, but, I went down there and signed up right away, and he did, too, but, … see, we had a draft number, see, so, I had to wait. … In fact, I finally got the call to go down and take the test, but, the test, believe it or not, see, I'd been out of high school, I never had a strong point in physics or in math, so, the test was filled with [laughter] math and physics questions, and I was more interested in history, and language, and things like that, language arts, but, anyway, … I took the test for the aviation cadets, and I just came in a point or two under the score required, you know. So, I didn't make the aviation cadets at that time, so, I decided that I would try again. So, I signed up again, a second time. … I started studying more math. I had never studied math before very much. I didn't like math, you know. Now, I'm getting way ahead. I mean, I'm getting ahead of the chronology here, but, after Pearl Harbor, I continued working for awhile, but, then, when I got drafted, which wasn't until '42, … it's a strange thing, [laughter] but, shortly after I was drafted, a notice came to my home address to come and take the test again for the aviation cadets, [laughter] and I was already at Fort Dix, New Jersey, [the] induction center. So, anyway, I was inducted in … October '42, but, I went to Fort Dix, and then, we were transferred, from there, to Miami Beach, Florida, where I took basic training in the Army Air Corps, and, at that time, Miami Beach, we thought, was the greatest place in the world, because it was so, you know, different from New Jersey, and so, we really thought, "Well, we're gonna

be here for the rest of the war, we might as well make ourselves comfortable." So, I wrote home and said, "I'm in Miami Beach, and it's a great place, and I intend to spend the rest of the war here." [laughter] That's how naïve I was, but, then, at Miami, when we first got there, I can remember so many things about the Army Air Corps there, because it was just filled with Army Air Corps, every hotel. … All the golf courses were turned into training fields. [When] we had to drill, we had to march from our hotel, about twenty blocks, up to Lincoln Road, where there was a golf course up there, where we drilled. We had close order drill, which I never used again in the Air Force, [laughter] so, I don't know what the heck that was all about, but, the guys were actually passing out. You know, we had a lot of fellows from, say, North Dakota or Minnesota who couldn't take the heat of Florida, so, they were passing out, because, you know, we didn't have air conditioning, like we do today, in a lot of those hotels, and we had bunk beds, maybe four to a room, like this size, bunk beds, upper and lower, and we weren't allowed to use the elevators. … For some reason or other, we had to run downstairs. When they blew the whistles to fall out in the morning, you had to run down, and some guys'd run down half-dressed, … but, they soon got used to that, but, the thing is that, at Miami Beach, we took a battery of these tests, you know, … classification tests, and … I was still trying to get into a combat crew. … What I wanted to do was get into a combat crew. I didn't want to be on the ground. I wanted to be in a flight crew. So, I got assigned to, and this was really odd, … it was odd to me, anyway, … Air Force Radio Operator's Mechanics School at Scott Field, Illinois. Well, Scott Field, Illinois, at that time, was coal country, not only C-O-L-D country, but, C-O-A-L country, [laughter] and so, when I found out, at home, that I'd been assigned to radio mechanics and operators school, they all laughed, because I was not supposed to be mechanically inclined. You know, my brother was; I was not. I was supposed to be the studious type, you know. So, they all laughed at home about that. … So, I went from Miami to Scott Field in November of '42 and took the radio operator's course, eighteen weeks, I believe it was. We had to … send and receive … a minimum of eighteen code groups, I believe they were code groups, not words, but, code groups, a minute to qualify to graduate, and I was on the graveyard shift, which was from about 11:30 to seven in the morning, and a lot of guys couldn't take it. They would fall asleep listening to that code, you know, listening to that code [for] a couple of hours and trying to record it, and so, that's where I went to radio school, Scott Field, Illinois, which is still there, I understand.

SI: Do you have any idea of what the wash-out rate was during basic training and radio school?

FC: A lot of them washed out of radio school, I'll tell you that, because … they couldn't cut the routine, especially those all on my shift. You see, we had three shifts, you know, the day shift, the evening shift and the midnight shift, so, a lot of them didn't make it the eighteen weeks. I don't know what percentage, but, I had some friends who didn't make it.

SI: How did you take to the radio operator's responsibilities?

FC: I liked it, although I had a couple of [difficulties]. The problem I had at radio school was not the code, but, the mechanical part. You know, we had to tear apart these, what we used to call SCR, the Signal Corps radio. We had these old Signal Corps radios, which you had to tear apart, break down, get the nomenclature of every part, and then, put them back together again, so [that] they worked. That was … the hardest part for me. Then, we had to build a little radio set, a transmitter, with the condensers and with the batteries. …

SI: Was it a large school?

FC: … Oh, yeah, it's a very big school. Yes, it was … one of the primaries. I think they had another one in Chicago, what was that called? somewhere in Chicago, but, this was the primary radio school for the Army Air Corps at that time.

SI: Where did you go next?

FC: … Okay, I graduated. Let's see, they had a big graduation. … I graduated in, I don't remember the exact date, but, it was in the Spring of '43, and I went to Harlingen, Texas, the Army Air Corps Aerial Gunnery School, where we started flying AT-6s. We used to go up with these, … I think they were new pilots, some of them … looked like they just hadn't taken a plane off before, and we used to go up with them, and go out over the Gulf of Mexico, and shoot from the rear of the AT-6, shoot at a moving target. It was kind of stupid. We did a lot of skeet shooting from … a stationary [position] or from moving vehicles going around the range, the skeet range. We did a lot of that, and we tore down the guns, and we used to put them all back together again, and we had a gunnery sergeant who insisted that we all go over to Mexico and get laid, and that was part of the qualifications, but, I should cut that out.

SI: You can edit that out of your transcript.

FC: No, but, that's what he did. … The first time I went up, down there … in gunnery school, was with this young pilot who said, "Don't step on the wires," [laughter] but, I had to shoot, you know, … 'cause it was an open cockpit. So, I had the gun, which was jumping all over the place, and he said, … "I'll just give you a little instruction; when you get through firing," we used to fire at the water and see … the bullets skip along the water. Now, we were really supposed to fire at this target. You had so many rounds … that you were limited to, and you had to make so many hits on the target to qualify, you know, so, we had to keep going up and up and up, and did a lot of flying, until we got to that point where we got enough hits to qualify, but, the first time I went up, he said, "Now, when you're through firing at the target, just give me a signal, and we'll turn back and head back to the base." Well, I got through my whole cartridge belt, … these long cartridge belts, and … I said, "Okay." I gave the signal. He goes into a dive. [laughter] He goes straight down and hits the deck, you know, and … it was new to me, see. So, I mean, I was just a kid, and he looked like he was even younger than I was, … a second lieutenant, and so, we hit the deck, and he got it down and taxied on the tarmac there, and I said to him, "What was that last thing for?" He said, "Well, that's just to get you used to some of the things you'll have to experience when you get over there." [laughter]

SI: How many people washed out of gunnery school?

FC: Well, we had squads, you know. I mean, we had groups of seven or eight, I don't remember how many, maybe ten, no, not that many, seven or eight men under one gunnery sergeant. I had a couple of them that didn't make it. Maybe two out of the eight didn't make it, because a lot of them thought, … well, by this time, they realized that they were heading for combat flying, the flight crew, and they didn't want that; they wanted to be on the ground, so, I

have a feeling that some of them just simply copped out. … From there, I went to Clovis, New Mexico, first phase, crew training, … and then, I knew [I would be on a flight crew], but, we never thought about going overseas. I don't know why it was. We didn't think about going overseas. I was just having a time flying. I was flying every day, I enjoyed it. I even enjoyed firing the guns, you know, and it got to be like going out and hunting, I guess, or something like that. So, then, I went from Clovis, … New Mexico, we used to fly down to Alamogordo, and Roswell, and Tucumcari. I don't know whether these names mean anything to you, but, Tucumcari was an Indian reservation up there. We used to fly low and scare the hell out of the Indians, but, then, Alamogordo, we couldn't fly there. They closed that off, 'cause … that was the area [where] they were experimenting with the bomb, you know, but, then, … from there, I went to Biggs Field, El Paso, Texas, for third phase, final phase training. You see, I didn't have an assigned crew when I was at Clovis. I was just flying with everybody as a radio operator, tail-gunner, or some other position. It wasn't until I went to … El Paso that I got assigned to the crew, my crew, that I went overseas with. … The story there is that there was one guy on the crew who was a screw-up. … I don't think his name is important now, but, I know his name, but, anyway, … he met me when I first landed there, and he said, "Oh, you're the new guy for the Griffith crew." I was assigned to the Griffith crew, R.C. Griffith, who later became a major in the Air Force, but, he said, "Well, I'll tell you, I want to warn you about that crew. The pilot, he's an Okie. [laughter] He doesn't know anything. … He's ignorant. The co-pilot can't land an airplane. The navigator gets lost. [laughter] The bombardier can't find the bombsight," and he went through the whole crew, you know, bad mouthing each one of them, every one. I said to myself, "Boy, what am I getting into here?" So, this is the truth. Now, we walked out on the tarmac the next day and, of course, we had to fly right away, because they were rushing crews overseas then. … He walked out with me and I didn't say anything. He said, "There's your airplane out there," and he pointed out there, and I saw this B-24. I said to myself, "Yeah, that's an ugly looking airplane." [laughter] He said, "Well, I'll tell you, you're on your own now, buddy," and I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, I'm not flying in that thing any more." [laughter] He said, "Look at it," and … he turned right around there and walked out, and they found him two days later over in Juarez, Mexico, shacked up with a little Mexican girl, but, the point I'm trying to make was, he didn't want to cooperate. He didn't believe in crew teamwork, I guess. It doesn't matter, because, strangely, I never did know what happened to him after that, because we shipped out and … went overseas, and I don't know what ever happened to him, but, I often wonder, but, I figured that I was really getting into trouble with that crew, but, then, when I met the crew and flew a couple of missions, … I realized that that was a good crew and they were all working together as a team, and so, all his talk was sour grapes. Now, there's a guy who washed out, apparently. I don't think he ever got into a flight crew again. …

SI: Can you tell me a little bit about your crew, beginning with your pilot?

