RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH CARLO J. GINOBILE

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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CHERRY HILL, NEW JERSEY
FEBRUARY 2, 2004

TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Janeann Robinson: This begins an interview with Carlo J. Ginobile on February 2, 2004 in Cherry Hill, New Jersey with Janeann Robinson and .

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: Sandra Stewart Holyoak. To begin, Mr. Ginobile I'd like to thank you and Mrs. Ginobile for having us here this morning to conduct the interview. To begin could you tell me where and when you were born?

Carlo Ginobile: I was born on October 30, 1921 in Coatesville, Pennsylvania.

SH: When and why did your parents move from Coatesville to New Jersey?

CG: My parents moved from Coatesville to New Jersey because of my health. I couldn't stay in the mountain regions because of chronic bronchitis so, we moved to New Jersey, a lower altitude..

SH: Where did your father work?

CG: He worked in the steel mills of Pennsylvania until we moved to New Jersey, then he went to work at the Campbell Soup Company in Camden.

SH: Was your father an immigrant to this country?

CG: He immigrated to this country in 1905.

SH: Do you know of any stories of how he came to this country?

CG: No, but I know how he met my mother, and how they finally wound up getting married. My mother was living with her sister in Coatesville and my father was a boarder in the same house, back in those days, it was meet a girl and marry her, after a few months they were married.

SH: Was your mother born in this country?

CG: No, she was also from Italy. She was from almost the same region as my father. My father's town was separated by a mountain from the town my mother lived in. If he would have crossed the mountain, he might have met her in Italy.

SH: Do you know the name of the town in Italy?

CG: Waste, Chiete, Italy.

SH: Did your father work at the Campbell Soup Company for long?

CG: He worked for Campbell Soup Company until he retired.

SH: Did your mother work outside of the home?

CG: No, she never worked. She was a housewife.

SH: Did any of your father's family come from Italy to this country?

CG: No, as far as I know he was the only one.

SH: Was there any other family members?

CG: My Father had one brother in Italy. His brother's kids moved to Argentina. There is a basketball player from Argentina that has the same last name as me except for the last letter, he spells it with an "I" instead of an "E," but I think he may be related.

SH: What about your mother's family?

CG: Only her sister came over, the one she lived with in Coatesville.

SH: Did any of your father's family live in the same area?

CG: No, I don't know of any.

SH: Do you have any brothers and sisters in this country?

CG: Yes, I have one brother and six sisters.

SH: Were they born in New Jersey or in Pennsylvania?

CG: The first three, up to me, were born in Pennsylvania, the rest were born in Camden, New Jersey.

SH: Are you the middle child?

CG: Yes.

SH: Did any of your brothers and sisters serve in the military?

CG: My brother served in the military during the Second World War, he was stateside.

SH: Where did you attend grade school?

CG: I went to Central Grammar, then Stevens Grammar School, then I went to Borough Junior High, and finally to Woodrow Wilson High, where I left in the eleventh grade.

SH: Did you have to leave school to go to work?

CG: I left for a summer job, but, I wound up staying, then I was drafted and that was the end of my schooling.

SH: What was it like growing up during the Depression?

CG: Well, the Depression was pretty hard on us. Only my father was working at the Campbell Soup plant, and that wasn't very lucrative. We had enough to get along. I remember eating in soup kitchens. We had a Baptist Church on the corner where I lived, the old Wally Mission, (Wally was the name of the pastor), and they served breakfast to all the kids in the neighborhood. They used to have a breakfast spread down in the basement. That's where I used to go in the morning for breakfast. That's where I developed a great love for apple butter and I still eat a lot of apple butter to this day.

SH: Did you stay in the same area or did you move?

CG: Yes, I stayed at the Becket Street address until I went into the service. After I came out of the service and got married, I moved just a few blocks away from my parent's home. A year-and-a-half later in '48, I built a house for us in Magnolia, we lived in that house for five years, then moved back to Camden for a couple of years, then we moved to the house I'm at now.

SH: What was your summer job that you left school for?

CG: I went to Campbell Soup, that's where I got the summer job. It was during the tomato season, which was a peak time at Campbell Soup. I used to work on their labeling machine, feeding cans to a moving belt that labeled them. I held that job until I went into the service, and when I came back, I graduated to operating the labeling machine itself.

SH: So, you continued to work for Campbell?