FC: Yeah, my pilot, … he still lives in … Fort Worth, Texas. He was a big, burly, strong, young, … Oklahoma farm boy, born in a place called (Cootee's Bluff?), Oklahoma, near Tulsa, I believe, and he was very strong, … and blond hair, curly hair, was very strong, and a good leader, a good commander, good aircraft commander, I thought, because he'd grown up through the ranks. He had come into the … Army Air Corps before the war, actually, and he'd grown up through the ranks to the rank of first lieutenant, when I met him, and, later on, he got the rank of major, before he retired. He stayed in the Air Force after the war and he was a kind of an

inspiring leader. … You know, I don't know what it was, it was something just that he melded everybody together as one group, one crew. Then, I had a young co-pilot, Bill Tinsman. …

----------END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE----------

FC: … And went into single-engine flight [school] and washed out, and they transferred him over to four-engine. … So, that kind of was the talk around the crew for awhile. "Why is this guy, who … wanted to be a fighter pilot and washed out, [here]?" and he would probably take exception to this, … but, I don't want to really alienate anybody, but, he turned out to be a darned good crew member and pilot, too, (I liked him; he still writes me), and then, … we had Bob Weatherwax, who was our navigator, was from Chicago. He was a happy-go-lucky, great guy to go to town with, go pubbing with and pick up girls, women, and he was, boy, I'll get into trouble here, [laughter] … but, no, that's the way he was; you asked me. He was a very outgoing, good, party person. You know, when we went to town, he would always group everybody … together. … Of course, as you probably already heard from other … Eighth Air Force people, there was … no line between enlisted, tech sergeants or master sergeants, and … lieutenants, or colonels even, for that matter. They seemed to all blend together. I mean, … rank didn't mean so much, you know. Well, it meant something, I guess, in the final analysis, … and then, … [our] bombardier was … Dave Edmonds from Philadelphia, who was a very handsome, young [man], was only about nineteen years old, I guess, when we went overseas; a fellow who liked to drink, I'll tell you that. We used to, sometimes, have to put him in the shower to sober him up before a mission, but, … he was one of the causalities. We lost two of our crew over there. One of them was Dave Edmonds, who was killed coming back from Friedrichshafen, and the other one was my best friend, Sergeant Sofferman, who went down in Belgium, but, that's a whole new story [that] I just learned a couple of days ago, four weeks ago, and so, Abe Sofferman was our first radio operator. I was assistant radio operator, believe it or not, and flew my first ten or twelve missions as a tail-gunner on the crew. Then, we had Jack Harmon, who was from Maine, who was a waist-gunner, a very likable fellow, who was a former high school … boxer, and then, we had John Gibboney from Saxon, Pennsylvania, who was a farm boy from the Pennsylvania coal area, mining area, and then, we had, let's see, oh, Earl Parrish, can't forget Earl Parrish. He was from Indiana. I called him a hard-headed Hoosier. He was a steel worker. … I think he worked in the steel mills before the war. He was from Indiana, Freedom, Indiana, and the ball-turret gunner was Bill Kuban from Darien, Connecticut, who got wounded in that mission where we got so badly shot up and we almost went into the North Sea by Norway in November of '43, and, well, that was it, plus, myself. …

SI: What did your phase three training consist of?

FC: At Biggs Field? Well, we flew a lot of missions, … night missions, flew a lot of night missions, and, on one of those night missions, I remember, [laughter] … we used to fly up to Roswell, New Mexico, which was called Roswell Tower. We'd circle around the tower. … I never did see any UFOs, but, Roswell got to be famous, later on, as the UFO capital of the world, I guess, as you know, and the title of a famous TV … series, but, we flew up there. We used to fly over to Carlsbad Caverns and up to Santa Fe, and then, … one mission, we flew down to Oklahoma, and we used to drop some practice bombs in the desert, the range out there, practice bombing range, somewhere near Alamogordo, I forget the name of it now, but, one night, … we

were on a night mission, … I was sitting in the waist position, just taking a rest as it were, and, suddenly, we dove down, like this, you know, and somebody said, "What the hell was that?" We all flew up, almost hit the parachutes and everything flying around, oxygen bottles, so, we said, "Oh, that was a near miss, near miss, near miss," [laughter] somebody coming along in the opposite direction. We had to drop down like that, quick. We got back to the base and we got bawled out. … The pilot said, "Well, it was the other [guy]." "Well, who?" I went and talked to one of the lieutenants there in operations, and he said, "We have a lot of those in training." He said, "You'd be surprised how many planes, how many crews we lose in training from mid-air [collisions] … and crashes on take-offs and landings." So, there was a big attrition there in training.

SI: Did you ever witness any accidents?

FC: Not in training, no. We went over to Mexico one night. This is not about aviation, necessarily, but, it gives something of the idea about the way we were. There was another base there called, I believe it was artillery, Army artillery, AA, … it think it was, up on the mountain there. What's the name of that place? Was it Fort Bliss? and so, we go to this Mexican dance hall, and there would be all these Mexican girls on one side, and all of us Army Air Corps guys, and these other guys from the Army base, and we didn't like these guys from the Army base. It was a natural enmity or conflict between the two of us; I don't know [if it was] because we were flying, and we thought we were something, and they were ground people. So, anyway, these … guys thought they had the whole thing fixed up. So, they get out there and start dancing with these girls, it's Mexican music, and so, we said, "Well, we're not gonna let that go on, because they're gonna monopolize all the girls." So, we got a plan. So, we'd go get about ten or twelve guys that would constantly cut in, you know. They'd see these guys dancing with all these Mexican girls, they would cut in immediately, push them apart, grab the girl. Well, that didn't set too well with some of these Army guys, so, … one of them started swinging, and then, another one started swinging, chairs started flying, [laughter] tables started going, somebody broke a bottle. They were breaking bottles on the bar and throwing them at the bar. The bartender was hiding, [laughter] and so, I got down on all fours, you know. Tables were crashing, and I crawled out of there, I crawled right out of there, on to the street. Then, by that time, they called the MPs, and you could hear the whistles blowing, and … the Mexican police, too; that's what we're really afraid of, the Mexican police. So, I ran back, as fast as I could, down the main street of Juarez toward the border, toward the bridge, the bridge over the river, the Rio Grande, there, right past the aid station, right past the guard station. [laughter] I was going so fast, … I made it … back over to El Paso, and the other guys on the crew, everybody on my crew made it, but, they did get some of our people, … and they put them in the Mexican jail over there, … and then, the MPs had to go over, or the Air Police, or the MPs, had to go over and bail them out of the Mexican jail, and take them across the border, [laughter] and put them in the … base jail, 'cause of fomenting a riot. That's one thing I remember. They had a station there where they gave out condoms, you know, at the border. [laughter] You couldn't cross the border without [passing it].

SI: Where did you go next?

FC: We went to Biggs Field, El Paso, Texas, then, we went to New York. I went back on leave. I flew back to New York and went to the Soffermans and stayed with him for awhile. He lived up in the Bronx. He was from the Bronx, New York, and I was from New Jersey, so, we went back. … We flew back. We hopped on one of those military flights, and we got priority, because we were [destined for overseas], and we flew back. By this time, we were sergeants, staff sergeants, I guess. … We didn't get tech sergeant 'til later, but, we flew back, then, we reported to Herington Air Corps Base at Herington, Kansas, in August of '43, and, from there, there was a couple of funny things [that] happened there, but, then, we got our orders there, and I wanted to go to the Pacific, for some reason or other. I remember that so distinctly. I wanted to go to the Pacific Theater and not to the European Theater, so, I was hoping. … We didn't know, until we got airborne, what our orders were. … The pilot and the co-pilot could open it only when we got airborne, and then, we knew, when we got airborne, that we were heading for the ETO and the Eighth Air Force.

SI: Why did you want to go to the Pacific?

FC: I don't know. I thought it was warmer, more girls, I don't know. It just seemed to be more compatible. … So, we went, flew from there … all the way to Dow Field, Bangor, Maine, and then, from there, we flew to … Goose Bay, Labrador, and, [from] Goose Bay, we flew to BW 1, [Bluie West], BW 1, Greenland. That's where I had the radio antenna (trailing wire) out, listening to code. [When] we came in, it was a blizzard. There was a big storm. … I guess you've been described this before, BW1 had this, like a fjord; … at the end, there was a runway, but, not too big a runway, [laughter] and, at the end of that, there was a glacier. So, you had to make it, really had to make it, [on] the first go, and I had this trailing wire antenna out, you know; it's a long antenna, you reeled it out to get the right frequency, and I was listening. The radio operator was back sleeping in the waist, and, all of a sudden, the navigator tapped me on the shoulder, he said, "We're coming in." … I tried to get that thing in, [but], we hit the runway before I got it in completely. The metal on the end of it broke off. It went, "Swit," … hit a Quonset hut where a couple of officers were playing cards. [laughter] They thought, "Jesus, we're under attack," so, they rushed out, and, when we taxied to a stop there, they came over, and they started bawling my pilot out, and my pilot said, "Well, wait a minute, let's find out what happened," and he talked to me, and I talked to them, and, finally, my pilot smoothed everything over, and they were gonna put me in the brig or something, but, they said, "No, you're passing through. You're going overseas. You're on assignment. You'd better shape up and ship out," as they used to say. So, we stayed there about five or six days, in BW 1. Then, we flew, from there, … over the ice cap to Meeks Field, Reykjavik, Iceland, I remember that, and then, from there, … we were a couple of days there, then, we flew, from there, to, well, we were supposed to go into Prestwick, Scotland, but, … that got socked in, so, we went into what's called Nutt's Corner, Northern Ireland, near Belfast. … Oh, you know all these places?

SI: Yes.

FC: … So, we went into Nutt's Corner and, immediately, we went into town and took some English, … RAF, what do they call them? … The WRENs, I guess. They took us, in a jeep, into town, and, … [in] the first pub we went to, we met an English sailor, from the HMS something or other. He was in port and he told us all the things we should be careful about in a blackout.

We'd never … seen a blackout, … you know, how you guard your money, watch out for this and that and everything, and pickpockets, and then, at the end of his long, drawn out talk, and about ten beers [later], he said, "Could I borrow five quid?" He wanted to borrow five pounds. [laughter] So, we all chipped together and gave him five pounds. I don't know why you remember those kind of things.

SI: Was that your first interaction with the British?

FC: Yeah, … well, it was the first interaction with the blackout and with Belfast, yeah, and then, we flew over to Prestwick, … and that's where I saw the Spitfires on patrol, when we're coming in there, when the Spitfire squadrons were going out, and they were patrolling, 'cause we were in a war zone. You see, when we left Iceland, we were told to man the guns with loaded ammunition, you know, and so, I crawled back into the tail-turret, and I could look down, and I could see … the German subs down there, you could see them, you know, and, once in awhile, you could see a freighter coming along, and you knew that those subs were gonna meet up with that freighter, so, we were supposed to … radio positions in, but, I don't know if they ever got them or not, but, one thing that was stated, and reported, and pretty well confirmed was that they were sending out false direction signals from the subs, … see, because German *Luftwaffe* patrols could come out that far, so, we were actually in the war zone when we left Iceland, heading towards Stornoway in the Hebrides and Ireland. So, I went back there, and tested the guns, and shot off a few rounds, and watched them, tracers, but, that's all water over the dam.

SI: You could sense, from both your orders and the English people, that you were in a war zone.

FC: Oh, yeah. You could tell right away that you were in a war zone, probably like what's going [on] around the World Trade Center today, I hate to say [it], … and then, when we got to Shipdham, … we were assigned to the 44th Bomb Group, … Eighth Air Force. We knew we were going to the Eighth Air Force as soon as we left the US, but, we didn't know [which bomb group]. We went to … a place called Luton-Downstable first and landed there and that's where we all got drunk and bought the bar. We bought a whole supply from the bar. … One of our officers went to this bar, and we all went there and gathered, and the fellow said, "We're getting ready to close now," … you know, they used to have their set hours. So, one officer said, "How much to buy," so much, "of this … scotch and whiskey and beer." He went back and talked to this manager, and the manager come back and … gave us a figure, I forget what it was, a hundred pounds. So, everybody chipped together a hundred pounds, and we'd just gotten paid, you know, and we bought all this stuff, and carried it out, and sat down by the canal there, and we had girls on each side. [laughter] We'd roll over there with one girl, and then, drink, and then, roll over there with another. [laughter] That's stupid. I don't know why I remember that, … and then, we get back to the base, I had to run like hell to catch the last truck, last convoy truck, back to the base, 'cause we had to drink all this liquor.

SI: The Army Air Force uniform was very popular with the women.

FC: Very popular, yeah.

SI: How long had the 44th Bomb Group been stationed in England by the time you arrived?

FC: Well, … [one of] the first groups, of course, in '42 that went over there was the 44th. It was one of the earliest groups in the Eighth Air Force, in the Second Air Division.

[TAPE PAUSED]

… Here's the 44th Bomb Group history, … it's called *Liberators Over Europe*, … and it has most of the crews. … I didn't get over there until August of '43, so, you see, at that time, … the 44th and some other groups were in North Africa. … They'd just recently been on the Ploesti mission, you know? So, there were a lot of crews down there, and we got over to Shipdham, to the base, and there were very few airplanes available to fly, and we had to wait until the crews and the aircraft came back from North Africa, you know. So, what we did was, we borrowed some from other groups, [B]-24s, and we did some practice runs out over what's called the Wash. I don't know whether you know where that is. That's off the coast, on the North Sea there, and flew out there and did some practice bombings, and I also … took a refresher course in the radio equipment … up at a place called, gosh, I can't remember the name of it now. … We had bunkers there along the coast, along the beach, and we fired out at targets in the water. I forget the name of that place, Snettisham? It was near Peterborough. We called it the Wash.

SI: You were part of one of the first B-24 groups to become operational in Europe.

FC: … The 44th was, yeah, and the 44th … had been flying low level practice missions for quite awhile in England before they went to North Africa, to Benghazi, and they were flying … off East Anglia there. … I guess we might say it was classified or top secret, … at that time, what the target would be, … and so, we got there in late August or early September '43. The first mission I flew was a diversion to the Frisian Islands, off of Holland, where … the Second Air Division was diverting for some B-17s that were going into … Northern France. That was in October of '43. Schweinfurt was about that time, but, I wasn't on Schweinfurt.

SI: Could it have been Stuttgart?

FC: Stuttgart? … That must have been later, because Stuttgart is pretty far inland, isn't it? … but, I remember flying some diversionary missions over the North Sea there and getting shot at, [laughter] and I got kind of angry, because I didn't think that [was right]. Why should you go out there and be shot at when you're not even … to the main target, you know? … I volunteered for another crew, for O'Neil's crew, I believe it was, to fly on Munster, the 5th of November, 1943. That was really my first mission, you know, and I was quite reassured, because we were up in one of the lead elements, at that time, and … I guess we were leading the Second Air Division, and I could see [in] back of me all these elements stacked up, lower and high elements, … spread out across the sky, and I said, "Boy, we've got a lot of company up here," and I don't know whether that story is in there or not, about that mission, but, I was elated, because I was so anxious to go, you know. The strange thing is, I don't know why it is, but, every time I think about that time, I think about how anxious we were to go, fly missions, and, yet, it was kind of strange, because we'd really sweat them out, so, I don't know. I think there was a lot of feeling that, … instead of sitting around, you had to volunteer to get missions in, you know.

SI: Was the minimum combat tour still twenty-five missions at the time?

FC: Yeah. So, I volunteered with O'Neil's crew, and he didn't know me, and I didn't know him, but, … I was so ignorant, not ignorant, but, innocent, that we were going over. I could see the North Sea there, I could see the coast, and we crossed the coast at, I don't know, 20,000 feet or something like that, maybe, and I looked down, and I could see the coastline of Holland, and it was a perfectly beautiful, clear day, you know, over the sea, and, as we got going inland, I began to see these clouds forming, right off my wings, and I was sitting there. You know, the pilot … radioed back, said, … "Report in. What do you see back there?" I said, "Well, it's been beautiful," [laughter] something like that. "It's been beautiful. I could see for miles, good visibility, but, just recently, I've been seeing these little, black clouds," and he said, "Damn it,' he said, "that's flak. [laughter] … Don't you know flak?" and so, then, from there, we just kept getting more and more of those clouds, [laughter] and that was my first experience with flak, you know. They just drifted by like little, black puffs, and then, we started rocking, you know. [laughter] "Whoa," up in front, they started going up, like this, they'd say, "Hey, that was a close one." I said, "Whoa, wait a minute, that's flak." That was the first time I realized that there was somebody shooting at us and from then on in to the target. Of course, … they had a thousand flak guns around Munster, it was reported, or was said, I don't know, a thousand flak guns or batteries. … It was a heavily defended industrial center in Northern Germany, at that time, and the RAF had gone there about two weeks before and got the hell shot out of them. … We lost three aircraft in our group and one of them, *Peep Sight*, came back, and that's that famous picture with the big hole, big enough to drive a jeep through, in the side of the airplane, you know. So, it was a rough mission to begin with, but, I never forgot the first moment, you know. You see you got all these "friends" up there, so called, … that's the elation, and then, all of a sudden, you see the flak, and that's a downer. …

SI: What did you think of the B-24's performance in combat?

FC: Not much. No, I didn't like it too much. It (mushed?) along, this way, you know what I mean? It mushed along, but, then, again, I've heard so many people say, in [B]-17s, … that we were faster … at certain altitudes. … See, here's the mission of *Peep Sight,* of November 5th, '43, followed by Parker, and they carried these guys off of it. … They got something like a couple of hundred holes in it. Others ditched in the North Sea and others crashed in enemy territory. … You know, we always would say, when you come back, say, the first or second mission, "Well, how did that [rate]?" You'd ask the old timers, some guy that had ten missions was an old timer, [laughter] you'd say, "Well, what did you think of that one?" He'd say, "Aw, that was a milk run," and you'd say, "Jesus, I'd hate to be on a rough one," you know, and so, … you got these fellows that come back from Ploesti, of course, we had a lot of them in our barracks. Rollin Looker was one of them, Sergeant Looker. … Well, he ditched in the Mediterranean, they were coming back from Ploesti and they ditched, Carpenter's crew, … in the Mediterranean, and one of the upper turrets came down. … When they hit, the impact jarred it loose and it came down and killed two [men], the engineer, I believe, and the navigator. They were under it, but, … he told these stories about how they ditched, … and he saw all these planes going down, right and left, over Ploesti, and it scared the hell out of him. You know, he used to tell these stories and he scared the hell out of us, because we were new crews, you know. So, we thought every mission would be somewhat like Ploesti.

SI: Did you have partial fighter cover?

FC: No, not on that one, … not on those early missions. That wasn't until … early '44, I guess.

SI: Among the men in the barracks, were there a lot of superstitions? Did many men carry good luck charms?

FC: Yeah. Good luck charms?

SI: Some men carried rabbits' feet.

FC: Well, some people kept things that they were given by their girlfriends or their … wives from home, like, little medallions and things they wore around their neck. We had one fellow, … Bill Kuban, who always carried a Catholic medal, and he claimed it was lucky. Of course, he got wounded … about the fifth mission, but, … well, there were all kinds of things about; let me give you one example here. We had a card game that went on all the time in the barracks, blackjack or [something else], and we had this fellow called "Alabama." … See, a lot of the fellows we always called by their states. I don't know why that was. "Hey, Mississippi," or Alabama, if you were from Alabama, or Mississippi, or Texas, and so, he was from Alabama. He used to be the first one up in the barracks, to wake us up for missions at … 0400 hours, and he would go around, rouse us all up, and, well, this one night, he lost all of his money in a blackjack game, I don't know whether this story is … in that thing or not, but, … he lost all of his money, and … it was getting very late, and we knew there was a mission the next day. So, he threw his wallet down on the fire, and he said, "I won't be needing that anymore," and, the next day, of course, he got shot down and never was found, went into the North Sea. So, I mean, that kind of shook [you]. Of course, as you know, whenever crews went down, … and even when we're late, they didn't have to go down, understand? we would start going through their clothes in the barracks. "He's got a nice jacket. He won't need that anymore." … Of course, that was frowned upon by the commanders, the squadron commanders, but, I think it happened a lot. It happened most of the time, but, Alabama Gilbert was shot down and they never found him or the crew. They just went into the North Sea, never found them, and then, we had Bill Kuban, my ball-turret gunner, he would get up in the barracks and knock his head against the post there. He did that, and then, I'd say, "What are you doing that for?" He said, "Well, to relieve tension. It relieves the stress," right? You're thinking about the mission. He knocked his head, like this, against the post, strange.

SI: Can you tell me about your fifteen missions? Do you remember where you were sent?

FC: … I was on … one of the Berlin missions. I was on Zwickau, Berlin, Bernburg, Brunswick, Gotha, Pas-de-Calais, Oslo, Kjeller, Norway, and … a couple of the rocket sites over on the French coast, Pas-de-Calais and Lechfeld.

SI: Which mission was the most harrowing?

FC: Well, the one, of course, that I remember [laughter] was the one that I think it was a miracle we didn't … go down and that was the 18 November, 1943, [mission] to Kjeller Air Base, the Luftwaffe base in Lillestrom, … you know where Lillestrom is?

SI: In Norway?

FC: Yeah, about twenty miles from the City of Oslo. We've got a memorial over there to the Second Air Division, Eighth Air Force. … The crews that were on that mission, … we just went over there in '93 and dedicated it on the same anniversary date of the mission, and the Eighth Air Force and the Second Air Division put it there, and the Royal Norwegian Air Force is the custodian of it, because it's on their base. That base is still being used by the Royal … Norwegian Air Force. … We'd gone to Rjukan, … the heavy water plant, Norsk Hydro, where … Hitler was making the [heavy water for an atomic bomb]. They'd gone there a couple of days before, and they bombed that, but, they didn't experience any opposition. So, this was a base, on the 18th, I think they went there on the 16th or 17th, but, on the 18th, it's an interesting story about Rjukan, but, we went to Kjeller, because it was … one of the leading bases in … Scandinavia [being used] by the *Luftwaffe*, and they were refitting planes to ship to the Russian Front, and so, it was a major maintenance base. They also had a BMW factory there that was making engines, BMW engines, and so, we went there. … It was a long mission. I guess, next to Ploesti or, probably, Berlin, it was a very long mission and a cold one, very cold. I remember how cold it was. … November in the North Sea was cold, … about forty degrees or thirty-five degrees [below zero], something like that, and it was a cold mission and a long one, because we had to go about 700 miles up, make a big turn, and come back again, through the Skagerrak. The Germans had *Luftwaffe* squadrons in Northern Denmark and in very close; there's a narrow place there, you know, if you look at the map. So, I was … flying with my … whole crew, … the whole crew was there, and so, we were going in, and we saw these German fighters off there, like they were parallel with us. They were just flying along when they were, apparently, radioing down positions, but, I don't know whatever happened about that, because the German High Command was having a maneuver … that day at the base, and they had given all the civilian employees, the Norwegians, a day off, off the base. So, there was a whole cadre of German troops there and they were having a defense maneuver. They were practicing antiaircraft defense, and they were running around there, having a ground deployment of troops, and the leading general of the Germans, General Von Falkenhorst. You ever hear of him? He was the leading German *Luftwaffe* commander in Scandinavia, actually, at that time, and he was there reviewing the troops, reviewing the maneuvers, and we came over, and … I don't know how, but, we caught the Germans totally by surprise, because the story is, I learned this later, when I talked to some people over there, when we went back over there, about seven years ago, eight, ten years ago, that General Von Falkenhorst was up on this hill, looking down … at the base, and, here, he saw these [planes], we had about 110 bombers in our force coming, and he said, "(*Vas dis?)*?" [laughter] and his aide said, "Oh, I can assure you, Commandant, those are ours," and then, when the bombs started to fall, why, they had to run for their lives, you know. They had to hide in this bunker. So, we almost got … the German general. We dropped 836 500-pounders in about twelve minutes over that base. It wiped out eighty-five percent of it. Mosquitoes came back, a couple of months later, the RAF, and wiped out the rest of it, but, … some of us made two turns over that target, and the funny thing was that nothing got off. I mean, here, they had all these aircraft, they didn't get off. They were taken totally by surprise, I don't

know why, because some of their reconnaissance planes had seen our formations coming in over the North Sea, so, I don't know. I remember going up the Oslo Fjord, we were at about 15,000 feet or so, and I could see the flak batteries on the ships down there in the fjord. They weren't firing and we could see the whole [thing]. … It just had snowed that day, or the night before, and the whole City of Oslo [was] just outlined in the snow, you know, and I could see the mountains of Norway going up to North Cape, and then, … we came out over that base, and, years later, I met a sixteen-year-old boy who was hiding, a school boy, … in one of the shelters that day, and he remembered it. We met, and I met him through some kind of a miracle, but, I met him because I put an ad [out] … and asked if there were anybody who remembered that mission from over there, and he remembered, because he was in a bomb shelter that day, when we came over, and all of the Norwegians were cheering, because they hadn't seen any [Allied planes]. See, that's another thing about this mission, it was one of the few that had been made, *en masse*, any appreciable group, on a Norwegian center of population. So, the Norwegians had gone five years, or almost four or five years, under German occupation, and they'd never seen too many mass bombings by the Eighth Air Force. So, this was a big event and we wiped out that base. The casualties must have been very high among the Germans, although I never could find out, the sums range up to the hundreds, several hundred, maybe, because … they were all exposed, you know, and the aircraft didn't [get off the ground].