CG: Yes, for a time. I went to school for electricity, an electrician's course, because I didn't have enough credits to go to college. I got a diploma from electrician's school, and went into industrial maintenance, which I did until I retired.

SH: Were you doing industrial maintenance for the Campbell Soup Company?

CG: No, I did it for two paper mills. I was the only maintenance man, I ran the department.

SH: Did you go to work for the Campbell Soup during the summer of '36?

CG: '39, not '36.

SH: It was '39.

CG: Yes, in '36, I was too young.

SH: How aware were you of what was going on in Europe in 1939?

CG: Well, to tell you the truth, back in ‘39, ‘40, ‘41, and even as far as the early part of ‘42, the war in Europe was of no concern to me. I mean, I was just a kid having fun. I never even thought of the war. The realization of the war came only after I was drafted, and then not until I was actually doing military training.

SH: Did you register for what was called the peacetime draft when you turned eighteen?

CG: Yes, it was the peacetime draft at that time.

SH: Were you drafted right away?

CG: No, I was drafted in ‘42. I registered for the draft when I was eighteen, but, I was twenty going on twenty-one when I was drafted.

SH: Where did you report?

CG: At that time, they had us report to an armory in Camden on Haddon Avenue and that’s where we were sworn in. From there they took us to Fort Dix and that’s where we were evaluated for what we were going to do, and after a number of tests, I qualified for airplane mechanic training, so, I wound up going from there to Atlantic City for further evaluation and immunization, then to Lincoln, Nebraska where I spent eight or nine months taking a course in airplane mechanics. When I completed the course, we got ready to ship out. I saw a circular for air gunnery and I always loved flying so I signed up for the gunnery course and I was shipped to Kingman, Arizona, where I took gunnery training. When I completed the course, I went to Wyoming where I was assigned to an aircraft, and a crew.

SH: Did you do that in Casper?

CG: Casper, Wyoming is where we left from.

SH: Did you think about volunteering after Pearl Harbor?

CG: No, like I said, I was a kid; I never gave a second thought to the war.

SH: What about after Pearl Harbor, in December of ‘41?

CG: Not even then.

SH: Did any of your friends volunteer for the military?

CG: No, but a friend of mine had a cousin that was in the Navy. He had volunteered earlier and he happened to be at Pearl Harbor at the time of the attack, and he was killed there.

SH: Had you thought about enlisting in any of the other services?

CG: No, I hadn't thought of any services at all, I was drafted, and I went.

SH: What was it like for a kid from the Camden area to wind up in Nebraska?

CG: Seeing the country was good.

SH: What are your memories of Nebraska?

CG: I have a lot of memories of Nebraska; it is one of the coldest places on earth. I can remember that very well, getting up in the morning battling through the snow, and the tarpaper shacks we lived in.

SH: Where you in Lincoln, Nebraska?

CG: Yes, Lincoln, Nebraska.

SH: Did you then go to Kingman, Arizona?

CG: I went to Kingman, Arizona from there, yes.

SH: What was it like to be in the desert then?

CG: It certainly was a desert, when they dropped us off at the train stop in Kingman, Arizona, the trucks were waiting for us, it was just a little shack for a railroad station. They told us we were in Kingman, Arizona but all you could see was a general store with a couple of gas pumps in front of it, and that was Kingman, Arizona, it was the whole town. I couldn't believe it, but, that's what it was. Then, they put us on trucks and took us out to a camp where we had gunnery class.

SH: What was it like to travel on a train across the country back then, when you went from Jersey to Nebraska, then down to Kingman?

CG: It was very dirty because they had coal-fired boilers on the trains, all the soot would come back into the cars, you had to keep windows open to get air. But, it was a wonderful experience riding across the country; I saw a lot of different things. For a kid that hadn't been anywhere, it was an exciting experience.

SH: When you were in Nebraska, what was the make up of the group that was in school with you? Were they from all over the country or predominantly from this part of the country?

CG: Everybody was from the east coast, our particular group came from Fort Dix, another group came out of New York, we met in Lincoln, Nebraska.

SH: Was there anybody from your area?

CG: No, I was the only one from my area.

SH: Did you get any kind of pass or leave when you were either in Nebraska or Arizona to go in and see the natives?

CG: Oh, yes, we went to town almost every week. We were given a weekend pass. They had a USO club [United Service Organization] there, and they held dances, and parties. There was a hotel on the corner where we used to stay, the Cornhusker Hotel, wow, the stories from there are not for publication.