----------END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE----------

SI: This continues an interview with Mr. Forrest S. Clark on September 11, 2001, with Shaun Illingworth in Orlando, Florida.

FC: … Well, we dropped our … bomb load there and without much opposition. I don't remember, I think, coming back … out of the Oslo Fjord, there was a couple of flak bursts, but, it wasn't until we got out over the open water again that, then, the word had gotten out to squadrons, the Luftwaffe squadrons, and they had beefed up a lot squadrons around that time, from Denmark and Norway, in that area called the Skagerrak, that they came up. … I would say it looked like they had a hundred or more fighters up there, ME 109s, I even remember seeing … some Junkers, JU 88s, FW 190s. … We had lost some power; we had lost some turbo charger power. We were lagging behind. See, I was in the tail, so, I could see everything, and I couldn't see the rest of the formation. Where were they? They were gone, (useless?). Anyway, it was customary, after a bomb run, everybody headed out there, "Get the hell out of here," as fast as they could, you know. So, they'd taken ahead and gone ahead, and we were lagging behind, and, as a matter-of-fact, from the target on, after the target, we started lagging behind, and I didn't see anybody back there, and I said, "That's not too good," because there's nobody back there, and then, I saw the fighters, you know. The fighters, they lined up at the tail. They were coming in right at level [laughter] with everything going, you know, everything, and I had fired the guns several times before that on missions, but, this time, … we were told to fire, and then, watch our tracers, and then, adjust for … the lead, and watch the tracers, and … fire bursts, you know, but, I just let go with both this twin .50s and was filling the whole sky back there, you know, and they were coming in and coming in, and I could see the pilots' heads, and helmets, and even their faces, they came in so close. I thought they were gonna ram us. I said, "They're gonna ram us. They're gonna ram us." He said, "Shut up and shoot." [laughter] You know, they'd come right in at level, then, they'd dive down at the last minute, and go under us, and come in another

[wave]. … Everybody was operating, the tail guns were operating, the nose-turret, everything, the ball-turret, or should have been operating, but, anyway, … there was a lot of noise, a lot of confusion, but, they were coming in, and I said, "They're lining up back there." I could see them lining up and coming in, one at a time. I don't know why they were coming in at the tail, but, they were, and so, … you couldn't miss them, let's put it this way. … It was said, … I learned this later, that they were firing rockets, which I had never seen before, but, they had these .20 mm cannons, you see, that was the thing. They could do a lot of damage, these .20 mms. So, I was this way … and a shell went right through. It didn't have much to go through, because, in those B-24 turrets, they had a big piece of thick Plexiglas there, but, there was an opening, not too much protection. The wind used to blow through there, and I was over this way, firing, and the ball-turret gunner, Bill Kuban, came up out of the ball-turret, … I still, to this day, don't know [why]. He should have stayed there, but, he came up and was bringing ammunition cartridge strips back to me, in the tail, because I was running short. My guns, … the belts were running low and I'd called for some. I don't know when I expected to pause and reload those damn things, because that was a job, especially at that altitude. So, anyway, … I was over this way and a shell went through here, right over my shoulder, and hit him, and he went down. Then, the bail out bell rang, and I heard the bail out bell in all this noise, you know, and firing, and the confusion, and I heard the bell. … I said, "What the hell is that bell?" … At first, I thought it was a dream, but, then, I realized that it was the bail out bell. So, I rolled back out of the turret and it was all these hot shells, spent shells, covering the whole bottom of the aircraft, and blood. This guy was bleeding, and I looked at him, took one look at him and said, "I don't think there's anything we can do for you. He looks like he's gone." He had his eyes rolled up. … So, Gibboney came back, he said, "Get the hell out of here. We've got to bail out. … Don't you hear that bell?" I said, "Wait a minute." … They were still attacking, so, I said, "Well, I've got to go back into the turret and finish up shooting." He said, "No, forget that, start throwing stuff out." So, we threw flak suits, everything we could, oxygen bottles, … to lighten up the back, and I opened the rear hatch and looked down, the camera hatch we called it, in the rear there, and looked down and saw the North Sea and the white caps, and I said, "Wait." He said, "Go, go, go." I said, "Wait a minute," … and then, I don't know what made me stop, but, something did, and, by this time, Kuban was out, totally, and we carried him back and put him behind the bulkhead, but, I looked down at the North Sea, and … Gibboney said, "What are you doing?" and I said, "Well, I'm praying." [laughter] So, I got down, and I really prayed, you know, and, just at that time, a thin layer of, well, not so thin, actually, clouds formed over the North Sea, and we went into it. We were heading straight down for the water, you know, by this time, and the German fighter pilots probably had written us off. … When we went into that cloud, they lost us or they were out of [range]. We were pretty far out by that time, so, … they broke off their attacks, and, from that point on, we just limped back over the water, I mean, [it] just looked like a hundred feet in some places. We'd go down, sink down, then, roar up again, then, sink down and roar up again, and I looked out there, and I could see a hole in the wing. It looked like it's big enough to drive a jeep through, in the wing, and so, anyway, I think there's a better picture of this, but, there's the plane. …

SI: Wow.

FC: This engine was completely shot up. We had no hydraulic fluid, we didn't have any landing gear, that was shot away, and about 150 holes in the plane, and so, for about three [hours], it

seemed like hours and hours, we just [limped along], and we'd see other planes going down. We saw some of our other group [members go down], Houle. Lieutenant Houle went down. We saw the plane go down and you couldn't ditch those [B]-24s. They were not ditchable, really. I mean, they'd break-up, you know, a Davis wing. You know, it wasn't like the [B]-17 wing. We devised this plan; we were gonna go down, the pilot was gonna ditch, then, … no, first, we were gonna bail out, use our Mae West, then, … in the water, and that water is about forty degrees, and then, … he's gonna ditch the plane, inflate the big raft, and go around and pick us up, which was about a million to one shot that we got everybody out of there. … Anyway, so, we limped on and on. … Then, I saw the coast coming up. … I wasn't sure what coast it was. I thought it might be the Dutch coast or the French coast. I didn't know what it was and I was completely disoriented. … Then, the order came back, "We can't get the gear down. The wheels are shot away. What are we gonna do?" and the pilot's command came back, "Jump, parachute, everybody out," except him and the wounded gunner. So, we bailed out and, as I was coming down, I remember thinking that you've got to free fall, so [that] you don't get tangled in … those big stabilizers, you know, those vertical stabilizers on the [B]-24. We had cases of where guys pulled their cord too soon, and the chute got [tangled], and that was all she wrote. So, I let myself fall. I counted to ten, you know, and then, … I said, "Gee." I looked up and there's the airplane. [laughter] … It looked like it was still there, so, I counted again to ten, and I'm looking up, I was also looking down. [laughter] So, when I finally pulled the cord, I came down over this farm field, which was a very muddy field. Luckily, it was muddy, and I hit, "Bang," like that, and rolled over about ten times in the mud, and my chute … was pulling me across the field, and I saw a farmer with a pitchfork come running. He stuck it, like this, at me. I put my hands up. [laughter] I thought, "Jesus, we've made a mistake. That damned navigator screwed up again and we're back in Germany," [laughter] but, luckily, it was England, about twenty miles from the base, fifty miles. We were pretty close. … I said, "Where are we?" in English, and he said, "Why, you damned Yankees." He said, "Don't you know your (geography?)?" something to that effect. So, then, I remember, I dug my hands into the dirt and wiped them on my flight suit and I said, "That's enough for me. I quit." They took me into the hospital, of course, and I did have a bad foot, I still have it, from that landing, 'cause, when I landed, instead of rolling, I put my feet down and hit, and you're supposed to [roll]. See, we never had any … parachute training, as flight crews. I don't know why that was. … One of my gripes about the Eighth Air Force was, they used to put us in these decompression chambers and send us up, you know, to ten, fifteen, twenty, 25,000 feet, and, you know, they'd ask you to have your oxygen mask there, ready, and, when you … felt yourself going to pass out, you put the mask on, but, we never had any parachute training, you know. … As a matter-of-fact, … when you check[ed] out this parachute, go through the line, … the supply sergeant would say, "Now, this is a perfectly good, packed parachute, but," he said, "you know, sometimes things happen, and, if it doesn't work, why, you can always bring it back," then, he'd laugh, but, the thing is that we didn't have any [training]. … Actually, we did have a couple of crews who practiced jumping, and … we thought that was stupid, you know, but, now that I look back at it, I don't know, I think maybe it wasn't so stupid. … I just want to say one thing about … my friend who was lost over Belgium and, about six months ago, now, I contacted the Belgian Air Force. … He's an airman, first class, Peter Loncke, over at Lommel, Belgium. … He makes a point of archeologically checking these crash sites of World War II bombers, B-17s and [B]-24s and I told him that I wanted to know about this one bomber, Lieutenant Pinder. There was a call [that] went out one morning, about four o'clock in the morning, for a mission … for radio operators, two radio operators. We

went down to the flight line. It was the 29th of January, 1944 and it was a mission to Frankfurt. … Sofferman was my first radio operator and I was assistant, so, we both could have flown on that mission, but, he chose to go. … We argued and he decided to go, so, I could have been on that crew. They got over Belgium, on the return from the target, and got hit by an FW 190. A wing was set afire, the plane went into a spin. Then, I think four men were killed in the crash and the others jumped. Pinder and Sofferman, the pilot and Sofferman, were hidden by the Belgian partisans for thirty-one days in the vicinity of Houffalize, Belgium. … I didn't know where the plane came down for thirty or forty years. I didn't know, really, what happened to Sofferman, the details, but, then, I found out when this fellow went down to the general area, the Ardennes, where the Battle of the Bulge had been fought. He found a little village there, and he asked the *burgermeister,* did he know of a World War II plane, a [B]-24, [that] had come down, crashed, near there? and he said, "Oh, yes. It's right over here, about five kilometers away. I can show you … the crash site." So, he went over there … with this mayor of this town, and, there, … in the woods, they found this big depression that had been dug out, and he came back, a couple of days later, with metal detectors. They dug up pieces of the fuselage, pieces of the arms, of the .50 caliber shells in there, and they got a piece that had the serial number, luckily, and they matched that up with the serial number of the Pinder bomber, so, they knew it was his crash site. So, on the 17th of September, which is next week, they're gonna dedicate a memorial over there to this crew, this Eighth Air Force, 44th Bomb Group crew, and they're going to have a memorial put up there which closes out a long chapter in World War II history. I mean, here it is, the year 2001, and, for forty years, or forty-five years or more, I didn't know, really, what happened. What happened was that after they bailed out, they were taken in by the partisans, who saw them coming down [in] the chutes. So, they were hidden … in several different farm houses to evade the Germans, but, somebody informed the Germans and told them where the hideout was, so, the Germans surrounded this hideout, and it was a four-day shootout, a four-day battle, between the partisans and the Germans, and Sofferman, who told me, personally, who was my best friend on my original crew, Griffith's crew, … that he would never be taken prisoner of war, 'cause he was Jewish, you know. … He was very gung-ho. He always carried his .45 on every mission, you know. Some of us didn't carry the .45s on the missions, but, he did. So, he made a break for it, tried to run from this farmhouse. Instead of giving himself up to be captured, a prisoner of war, he made a break for it, and, of course, the Germans shot him down right on the spot, and he was killed in action. So, I've always wanted to know that story, and it wasn't until … a few weeks ago that I got the full story, and I want to say that war is a terrible thing, not only from the standpoint of what you have to go through, but, it also leaves a lot of gaps and a lot of memories … that haunt you in years to come. … You have to get some kind of closure on them. Now, … I don't want to get editorializing, but, in view of what happened today, and this is … September 11th, 2001, … we cannot be too vigilant in this country about internal threats as well as … external threats. Hitler and Japan were tremendous threats to us in the World War II period, but, we still have threats from within, and we can't be too vigilant. We've got to be on guard all the time. Now, I think that a lot of the World War II generation are dying off, and it's gonna be difficult for them to play any significant role, but, I would like to see, if it was possible, … the World War II generation, of which I am … one of the members, some day have a memorial of, say, a hundred years of peace, something like that. I mean, where we could … get a world where we would have a century of peace and they talk about all these memorials of World War II; a memorial in Washington is fine, and the memorials that we put over there are fine, and the memorials at Normandy are fine, but, the greatest memorial to these

people, like my friend, … Sergeant Sofferman and … Lieutenant Edmonds, who was also a casualty from my crew, would be a lasting peace of, say, a century. That would be the greatest memorial to those people. Also, another thing that I think is important is that it's taught in school, you know, not among, necessarily, college [students], but, even earlier than college, that these sacrifices were made and are, in some respects, still being made. So, I hope that whatever I say on this short tape, and I know I rambled on quite a bit, … is that we will learn some lessons from this that we can apply to the 21st Century, which is now beginning, and that if there's anything that we can do, like volunteer to go into the schools to talk about these things, [we should]. … Not to scare kids; I always get, when I go to school, the question, "Did you kill anybody in the war?" … Of course, we killed, just like George McGovern in the new book by Stephen Ambrose. … Of course, what do you think we did when we dropped these 800-pound [bombs] or these thousands of bombs on these German cities? Somebody was killed, sure, you know. So, yes, but, on the other hand, our people were killed, too, so, you know, it works both ways. … So, I hope that people will understand that it's not just a game, war. … I give credit, … I didn't see it, but, we all saw *Private Ryan*, a great picture by Steven Spielberg, and all of that, but, to the people who were there, who went through it, it wasn't really a game. It wasn't a reality game, like *Survivor*. [laughter] It's something much more lasting, and it leaves scars on people long after the event, you know, and so, I don't think the youth should regard war, the Second World War, or any of the other wars for that matter, as games or something, … you know, where people went out and killed each other aimlessly, but, they should carry some kind of a message, because human life is precious, you know, and of all the times in the world, this date, September 11, 2001, with what's happened in New York and Washington, should bring that message home to us, that human life is precious, and I want to leave that message with people who hear this.

SI: I think that is very appropriate.

FC: … I also want to say something, thank you to Rutgers, because, for a long time, I've been writing these things, and I had been writing a lot of details, which I feel, sometimes, aren't going anywhere. … I did donate something to Rutgers Library about my war experiences, along with some things, also, about my career in journalism, which I hope that others, research people, will take advantage of and study, and that, in some small way, I wound up contributing, because I don't, maybe, have too much longer to go on this earth, but, I want to leave some kind of a legacy, and that would be my legacy that these documents have [recorded]. So, if there's any more questions, I will try to answer them.

SI: Can you tell me about the day you were shot down?

FC: … April 13th, that's an unlucky day, April 13th, 1944. We were on a mission to Lechfeld, Germany. … I believe it was an ME 262 base. As you know, as well as I do, or probably more than I do, the ME 262 came in late in the war as a German *Luftwaffe* fighter and was a very effective jet fighter. … I used to see it go through our formations like a blink, you know. You'd see a little dot, and then, "Swish," it's gone, and I remember them very well in the later missions. … On this mission, now, that's a rather deep penetration, DP, to go to Lechfeld. That was way over … near Dachau, not too far south of Augsburg … in southern Germany, quite a ways across enemy territory there. Anyway, we got over the target, and got hit by flak, and lost a lot of fuel

and the fuel was streaming out [laughter] in big streams, I remember. It was a very dangerous situation. … The pilot, with the help of the engineer, calculated how much fuel we had left. We couldn't … possibly make it back over 700 or 800 miles of German occupied territory to a base in England. … From 20,000 [feet], we could see the Alps, over to the south. … I was the radio operator that time, because, by that time, we'd lost our [radio operator]. Sofferman had gone down. … We got rid of our bomb load over the target. I remember seeing the target, … the bombs going right into the runway, hitting these 262s and blowing them to bits there, and I said it was a pretty good bomb pattern, but, we didn't have any left, but, somehow or other, … we kept the bomb bay doors open. I don't know exactly why. … A radio operator's job on a [B]-24 was to go back … if the bomb bay doors creeped, as they sometimes did. They'd creep, slowly close. There was a manual [crank], you remember that? … You had to go and manually crank them open. So, I was back there, trying to manually crank open the bomb bay doors, [laughter] and you try that at, say, 15,000 feet or so, whatever, and I was trying to do that, and then, the pilot said, "Okay, we're going. We're gonna try to make Swiss territory," and it was right over there. It looked like it was right over there. [laughter] So, I said, "What are we gonna do now?" … Well, he said, "We'll send a message over," [laughter] in code, of course, "that we're trying to divert to Swiss territory and we're out of fuel," or very low on fuel, and … so, I coded this message, I'll never forget this, and sent it, in code, bomber code. I don't think they ever got it. I mean, maybe the other formation got it, but, we were … separated from the formation by that time, and so, just as we got near the border, … it's not in the story, but, I learned this … very recently, there were four burst of flak, "Bang, bang, bang, bang," and the waist gunner, Sergeant Harmon, got his finger shot off. He was holding one of the waist guns, because there were still fighters around, … and he got hit by a piece of flak, and then, the pilot, … "Swish," dove down to the right, I believe it was to the right, dove down immediately to the right, and … we looked up, and, "Bang, bang, bang, bang," there were four more flak burst just where we had been. So, if we had been just a second or two seconds later diving, we'd have gotten blown to bits. … They got our range, you see, the first time, and the pilot was smart enough to know to go into a quick drive to the right, but, then, the flak burst appeared right where we were, [had been], so, we were very lucky. We went into Dubendorf with no fuel at all, practically, and that's near Zurich, and crashed, cut the trees off as we went down. We cut the trees right off with our wings, rolled into a big ball on a grass field. … It was a … Swiss Air Force base, and they were flying ME 109s out of there, so, it looked just like German planes. So, we didn't know whether we were in Germany. When I got down out of the bomb bay, I let myself out, I flicked the switch on the IFF to blow it up. We had a little IFF machine back there. I flipped the switch and it set a detonator off, … "Boom." We were told to do that if we came down in enemy territory, or blow the plane up, but, we didn't have time to blow the plane. So, as soon as I got down out of the bomb bay, I saw what looked just exactly like German soldiers with automatic rifles all around the plane, surrounding the plane, and so, I said, "What the hell is going on here? … Did we make a mistake? We must have landed at Munich." So, anyway, … I started walking away from the plane real fast, because I thought it was gonna blow up anyway, even though it didn't have much fuel in it, but, you could smell the fuel. It was leaking. So, I walked away, and I walked about fifty yards, and, all of a sudden, I felt this gun at my back. I looked around and there was this little German soldier with a gun, looked like about seventeen years old, sticking right in my back. [laughter] I put my hands up, I said, "That's as far as I'm going." They took us in to interrogation and asked us about [the] bombing of Schaffhausen, which was the big controversy at that time. We had bombed some Swiss cities, the Eighth Air Force had, you

know. We'd bombed Zurich, … Basel and Schaffhausen, that was the famous one, just a few days before this happened, so, they were very uptight about that, the Swiss were, and they interrogated us [for] about eight hours, held us in this operations center, and then, they put us in a van, took us to the schoolyard, where we slept on the ground for three nights, and then, they put us in a train, took us up to Adelboden. That's a whole chapter of World War II history [that] not many people know about. We had 1500, mostly Eighth Air Force and some Fifteenth Air Force men, in internment camps at Adelboden, at Wengen, and at Davos. The three main camps were Adelboden, Wengen, and Davos, and I came out after D-Day, and I have a little story about how we found out about D-Day, but, it's … too long to tell, but, I came out in December of '44. … A group of us Yanks, British and Americans, there were British and Americans there in the internment [camp], had gone to Zurich and were under guard there, and we're coming back to our … camp up in the Alps. We knew we'd never get out of that place, because it was completely up [in the Alps] and you had to be an expert skier, and so, we got in the train, … going to Bern, which was the capital, and I knew that [if] we could get to the American embassy in Bern, they would help us get out, over into France. … We had about five guards, all armed guards, Swiss guards. They would march us off. We said, "We want to … have a rest stop at Bern. … We have to go to the john." [laughter] … So, a group of us, we had about fifteen of us and … about five guards, they got us off the train. They would count, "*Ein, zwei, drei*," … but, they would lose count, … so, when we got back on, there would always be a couple missing. Anyway, we got off the train there, … at the Bern station, mixed with the crowds there. … Now, you've got to remember, we had Swiss clothes on. We sat at a café, an outdoor café, along the … Bahnhof Strasse there. … This German Swiss, there were a lot of … German sympathizers, he came up and said, "Ah, *bitte (knoersher*?)," [laughter] and so, … we paid attention to him, and the other guy who was with me, Carl, … he spoke German very well, I couldn't speak German, so, he hailed a cab, said to the cab driver, "Take us to the American embassy." So, we got in the cab, went to the American embassy, ran right past the guards there, the Swiss guards there, and, in there, we found about fifteen Americans waiting to get out. … To make the story short, we were there [for] about four or five days, and then, they put us in … Swiss clothes, Swiss cigarettes, or German cigarettes, and we … walked along the streets to this house, a big villa. Behind the house, there was a moving van, walked up into this van, and the whole van was filled with GIs trying to get out, escape. Then, they closed the van up, sealed it up, and drove us about five or six hours to Geneva, up in the mountains, outside of Geneva. There, we met a French Underground, Maquis, guide, who worked for the French Resistance, a couple of them, who took us walking. We walked by night and hid in these different farmhouses by day for three days, 'til we got to the border, … there's a big mountain there, over the mountains, and it was cold. … This was December, you know. We walked 'til we got to the border, and then, there was barbed wire, and then, there was a stream, it was an ice cold stream. We had to wade through that stream, go under that barbed wire, and run up a snow filled, icy field to a farmhouse and knock on the door three times, and … the French guides told us that would be France, and … they'd be waiting for us over there. So, these guys had Swiss watches on, everything; they tried to take everything they could, backpacks, … everything. … They couldn't get under the wire, because it got stuck there, so, I pushed them through, and they ran up there, and then, the next morning, instead of waiting … [to be] picked up, … this Carl, a friend of mine, got anxious, so, we didn't want to wait. So, we started walking in what we thought was the direction of the nearest town. Well, it turned out that we were walking back toward the border. … Along came this patrol, and we saw the patrol coming down the road on a jeep, and it was an American