SH: How did the local people treat the servicemen?

CG: Wonderful, the local folks used to come to town and pick up a serviceman for Sunday dinner. I went with a family once to a rural farm and had a wonderful time. Our cultures were different, I remember being served a whole onion on my plate, which I normally wouldn't eat, but I ate the whole thing, otherwise it was a beautiful experience. The people were wonderful there.

SH: Did you try to teach them to cook like you?

CG: Oh, no, I wasn't trying to mix cultures in any way.

SH: Were you treated the same way in Arizona?

CG: I never met any of the people in Arizona. There was no town, just a general store.

SH: Then, from Kingman you went to Utah or to Wyoming?

CG: Boise, Idaho, before I went to Casper, Wyoming that's where I met up with the crew. That's where we got a new plane, right from the factory, and that's the plane we trained on.

SH: Can you tell us what the plane was that you trained on?

CG: It was the B-24D. It was a four-engine bomber and it consisted of four turrets; one in the nose, one in the tail, a top turret, which is the top gun and a ball turret which is on the bottom. Then there were flexible guns, one on each side through the open windows. There was a pilot and a co-pilot up front, a radio operator behind the co-pilot; the bombardier, navigator and the nose gunner in the front compartment, just ahead of the front wheel, the nose wheel. I was originally assigned at the nose turret, but the compartment was very small and I was a pretty big man and I didn't fit easily into that compartment with the two other men, and it wasn't very comfortable. The tail gunner, Andy, was a small man, so we changed positions. As it turns out, he was the only member of our crew to be killed, in my assigned position.

SH: Had you trained with any of the other gunners in Arizona?

CG: No, I didn't train with any of the crewmen that I joined up with; they were in classes before me at different places.

SH: What did you do in Idaho?

CG: We were just in the standing position, just waiting to be assigned to crews.

SH: What did you know about the B-24 before you were assigned to it?

CG: I was in Lincoln, Nebraska when I had the mechanic's training. We were not actually trained on bombers, just fighter planes. At the time the B-17 was a more prominent airplane, we learned about the B-17s and B-24s but, not actually seeing them. We were more focused on the fighter planes.

SH: When you were in Kingman, Arizona were you trained on a B-24?

CG: No, in Kingman, Arizona it was just learning how to handle guns. The first part of the training consisted of shotguns, you would stand up on the back of an ordinary pickup truck and they had a cage around you so you wouldn't fall off, but in that position you had a shotgun and they would shoot clay pigeons as you drove down the road, the driver would take you down around the course, where you would try to hit the clay pigeons. They were shot out by surprise, you were to aim and shoot, and we had maybe three or four days of that. Then, we had ground courses on machine guns; tearing them down and putting them back together again, putting a glove on and blindfolds on, taking the gun down, and putting them back together again, so that you could handle the gun blindfolded and in one hand, which worked well. After you learn that, you were assigned to an airplane, and I was assigned to AT-5, which was a trainer plane. They had the gun rigged up in the back seat, you take off, and they fly with what they called the sleeve. The sleeve plane would be flying up around the sky and you shoot the sleeves, lots of times the lead plane got hit.

SH: Did it really?

CG: Oh, yes, we were all nervous gunners, we're just kids, we didn't know what we were doing to begin with, but, that's how we learned to fire guns in aerial gunnery.

SH: What did it take to get assigned to be the sleeve pilot?

CG: I don't know what it took, but he had more nerve than I did. In the course of that flying, we had some beautiful experiences because it was near the Grand Canyon. One time the pilot asked me if I wanted to see the Grand Canyon. I said, "Yes, let's see it." "Okay," he said, "expel all your shells or throw them overboard and we'll go down to the canyon." That's what we did; dumped them over and took a dive into the Grand Canyon, now, when he said, "See the Grand Canyon," he meant see the Grand Canyon, because he dove down into it and we were flying along, with the mountains both sides of us getting higher, and up front just ahead, there was an opening, I wasn't sure the plane could make it through. Sure enough, the pilot flipped the plane on its side and it went through, air acrobatics, it was a wonderful experience.

SH: Do you remember the pilot's name?

CG: No, I don't remember his name. But, it was a great adventure for a young kid who had never been anywhere. It all worked out nice, after we got through that course we went to Boise, Idaho.

SH: When you were in Boise, Idaho was it winter or summer?

CG: It was almost winter.

SH: Were you still training there as well?