colonel with the Seventh Army, I guess, and he had an … assistant with him. … We hadn't shaved in about a week, and we were dressed in civilian clothes, and he said, "Those are our men. I can tell they're Yanks." [laughter] He said, "Jump in." So, we jumped in and went to Annecy, where we were given new uniforms and showers and taken to … Lyons, France, where we were given the first meal, we hadn't eaten in about seven days, … by German prisoners of war, I remember that. The German prisoners of war came out and the Captain said, "Now, I don't want any of you guys to say anything to these men or cause any incidents." He said, "I just want you to mind your own business and eat." When I saw these prisoners of war, and this was in December of '44, I said, "Boy, Hitler is in real trouble," because these guys looked like they were on their last legs. They looked terrible. They were all about sixteen or seventeen years old. … They looked like they … had malnutrition, they looked thin, they looked very bad. … From there, they flew us back to London, and, eventually, back to the base. I was only at the base about two weeks, and I got orders to go return to the US, fly back to New York, but, the whole episode's about these … 1500 or so men. We lost … about sixty-two men in Switzerland who either crashed, or were killed coming in, or died of wounds, and they were buried over there, and very few people know that. We have a Swiss Internees Association, which was formed about ten years ago, and … they have gone back to Switzerland to visit some of these places, but, it's a strange thing; there was a lot of anti-American feeling in Switzerland, especially in the German speaking part of Switzerland. … There were stories about how these taxi drivers and other people in Switzerland would abduct American airmen, and British airmen, too, they had some RAF people over there, and turn them over to the Germans at the border, at the German border, for a bounty, you know, and those stories were pretty well proven to be true.

SI: I have never heard of that.

FC: Yeah. I was going with a girl, oh, gosh, I don't know how to get into this, this is outside the scope, … in Zurich and she had me over to her house one night for dinner. There was a knock on the door about midnight and some neighbor said, "(*Politzie*?)," "Police are coming," because, you see, it was off limits. We weren't supposed to be there. We were supposed to be back … under guard and we'd sneaked out of the hotel … and got into Zurich. So, I ran. I went out through the … john window, down an alley, and ran. You know how those streets are in those old towns, they're just alleys, very narrow and winding streets. I ran all the way back to the railway station, … and, just as I got there, this other guy, my friend, he was running, too. [laughter] We both got in the same cab, and we told him … to take us back to Baden, which [is] where we're staying, and we would sneak back into the camp. Well, instead of going to Baden, we thought, "Well, maybe this guy is gonna turn us over to the Germans." So, we were going along, you know, in the night, and we said, … "We don't trust this driver. He might be, you know, [a sympathizer]." So, we bailed out. We just jumped out of the cab and into a ditch, … it happened to be filled with water, but, we didn't [care], and we hitchhiked back to the station and took the train, but, I will never know, to this day, because … the stories were that some of these taxi drivers were making extra money on the side by turning Americans over to the Germans, you know, for a bounty. … I think it's true, because there were cases of that reported. …

SI: Within the internment camp, was there a rumor mill or an information network?

FC: Oh, yeah. Well, … like Sam Woods, … we had people who were helping. You see, the thing was that, under the Geneva Convention of International Law, we were supposed to stay there until the end of the war in Europe, which wasn't until May of 1945, … and then, we knew that when we got out, … we were not really supposed to go to the Pacific War, because we were in the classification of prisoners of war, or the same sort of classification, although, we weren't really. … What we had was two radios, the German radio, which gave the propaganda, and the BBC, … clandestine radio, which was listened to by a lot of the Swiss, and you could trust that, but, you couldn't trust the Germans. When the invasion happened, I remember, the Germans, for days and days and days, said, "Oh, it was a small force that was thrown back at the beaches and they didn't gain a foothold," and all that stuff, and we didn't know … the true story until days [later]. As soon as it was confirmed that this was really the invasion, all the Americans and the RAF people that were there in our base started trying to sneak out. They would put on a disguise, they'd take their skis, they'd walk out, … but, most of them were caught before they even got to the border, because the Swiss had excellent patrols, ski patrols, and, to get by them, you had to be good, … and then, they put them in these, did you ever hear of the "Black Hole of Wauwilermoos."

SI: No.

FC: You should read that, by Dan Culler, my friend, Dan Culler, who was thrown into this. He tried to escape twice, and they caught him, and, under the Swiss law, they could put him in a detention camp, which was … something like a concentration camp, with guard towers all around it, and … the story is well documented in his book, but, to answer your question, yes, we did have a lot of underground information filtering into the internment camp, and we also had some bad information. … One of my friends, we were sitting down, talking like this, about what route we would take to get out, you know, and … what form of transport we would use. … There were certain Swiss who would take money to get you out, but, you had to trust them. A couple of times, one of my friends, who recently died, he trusted one, and, when they got to the station, there, … the contact point, the guy didn't show up. Instead of him showing up, some Swiss police showed up, and arrested him immediately, and put him in jail, civilian jail, … although he had to pay him. So, the guy got the money, but, he didn't carry out [his end], you know. … So, you had to be sure you could trust [them], but, I knew that [if] we could get to the American embassy in Bern, we could trust the American embassy. It was there that Allan Dulles was working, the founder of the CIA, of course. He was working in clandestine [operations]. There were people in Switzerland, in those times, you couldn't trust. … Either a person was a spy for one side or a spy for the other side and would trade information at the drop of a hat, you know. You couldn't trust [them].

SI: How was morale among the internees?

FC: Morale? …

----------END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO----------

FC: … To go up into the mountains, and, sometimes, … the Swiss Army taught us to ski. I remember, I got pictures of some Swiss Army officers, but, the guards were always there. They

were always there, somewhere close by or right around you, and that irked, not irked, that's too weak a word, I guess it would madden some GIs, because, see, their idea was that they had to get back to their base, back to their unit, back to their group, and go back on flying duty again. That was their duty. It was their duty to escape. The Swiss took the idea that it was their duty to remain there until the end of the war, so, there was this conflict, always, between [them], and then, there was the guys who just didn't care. They just were willing to sweat the war out there, but, the Defense Department and the US Air Force, after the war, investigated every case of an American crew that went into Switzerland, and, for that matter, Sweden, and they couldn't find one that was not justified by battle damage, in other words, every case they found. … There's been a lot of malicious rumors that some crews actually defected, but, I can guarantee you that wasn't the case. That's not the case, because they all had [battle damage]. They checked out those cases. These planes were in various stages of damage, … all of them, and so, there was no case of [defection]. If you want to read a good book on that, … it's called *Haven or Hell*, by Roy Thomas. He has documented every crew and every aircraft that went in there, B-17s or B-24s, and even some fighter planes went in there. … Each one of them had damage, had justified reasons. … There was all kinds of stories about that and I think … it's being unjust to the crews that went in there, because there was nothing like that. I mean, the fact is that in the case of my bombardier, Lieutenant Edmonds, they had bombed Friedrichshafen, which is not far [away], as you know. It's on the lake, Lake Constance, between Germany and … Switzerland, … and his pilot, I just learned this … recently, too, his pilot said, or somebody on the crew, I think it was the bombardier, said, "Look, there's Switzerland over there. Why don't we go to Switzerland. We're shot up. … There's a good chance we won't make it back." Friedrichshafen was pretty deep and the pilot said, "No, we're going back. We're gonna make it back." … They got over the beach in England and they crashed and five of the crew was killed in the crash, see. So, it's just a gamble, you know.

SI: During your training, did you have any idea of how dangerous your missions would be?

FC: Listen, … in training, you mean in flight training? … Well, no, I didn't. I didn't really have … any idea of that. I didn't think about that. I thought about, "Well, it's gonna be … interesting, flying." … I got all this information. I got … education, actually, in radio equipment. I knew about guns and, you know, I knew how to fire guns. … To answer your question directly, I really didn't think about that. That's strange to sound, but, I really didn't. It wasn't until we got over there and, as I told you, my awakening was on that first mission when I saw that flak.

SI: Before we discuss your return to New York, is there anything else that you would like to mention?

FC: … Do you want to go into what I did after that? … Well, that's another book. Well, I returned and, well, the only thing I want to talk about is this, … the psychological problems. We had a fellow in the crew, … you know, I don't want to get on a dangerous subject, but, there were a lot of gay people. You've got to remember that in that war, we didn't hear much about gay people, like gays in the military, like you hear about today. So, there were, actually, instances of where gay people, and I probably knew some of them, flew combat missions and exposed themselves to the same dangers as we did. … You know, it's a funny thing, you talk

about, now, my friend, that brings up the subject about racial questions. My friend was Jewish, but, we didn't think of him as Jewish, my best friend, Sofferman. We didn't really think of him as Jewish, and I just met a guy who met him over there in the partisans' camp, and he said he didn't think of him as Jewish. … When you're flying together in a mission situation on a combat crew, everybody, you forget about racial differences. Of course, there were no black people, but, that wasn't our fault. [laughter] That was … the higher ups, [they] determined policy, but, I don't remember [there] ever being any anti-Semitic remarks made about my friend on our crew or … any other crew for that matter. … That goes for gays, too. I know … there's ways that you could tell they were gays. They didn't try to make a determined effort to separate them, although they said they had psychological testing and all that stuff. … Well, the other thing is, it's amazing to me to think about modern day flying, where we went over there after a rather quick training, you know, and were thrown into a very, you'll have to admit, horrendous war in the air, but, you see, … the thing was that there never had been a war exactly like this before, you know. World War I and the Civil War and all those, this was kind of a different war, especially up there, in the sky, in the air, you know. So, we were not, I don't think even the leaders were so prepared for it, you know, what happened, because it was just unprecedented, you know, … but, physical training, okay, [laughter] it makes me laugh, nowadays, when I know these fighter pilots, … because I met some, … take such wonderful care of their bodies, physical training. I mean, they stress that. We had physical training, but, after we got to be on flight crews, that sort of disappeared, I don't know why, but, we drank too much, we went out with too many women, we stayed up, sometimes all night, before missions. We sobered up on oxygen, pure oxygen, [laughter] by cracking it. … Of course, in basic training, we took a lot of so-called calisthenics, but, I don't remember the combat crews doing that. Every time I saw a combat crew, it was either in town drunk, or pubbing, or laying around the barracks playing cards or something like that, you know, waiting for the next call. So, I often wonder how we did that, because it takes a lot of physical stamina to fly an eight hour mission, you know, especially at altitudes, and, yet, we didn't have any organized [regimen]. I know that when we were in basic training, of course, we were taking [physical training] every day, but, … we were more or less excused from [that]. I just don't know how it happened that we had such a great number of flight crews that endured a lot of these hardships in flying, and depravation of oxygen or freezing. … I got frostbite, it's on my record, I had frostbite, and they had to cure that before I got out of the Army, so-called, or the Air Force, but, I had frostbite, aerotitis, from the ears, I … had that. … Those funny suits, you know, they weren't too good either, the heated suits. They would sometimes short out and you couldn't take those gloves off to fix the guns or do anything. If you didn't shave, the oxygen mask, did you know that? The oxygen mask didn't fit right or it leaked and you didn't get the maximum benefit out of it. A lot of people don't know that, but, that's the truth. … There was a lot of rigorous things put on the body, the human body, and, yet, we didn't think about allotting hours every day to go out and exercise and keep up, walk on the treadmill, for example, which I was supposed to do today, which I didn't do, but, I do more exercising now than I did then. So, I don't know. That's one point that I would like to stress. Also, the fact is that, … okay, we hear a lot about D-Day. … D-Day was a great thing, and I certainly don't want to take anything … from the men who were in D-Day, but, in effect, every time we went over Germany, in the Eighth Air Force, we were facing sort of our own D-Day. We were flying four, five hundred, six, seven hundred miles, sometimes, into enemy territory, crossing over the enemy frontlines, as it were, although, you might say, "Well, you were at 20,000 feet," but, … that's not the point so much. … So, actually, we … were there in Germany, in Central Germany, deep in