CG: Yes.

SH: Did the weather conditions affect your training at Boise, Idaho?

CG: The weather conditions were no problem at all. Snow, sleet or rain, we trained, it didn't make any difference.

JR: Did your training weapons ever jam?

CG: The weapons were good, but they did jam once in a while, learning how to take a gun apart and putting it together again with a glove on and doing it with one hand, blindfolded, well, that came in handy for me because I had an occasion where my gun jammed. I had to reach in because being in the turret your guns were on either side of you. They were behind the enclosure and you had to reach around to get to them. I had to reach around and un-jam my gun on one occasion. So, that's where the training of taking the gun apart and putting it together blindfolded came in very handy because I couldn't see what I was doing, I had to feel everything I was doing and it worked out good, I was able to get my gun going.

SH: Did anyone not make it out of gunnery school?

CG: Oh, yes, we had a lot of failures. There were kids in there, as soon as they were assigned the plane, their first flight, were so sick they couldn't make it. It wasn't because of the fire, it was because flying wasn't for them. I already had a little experience flying because when I lived in Camden, we had an airport about a mile away, back in '36, '37, there was a circus plane that came around and I had an occasion to be able to get on it.

SH: Did you always have a love for airplanes?

CG: Yes, I use to build model airplanes like mad when I was a kid, I loved airplanes. In fact, my bedroom was plastered with pictures and posters of airplanes, the Navy and Army airplanes that we had at that time. So, flying was almost second nature to me.

SH: Having had the training to be a mechanic on these planes, did that ever come into play?

CG: Very much so, I think it was after the service overseas, I was assigned to line duty at Langley Field in Norfolk, Virginia, to work on planes. The airplanes would go from hangar to hangar for inspections. One hangar would take care of the engines, another one take care of the lubrication and so on down the line. Well, I was assigned to lubrication for a while, then, to where I did repairs, that's where I got a chance to use it.

SH: After training in Boise, you were sent to Casper to connect with your crew, how long were you in Casper?

CG: We were there about three months. It might not have even be that long, because from Casper, we only did about a half a dozen training flights.

SH: How far would you fly on a training flight in the B-24?

CG: Well, the distance a B-24 could travel, one way, would be about eight thousand miles, so we'd go out about four to five thousand miles, turn around and come back. One time, we went on a flight and we were supposed to … bomb … (sight) New York and then come back. On the way to New York, the pilot radioed in that we were having engine trouble and we had to land. We were over Indiana, he was from Indiana. … He was going home to visit his folks. So, we landed in an airport there that could barely accommodate our airplane. Our airplane was too big for the runway but he got it in there and we landed. Their crew chief worked on our airplane for a little while and our pilot went to visit his folks. … When he came back the next day, we went to take off, we looked at the end of the runway there was a fence and a telegraph pole in the way, we didn't know how we would be able to clear them, we crossed our fingers and took off, we barely made it over, but he got it off the ground and we headed back to Casper. It wasn't too long after that we went to Florida, Puerto Rico, South America and then overseas.

SH: Did the plane you were assigned in Casper then became your plane permanently?

CG: Yes, that became our airplane, we named it.

SH: What did you name it?

CG: *Lonesome Pole Cat*.

SH: And can you tell Janeann what a pole cat is?

CG: It's a pole cat, a skunk.

SH: I'm going to pause the tape, Mr. Ginobile has a dairy he's going to show Janeann.

CG: The only reason we named the airplane *Lonesome Pole Cat* is because in every flight we took off, we were the last plane in the diamond formation. So, we were always up there alone, so we called it the *Lonesome Pole Cat*. I found out later, through the internet, or rather my daughter did, that there was someone out there that flew in the *Lonesome Pole Cat* in England,

and that there were three or four *Lonesome Pole Cats* around. I didn't know it at the time, but, they were all B-24s, too, by coincidence.

SH: Did you paint the plane after you named it?

CG: Yes, that was written on the plane, *Lonesome Pole Cat*, the designation and also the character. I have a picture of it in the book there.

SH: What was the interaction like between the officers on your plane and the enlisted men?

CG: We were one, altogether.

SH: Was it very relaxed?

CG: Very relaxed and together.

SH: Where was your crew from?

CG: Dillon was from Oregon; Charles Lam was from Texas; Wyatt was from Louisiana; Hemslee, the navigator, was from Georgia; Bosaner, the bombardier was from a small town in New York, I forgot the name of it. The pilot was from Indiana, Liberty, the one who was killed was from Montana, and of course, I came from New Jersey.

SH: Did you have a nickname?

CG: We used to call each other by our last names. I got the name Deg, because Ginobile was too hard to remember. So, they called me, Deg, not in a derogative way, it was just a name to respond to very fast.

SH: Before we go to Florida do you have any other questions Janeann?

JR: During your training missions, was there a protocol for the plane going down, say, you were shot down, or if you had a malfunction?

CG: That was part of the training of the pilot, not the crew, of course the crew had to ride along because we had to experience the same thing. He had to put that plane in a stall, a roll, any kind of maneuver we might encounter in a situation over there. On one of them, we had an instructor pilot with him that was well-trained; he took us up to fifteen thousand feet and put the plane in a stall. A stall is when the plane goes straight up and it can't go anymore, it just stalls out and it falls, that's what he did. You have to make a gradual recovery. When you get to a straight flight, you pull out at the bottom, and make a good climb, not a vertical climb but a gradual climb out and that's one part of the training. What was interesting in one of the stalls we did over a cornfield, over the instructor's girlfriend's house, the pilot, doing a little show-offing, brought it down a little bit too close, when we landed, there was a corn stalk up in the wheel-well of the airplane. Now, a B-24 has high wings and the body hangs below it. How we got a cornstalk up in the wheel well, which was about ten feet off the ground, … God only knows. For

young kids that never experienced anything, that was a thrill. It was hard work for the pilot, co-pilot, and the trainer pilot, but to us riding along, it was a thrill, more or less like a jackrabbit amusement ride. We did have some good times, it wasn't all bad.

[Editor's Note: The following is a copy of a letter sent by Mr. Ginobile to Janeann Robinson concerning the incident related above:

To Miss Robinson,

This is how we figured the stalk got up into the wheel well.

In buzzing the house, the plane comes in about fifty feet off the ground at high speed; this makes for a terrific prop wash and suction motion with the ground. As the plane roars in at that altitude, it takes quite a long run to get back in the air. At the midway part of the run, the cornfield was probably 150 feet from the house on a hill. We figure we must have been pretty close to the ground at one point, passing over the cornfield. Therefore, with the prop wash and suction, we picked up a loose stalk. That's all we could figure.

Carlo Ginobile]

SH: Were there other memories of things that you saw and did?

CG: The crew that I joined were already familiar with each other and had lived together for a while. When I joined the crew, of course, I didn't know them that well, I was getting acquainted with them. One night we went to the movies, I forget the name of the movie, but it was a comedy. Well, I didn't know why, but they kept pushing me; they made the gunner go in first and then me, so I was sitting next to him. I didn't realize why they did it, until the movie started. It was a hilarious movie; all of a sudden he hit me, turns out, he gets very excited when he goes to a comedy, and he hits, that's why they put me next to him. He didn't do any damage or anything, he just got excited, that was a funny night.

SH: Were you a replacement for someone in your crew?

CG: No, I wasn't a replacement; we were making up crews as the men were coming in.

SH: Were you the last member to join the crew?

CG: Yes, as the men came in, they made up crews. I don't know how they profiled you for it, but they tried to put together a crew that would work well together. I mean, you can't put a guy in that didn't get along with the rest of the crew, it just wouldn't work.

SH: Did you meet any townspeople in Casper?

CG: No, we stayed on the base, they wouldn't allow us off, it was all business.

SH: What were you told about security and censorship at that point?

CG: Just to keep your mouth shut, that's all. Nobody had to know anything, but, the town people knew more than we did. If you wanted to find out anything, just ask the town people.

SH: For your assignment, did you have any clue whether you would be going to Europe or to Italy, or to the South Pacific?

CG: The assignments weren't put out until about three days before we were ready to leave, I think the pilots knew a little before then, but, that's when we found out that we were heading for Italy.

SH: Did you have any leave or time to get back home before you left the States?

CG: Yes, I had some leave.

SH: Did you come back by train?

CG: Yes.

SH: Did you take the train from Florida?

CG: No, from Wyoming. I only had two leaves, that was one of them, before we went overseas they gave us thirty days, I went home and came back.

JR: How many days did it take you to get home on the train?

CG: About two days, coming cross-country. In those days, the passenger trains were side railed for freight trains because freight trains carrying war materials, had priority over the track. In other words, if we were on a track and they were on the track; we got off so they could get by. There was no getting around that.