Germany, long before the first troops landed at Normandy, and there was a battle going on up there in the sky involving human beings and airplanes, and I don't think that should be lost, and, also, the other point is that a lot of the missions that we were flying in … early 1944 and up to May and June, May of 1944, were to targets that were softening up German defenses for just such an event as the D-Day invasion. … In effect, the Eighth Air Force did play a part in D-Day. Of course, by the time D-Day happened, there were … about ten sorties of German aircraft over the invasion beaches, because … the *Luftwaffe* had been so decimated by that time, but, when I was flying missions, there's big difference between flying in 1942, '43, and later in '44 and 45, not that I'm taking anything away from the men who did it, because they were just the same as us, but, without fighter escorts, going into places like Schweinfurt, Regensburg, Berlin or Kiel; our group went into Kiel in early '43, I believe it was. They got the Presidential Citation for Kiel … and Ploesti. I mean, that was a completely different situation than going in … later, not that I'm taking anything away from them, but, … it is a big situation. It was stated in some reports, … and I may be wrong about this, and, if I am, correct me, there was some statistics that something like three out of five airmen, in the early days of the war over Europe, didn't survive, some figures like that. …

SI: I believe that one-third or more of those airmen were either lost or wounded. Then, after the P-51s and long-range P-47s were introduced, that figure fell to one-quarter.

FC: Well, … I came back in 1945, in January, … the 15th of January, I believe it was, and went immediately to Atlantic City. … One thing I remember, you might be interested in this, it's a funny thing, we had gunners on our crew, [laughter] I think Chuck Yeager speaks [about this], you could look out there, and you could see a perfectly clear sky, and they would say, "Okay." Everybody, of course, was looking, all the time, for enemy aircraft. They would say, "There's an enemy aircraft out there at three o'clock," … and you'd say, "I can't see a damned thing. I just looked." Two minutes later, he's coming right from that direction. I think that's pretty uncanny. … I can't explain it, but, it does happen.

SI: The Army Air Force veteran that I mentioned before said that he hated scrubbed missions because he went through the same mental torment as he would before a real mission, but, then, there was no mission. Did you ever feel that way?

FC: Oh, yeah. You mean where they shoot the flare? We always would wait for the flare, the green flare would go and the red flare. Oh, yeah, you build up a lot of tension, and then, nothing happens. Oh, yeah, that happened a lot. It happened to me a lot, [laughter] and then, we had the missions where [there was a] mid-air [collision] on take-off, before the assembly point, before the formation could [form], … we had a lot of that. We also had a case of where our radio operator, this is a … hard-to-believe story, but, a fellow I knew, 'cause I knew most of the radio operators, but, he came in and he forgot his … bomber code. You had a book, you know, the bomber code, which they changed every couple of days, the new book, and he'd forgot his, so, he went back. I don't understand how he did this, exactly, but, he got out of the aircraft and ran back to the operations [office], got the bomber book, but, as he was coming back, you've got to remember, it was very early light, dawn, it was very poor light, and he … ran right into a moving prop. Now, we got that word, why, that wasn't a good start to the mission, you know. We got a lot of that. I had a friend of mine who went off to one side, and he was violating rules, really, he

shouldn't have done this, and he used to be a smoker, so, he'd go off about twenty yards from the dispersal area and sit down on a swale, which was a little swale there, and light up a cigarette, which was definitely not [good]. The pilot never found out about it. … He'd say that that relieved the tension. … There were a lot of missions that were scrubbed. … There were some missions that should have been scrubbed, but, weren't, [laughter] you know. I mean, there were a lot of things about missions, … [the] briefing said, … "Moderate to minimal opposition can be expected from the fighters … and flak," and then, you'd go over there, and … the flak would be all over the sky, and fighters would be coming in in all directions, … but, there is a lot of luck. I had two crew members lost, … both of them KIA. The bombardier and my radio operator were killed because they volunteered with other crews. Now, that might tell you something. You see, of course, you almost had to volunteer with other crews to get your thirty missions or whatever, you know.

SI: During your combat tour, how aware were you of the concepts behind strategic bombing and what was your opinion of the theory?

FC: [laughter] Strategic bombing?

SI: Yes. For example, the idea that destroying the ball-bearing plants at Schweinfurt would cripple the entire German war machine.

FC: No. … Well, with the case of Ploesti, we knew that the oil supply was a vital strategic asset to the Germans and they realized that. That was drilled into us, yes, but, overall, I didn't have much association with … lectures about strategic bombing, no. You know, we're just trying to do a job. … I do have one enemy aircraft, I don't want to bring that into this, … it's on the record. No, what I mean is, it's on the record in the Air Force, but, the funny thing about that was, oh, I want to say something about that, credit for enemy aircraft shot down. … That's a big subject, which could take another … tape, [laughter] but, you know, we got these reports at … interrogations, especially. … Some tail-gunner or waist-gunner would say, "I got two. I claim two." "Was it confirmed?" "Well, I don't know. So-and-So over here saw it go down. So-and-So saw … it was smoking, [laughter] … heading in the direction of the ground, or general direction." Well, you know, I often wonder, … I got the record here, someplace, for the 44th, how many enemy aircraft shot down, and I do have that credit for one. … I was in the hospital after the mission, 'cause I busted my leg in parachuting, but, the navigator, Lieutenant Weatherwax, came in and said, "We're putting you in for one enemy aircraft shot down." I said, "Don't. … Look, I don't care about that." I said, "Get me out of here. I want to get out of here." [laughter] I was not really [interested], you know. The rest of the crew decided that that was … confirmed, so, they did it. I didn't do it. … So, I wonder how many of those enemy aircraft shot down actually were, you know, and … by whom? Everybody is firing, you know, so, it isn't like a one-to-one thing with a fighter pilot, one against another fighter pilot, you know. Everybody is firing, so, you know, to take a credit, I have a dubious opinion about that, but, if it's on the record, I suppose it's true. I guess what's on the record makes it true, you know, but, when you're firing at an aircraft coming in at three or four hundred miles an hour, and you're jumping around in … a bomber, … I don't know, you know. … Well, we know that, with the cases of these fighter pilots, they could actually see the conclusion, but, you know, it's [ambiguous]. Any other questions?

SI: Can you tell me about your years at Rutgers?

FC: … January of ’45, I came back, and I went … back down to Harlingen, where I had a job of teaching, no, I didn’t have a job. I worked for the director of flying down there, flying up with a lot of colonels, majors, and lieutenant colonels, and even some generals, [laughter] who’d come back from their tour of duty overseas and wanted to get their flying time in. That was a funny one. I had a clipboard, like this, and I kept the records for the director, the flight director down there, so that they could get their flying pay, whatever it was, four hours a week or four hours a month. … We used to fly around in a C-47 or a B-25 and stay up there for a couple of hours and fly around the pattern, and I would … check it. They’d come to me and say, “Look, today, I’ve got a date to play bridge,” or not bridge, but, golf, “would you mind putting me down for four hours?” I’d say, “No, I can’t do that, Major. [laughter] I’m only a tech sergeant.” That was a funny thing. They were all coming back from completing thirty missions or more, some of them, … and they were the ones, those officers who I flew with at that time, … who were the founders of the modern Air Force, actually. There were some very important people there, and then, I went to Newark Air Base in Newark, … ATC. I was there when the plane flew into the Empire State Building, [laughter] like today, this is much more catastrophic, but, … I remember that plane, a [B]-25, … and I was at the base, there in Newark, when it happened, and everybody … was astonished, but, that turned out to be a complete, I think, navigational error, nothing of this [magnitude]. It wasn’t a terrorist act, but, anyway, then, I went to Salt Lake City, … and I was discharged there in October of ’45, after they treated me for sinusitis and aerotitus. I went to the hospital there at Fort Douglas, Utah, and was discharged. Then, I came back in October, and, immediately, I wanted to go to Princeton, but, I couldn’t get into Princeton or Yale or any of those big schools because of the fact that, in the first place, they weren’t offering any [GIs a place]. Rutgers was ready. Rutgers was ready for the GIs in November of 1945. About a couple of weeks after I got home, they started a special session for the GIs, … and I enrolled in that session, in November of 1945, and I consequently graduated in June of ’49, in the Class of ’49, … along with Frank Burns, [laughter] Frank Long, and some of the others, my fraternity brothers. I belonged to the Sig Ep fraternity, Sigma Phi Epsilon, which was up at 590 George Street. … [The] first year I was at Rutgers, I was at Hegeman Hall in the Quad. You know where Hegeman Hall is? … I was in Hegeman Hall when I was first enrolled there, and then, I went and lived in the fraternity house, Sig Ep House, over on 590 … George Street. … It’s no longer there. The house has been torn down and they lost the second house, unfortunately. They had a beautiful new house and I was there when they opened it. Then, I understand, they lost it, so, they’re without a house at Rutgers. I went to school with a bunch of GIs who were far advanced from what the average freshman was in college at that time, because they’d been all over the world and some of them had been in all kinds of situations, you know, … war situations, and were very much advanced. I met my wife there. She was at NJC, and we started dating in 1948, I guess it was, no, … it must have been ’47, and we were married in ‘48, but, she and I met at a fraternity party at the house, at 590 George Street, and Mason Gross was my favorite, one of my teachers there, philosophy. … I remember Mason Gross, Kenneth Jennings, who was in journalism, who I never forgot, a guy by the name of, German, (Helmut von Erfa?), who was the art teacher, art professor. I don’t know whether anybody has ever [mentioned him]. I don’t know what ever happened to him, and another one was Clarence Turner, who was … a professor of French, and I took French language there, … but, Mason Gross … was a great teacher. This is

before he became president. … I just thought he was a great teacher. He made a big impression on me, for the rest of my life. Ken Jennings did, also, and they're both dead now, I guess, … and Clothier, I believe Clothier was president, wasn't he, at that time? and we had a French professor, Turner, … who was always complaining about the weather, one thing or another, … he's probably gone now, and McGinn, William McGinn. He was a professor of English in the English Department, taught Shakespeare. I remember him, and I remember Kimball, an old guy by the name of Kimball, who taught French literature, and … we'd read from this book, translation, and he'd say, "Now, this is where we stopped in April of 1921." [laughter] I remember that. He had been there about forty or fifty years. Then, there was … Soup Walter, Music Department. He was a great one for the chorus. We called him Soup. … Who is the one that was in the History [Department]? I'd take history classes. … [Edward] McNall Burns, yeah, he was in the History Department. What did they call that, History House? … yeah, Bishop Campus. When they built the Commons, no, this was before they built the Commons. There was nothing there but Bishop and I was behind it, in the Quad. Is it still there, the Quad? Hegeman Hall? … Then, we went to the … new stadium; it was a relatively new stadium, across in Piscataway, at that time, and Harvey Harmon, was it Harvey Harmon? was the coach, and Frank Burns was the great quarterback, I guess, wasn't he? and we used … to have our fraternity parties down at the … CT, the Corner Tavern. Do you remember the Corner Tavern?