SH: Now, when you flew from Wyoming to Florida, where in Florida did you go?

CG: We touched down in the northern part of Florida. It was just a touchdown to refuel, then we went to Puerto Rico. We landed spent the night in Puerto Rico. Then, we went to Brazil, I forgot the town in Brazil, that's where I bought my first pair of Gaucho boots, in fact, everybody bought boots there. That's where I also learned about bananas.

SH: Did you do any training there?

CG: No, we just went there to prepare for the hop.

SH: Were you there alone or did a bunch of planes fly together?

CG: Each plane flew individually out of Casper, took their own path down. They were given a course and everybody followed the same course because we were all going to land at the same

place, but we didn't land as groups. We staggered in an hour apart, but everybody wound up at the same place. We all met up in South America, we stayed there a day or two, then, we flew across the ocean to Dakar, on the west coast of Africa.

SH: In Casper, is that when you found out your assignment was in Italy?

CG: Yes.

SH: It wasn't when you got to Florida?

CG: No.

SH: You already knew where you were going?

CG: When we left Casper, we knew where we were going.

SH: Was the bomb group already assigned?

CG: No, the bomb group wasn't assigned until we got to Algiers.

SH: Did you get off the plane at all in Dakar?

CG: No, we just spent one night there. That was an adventure. They posted guards, these huge, black fellows, no shoes, blue uniforms, a red turban, and a big gun. They were supposed to stand guard over the planes in the airfield, but, we didn't trust them, you had to be on your toes all the time. I was assigned to sleep in the plane. I slept in the plane while the others slept in the hotel. Then we went on to Algiers, that was the hop off point to Italy.

SH: What year were you in Algiers?

CG: It was in December '43. There's one thing I remember about Algiers, we went there on Christmas Day, we went to Mass in a barn, that's the first time we attended Mass since being in the service, it really hit home. It was beautiful, I mean, it was in a barn, there was no elaborate dressing or paraphernalia, it was just a plain table and the chaplain up there, that's all.

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

SH: What were you hearing about the locals?

CG: What we were hearing then was what you're hearing today, "Keep your eyes on those Arabs," and that's what we did.

SH: Did you leave the base at all?

CG: There were no bases, we were actually in an olive grove. We were spread out on the olive grove in tents. The planes were out on a field, but we were bivouacked in olive groves, of some

sort. We had occasion to go into the town there, that's where I got my first taste of French cognac.

SH: You liked it?

CG: The French cognac was good.

SH: Where was your base, when you were in the olive groves?

CG: Oh, I couldn't tell you where it was geographically.

SH: Were there any of the other services there besides the Army Air Force?

CG: It was a mixture of everybody there, British, Americans, French, there were all kinds of people there.

SH: Did you get to talk to anyone from the other services?

CG: Yes, they were just casual conversations, drinking in a bar and talking casually, that's about it.

SH: Were there any incidences that you can remember?

CG: No, nothing ever happened, everybody had their minds on the war.

SH: Were you given any instructions about how to interact?

CG: Yes, just to be careful of the Arabs, that's all and, of course, to keep away from the women because, believe it or not, it was disease ridden.

SH: How long were you in Algiers? Was this a staging area for you?

CG: Yes, it was sort of a staging area, that's where we got together and formed the groups. That was our station and from there we went to Italy. There were twelve to fourteen of us in one group and we landed at different spots, which was our operation base in Italy.

SH: In Italy.

CG: We were in tents there.

SH: What town?

CG: Gioia del Colle was the first town we hit and we operated from there for a while.

SH: To which group were you assigned?

CG: Well, when we first went over there, I was assigned to the 541st Air Wing.

SH: Okay. Now, did your crew change at all or were you guys still together?

CG: The group that I trained with were all together, except we had to get a replacement for the co-pilot because our co-pilot was a fellow that came out of the circus, he was a big, brawny guy, so he didn't fit in well with the crew. He just didn't click with the rest of the crew. It was better to change him and get someone who was more compatible, because we had to work together.

SH: When did you make this change, in Italy or in Algiers?

CG: We made the change in Italy.

SH: Now, where was your new co-pilot from?

CG: The co-pilot, Lieutenant Quinn was from Louisiana.

SH: Now, had he had already been in Italy? Did he have any experience?

CG: No, he was a new member that came over. They had a few spare pilots, co-pilots and a few gunners around.