SI: It is still there.

FC: [laughter] … We drank many a times down there. … See, I was a student there from '45 to '49, but, at that time, I used to live there on campus during the week, then, I would commute home to Caldwell during the weekends. … What I remember about Rutgers is so many things, you know, Voorhees, I remember a guy telling me, … "The professor's there." I'd never be a botany major, because I couldn't understand the sap running up and down the trees. [laughter] … Weary Zingg, we called him Weary, he used to be an assistant football coach. I was there when they had the big rallies for Harold (Stassen?). He spoke at that Commons there and, I think, Wendell Willkie and some of the other people, and they had, … is it called the Ledge, … right over the river there?

SI: Where the dorms are?

FC: No, they had trailers out there, which were used as classrooms. Was it called the Ledge? … I think Dean Esterlee, was it Esterlee? Oh, another guy, (Boyenton?), was a professor of journalism, and Ken Jennings, and was it Esterlee who was the dean of journalism? … We had our journalism classes in Van Nest Hall. … The eating hall was in Winants Hall. That was before they built the [Commons], in Winants Hall.

SI: Did you work for the *Targum*?

FC: I didn't work on the *Targum*, no, or the radio station, either. … It was WRSU, I guess. I guess they still have that. No, I didn't work on the *Targum*, but, Frank Long, … Francis X. Long, he was a *Targum* man. Now, I went to school with Henry Zanzalari, and he later became Superintendent of Schools, Vocational Education, in Middlesex County, and some of those other people in Sig Ep. They were all returning veterans and they're all dead now, I guess. … A

house burned down next to us, the Sammy [Sigma Alpha Mu] House. … That created a stir, because some girls ran out, in the middle of the night, and they cracked down, although, we had a bar in the fraternity house and drank a lot of beer there. … I think, for awhile, the fraternities were on probation at Rutgers, weren't they?

SI: I believe so. Do you remember the "Great Pee-In," as some interviewees have dubbed it, when fraternity members surrounded the *Targum* building to "protest" their coverage of the fraternities?

FC: … Oh, yeah, I remember that, … Inter-Fraternity Council, yeah. Most of the time at Rutgers, I was too busy … studying. … You want to know about what I remember about Rutgers? … Well, I'll tell you the truth, what I remember is Buttonwood Manor. We used to go down and have a party down at the Buttonwood Manor. You know where Buttonwood Manor is?

SI: Actually, my grandparents live near the Buttonwood Manor.

FC: In Matawan? That's where we had our fraternity parties. We used to also have a baseball team that played Inter-Fraternity Council games; … there was a field there called Nielsen Field, I believe. I think that's where Paul Robeson [played]. It was an old, old football field, before they built the stadium across the river in Piscataway, remember that? It was a long time ago. … The library was in Voorhees Hall. That's a new library there, Alexander. That was in Voorhees Hall, … by William the Silent. William the Silent is still there, I guess, right? William the Silent, the statue, we called him [Silent] Willie. … After I left the fraternity house, the last year I was there at Rutgers, I lived … up at the married students quarters, up at Piscataway Campus, on River Road, across the river, and used to walk, from there, across the Landing Lane Bridge, the old bridge there, Landing Lane, along George Street, all the way down to the campus. Every day, I did that. Well, I had a car, but, the car I had didn't go uphill. I had a car, an old Buick, that I bought there when I was in college. So, I had to back up the hill. I couldn't go forward, I had to go into reverse to go up the hill, I remember that, up to the top of the hill. One day, I backed up there and almost backed into a police car, the campus patrol, that's what it was, we had the campus patrol. … We used to go over to NJC and [laughter] get thrown off, by the security guards, after ten o'clock. What I remember about Rutgers is good. I don't have any bad memories about Rutgers. I still like to go back to Rutgers. … Well, I did go back to some fraternity houses, but, I didn't go back to the fiftieth reunion, that's the trouble, and I understand that they had a big fiftieth reunion party. I didn't go back to that, but, I did work in New Brunswick. That's not on here, but, I worked at the … Middlesex County Courthouse for about seven or eight years. I worked there in the '70s and was there when they had the Kent State shooting, remember the Kent State shooting? I believe that was 1970, and there was a big demonstration. The students occupied Queens, the president's office, remember that? Yeah, I was there, I remember that, and that was quite a thing, and I was also there when they had the anti-Apartheid demonstrations against the … divestment of South African holdings by the Board of Trustees. That was a big controversy there at Rutgers and Jesse Jackson came down and riled up the students. … Another memory I have about Rutgers is, though, that, when I went to Rutgers, we used to, … on football game nights, go downtown and tie up traffic [laughter] at George and Albany Street. That's kind of stupid. … Another thing that we used to do was, I

couldn't wait to get back from the stadium to go to the fraternity party, because, as soon as the game was over, whether we'd win or lose, … somebody would open up these kegs of beer, and they'd be gone in about a half an hour, [laughter] the way they drank, chugalugging, you know. … Mason Gross was a terrific teacher and I think he had a thing called *Dr. IQ* … on television, wasn't it? … He was the answer man, I remember that, … but, he was a great teacher, because I never paid much attention to philosophy before, but, when I started with him, and I got very interested in philosophy and still have some of my textbooks from Rutgers from that time, all marked up with comments by Mason Gross, and, also, other books … with comments by Ken Jennings, … but, what I remember is that Rutgers was relatively small in 1945. Believe it or not, between 1945 and the year I graduated, of course, we graduated in a big ceremony up at the stadium, it was filled, I mean, there was a great increase there between '45 and '49, and '50. I mean, it just burgeoned out in those five years, … and I don't know how many students it's got now. … My wife went to NJC when it was called NJC, New Jersey College for Women, now, it's called Douglass, but, she graduated with top honors, and the story was that if she hadn't met me in the last … couple of years of college, she would have graduated [with] even higher honors, [laughter] but, that's what they said, but, I was not a top, "A" student in college. I was just an average student. … Then, I went to the University of Minnesota for a year, because I still had time on the GI Bill, and I went out there, and took a full year, and got a Masters degree in English at the University of Minnesota, after Rutgers. So, I want to say one thing, the GI Bill was the greatest thing that ever was done for the veterans in this country and I hope that they have it again. They still continue [it] for the oncoming vets. Going back to the CT, … there was a guy by the name of, I forget his name now, he was a bartender there, everybody knew [him]. I think he retired long ago, but, we used to come back, and then, go back to the dormitory, walk up that little hill by Winants Hall, up to Queens Hall, singing at the top of our lungs, "Ring the bells for Olde Queens College," I remember that so well. … We had two houses there, for awhile, on George Street. One was that new house, which I think they lost because of tax foreclosure or something. … You see, I still contribute … to Rutgers, [the] Alumni Fund, and I still contribute to the Sig Ep Fund. I'm a … life member of Sigma Phi Epsilon. … Yeah, I think I'm still a member of the Alumni Foundation; I give to the Rutgers Alumni Foundation. I pledged so much and I hope I can keep it up. …

----------END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE TWO----------

FC: … I went out to the University of Minnesota, and then, after that, in 1950, I went to work in Florida, believe it or not. I was radio news director of WLOF in Orlando, Florida, in 1950s and stayed there for … five years, and then, I developed a news program, we had seven newscasts a day, and one of the first [in the area]. That was before Disney came to this part of the country and even before the Space Center, before NASA, and then, I got a job in Sarasota with the *Sarasota News*. No, first, I went to work … as an editor of the *Lake City Reporter,* up in Lake City, North Florida, and had a lot of experiences up there with the KKK and other racial groups, … during the '50s, when there was a tremendous amount of controversy about desegregation in the schools, and then, I went to work for the *Sarasota News* in Sarasota, Florida, and covered political campaigns. … Briefly, I covered … Adlai Stevenson, Richard Nixon, and interviewed Eleanor Roosevelt a couple of times. … Then, I went, from Sarasota, back to New Jersey and I worked for Gannett Corporation, … the *Courier News,* in Somerset, Bridgewater, Somerville, New Jersey. … We built a new plant out on [Route] 22, at [Route] 287, in Somerville, … you're

probably familiar with that, out toward what's now called the Commons. I guess it's a new shopping area out there. Our news office, … 287 was on one side and 22 on the other, and I worked there for twenty-four years, until I retired, 1987, and came to Florida, and have been living here ever since, in Florida. So, I spent about an equal amount of time in Florida and an equal amount of time I spent in New Jersey, so, I guess, [laughter] in the last fifty years, it's been divided among Florida and New Jersey, with one year in Minnesota, and I'm very glad to be alive at this time, because I'm just past my eightieth birthday, and I have a lot to do.

SI: Congratulations.

FC: [laughter] I don't know whether it's congratulations or not, but, I want to just say [that] I'm very grateful to my education at Rutgers, and, also, I'm grateful for the opportunity to speak about some of these things about World War II, and even more so now, because there's something like a thousand World War II veterans dying a week, I think it's a week. I think that's the figure, isn't it?

SI: Yes.

FC: … I thank the Rutgers Oral History Program for sponsoring this, and I want to know exactly what is done with these tapes after they're completed. Do you have a depository for them? Are they available?

SI: Yes. They are available through Special Collections in Alexander Library and a transcript will appear on our website.

[Mr. Clark asked that the following notes be added to this transcript:

Some mention ought to be made that two Rutgers men were on the same air crew in the Eighth Air Force in World War II, my copilot, Lt. William Tinsman, and I. We were crewmates in 1943-1944 and survived the war. It may be very unusual that two Rutgers men served in the same group or unit, much less in the same crew. Tinsman attended Rutgers prior to the war and I graduated in the Class of 1949. I do not know if he completed his studies and graduated.

Also, I was a witness to the 200th anniversary convocation of Rutgers in 1976, when Hubert Humphrey was special guest of honor at the ceremonies on the campus to mark the university history from 1776 to 1976. I remember, in 1945, seeing many Rutgers men wearing uniforms of the military services and it was not uncommon to see veterans composing eighty to ninety percent of the men on campus. There are so many memories of Rutgers that I cannot cover them all.

However, I think it important for younger generations to know the very major role the University played in post-war education, especially when it started the explosion of growth that has carried this university from a small liberal arts college to a state university and, now, a world-class center for learning. That all started in the closing months of 1945 when veterans came home from around the world and all the war fronts.

We were in the wartime city of Brighton, England, and it was during the time of the German air raids. It was, if I remember correctly, late 1943.

I was with a group of my crewmates and we did the usual pub hopping, starting from Tommy Farr's pub and going all day. We wound up at the only roller skating rink in the city in the late afternoon. We all had a few drinks too many. We teamed up with a couple of Aussies who were on leave.

At the rink, we met some English girls and were twirling them around the rink at great speed. Suddenly, we heard the air raid siren go off and everyone headed for the shelter. However, we kept right on skating around and around. The air raid wardens urged us to "get to a shelter," but we ignored them.

We skated directly out the front door onto the main street and, still on skates, with the Aussies leading, we headed for the beachfront. Bombs began to fall down on the beach, setting off bright flashes in the night sky, but we skated on, singing at the top of our lungs. Lucky for us, no bombs fell on us, but we ended in one of the waterfront hotels where the Aussies brought us. I shall not forget that wild night in Brighton during an enemy air raid. We never did go to a shelter.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 1/9/02
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 1/11/02
Reviewed by Forrest S. Clark 2/02