SH: Before you left for a mission were you involved in any briefings?

CG: The briefings we had before take off, for any mission, were, where we were going and what we were going to do.

SH: Who led the briefings?

CG: The base commander.

SH: It wasn't the pilot who would talk to you?

CG: No, it was the base commander, like you see in the movies, you'd sit there and they're giving all these instructions. Then, the crewmen leave and the pilots, co-pilots, the bombardiers and the navigators stay and get the final briefing, which is the course, time and everything that they needed to have for the flight.

SH: What was a typical day like for you in Italy?

CG: A typical day was just getting up in the morning, having your breakfast, taking care of your needs and going into briefing, get your briefing, get your gear ready, go to the plane and get ready for take off. That would be the start of your day.

SH: What was your responsibility before take off?

CG: I was a mechanic assigned to the airplane. Charles Lamb was the first mechanic, I was the second. We would circle the plane and check out different things and make sure that everything was in order for take off. Our crew chief on the ground took care of the plane after we landed and he was with us when we circled the plane, what we called, run the props, every one of the props must be turned over, so that the engine is free to run because if you didn't do that you can pop an engine. The oil at night drains from the crankcase, down into the bottom of the cylinders, you could try to start the engine and when that piston came down, it would force the head of the bottom cylinders to blow because oil would be down in there. That's why you had to run it through by hand to get all this oil out of there and we'd do that and then wait for the pilot, co-pilot, bombardier and navigator to come. When they did, we boarded the plane, got into our positions, and got set for take off. I had to be out of the turret, in the back compartment, waiting for take off. As soon as we took off, I would go to my compartment.

SH: You wouldn't go back there until after?

CG: No, I wasn't allowed, I could just sit back there, but, I wasn't allowed to sit in the turret because it just wasn't done. You just didn't sit back until take off. After take off, you were told it was clear to go back and that's when you went back to your compartment. The ball gunner got into his position, the top gunner got in his position, everybody got into their positions, and then, the planes would circle around until they got into formation. When the formation was formed, then, you would take your heading for the target. When we took the heading, we'd wait until we got out over the water and then we were given a couple of minutes to test run our guns. In other words, we fire our guns a couple of rounds to make sure they were working. Then we put on our necessary gear and proceeded to the target.

SH: What protective gear did you wear?

CG: We wore what we called the bunny rabbit suit, which hardly ever worked. It was an electric suit that we hooked to the electrical system and it was supposed to keep us warm. Everybody shared the suits and they developed what we called hot spots, thin spots in the elbows and where you exercised your gun. We called the thin spots, "hot wire." They would get real hot and you'd be fighting these hot spots. You couldn't shut the suit off because it was sixty below zero up there and you'd freeze up if you took it off, you had to keep fighting those hot spots, but, otherwise it was all right. We could have used a lot more, there were not enough to go around.

SH: What about equipment and supplies? Was there any doubt that you and the rest of the crew were well trained and well prepared when you got to Italy?

CG: No, I think the training was in doing, I mean as far as what they taught us 'how to do' and 'what to do,' we were well trained, but as far as the real training, it was in doing and nobody could teach you that. You could stay in school for a year and you would never know what to do. You had to experience it. Our equipment; we got that blue bunny rabbit outfit to keep us warm; then on top of that, we had what we call a, "Mae West," that was our flotation device, if we went down in water; on top of that we put on our parachute harness, which is a harness that wraps around our body to hook our parachutes to, but we don't wear parachutes, our parachutes were

outside. We couldn't have parachutes because they were too cumbersome so, we just had the harness.

SH: Where outside?

CG: Right outside the compartment where I was, was the parachute and after that you had your flak suit on top of that. … They were something like the bulletproof vest they use today, only ours has a longer skirt and then you had your hard hat, your steel helmet. This was the paraphernalia that you wore in your turret.

SH: Did you wear anything under that helmet?

CG: Yes, I had a plain flying helmet with my headset and hooks for the oxygen mask and then I had my oxygen mask and a ring attached to the flying vest. The helmet was just for when you went through the flak, that's the only time you would put that on.

SH: How did you communicate with the rest of the crew?

CG: You had inter-plane communication. You wore a throat mike and you had your earphones, of course. You heard everything going on in the airplane, and you had your channels, you could turn your channels to hear inter-plane communications, and things like that. You were pretty much in touch with everybody, you weren't alone.

SH: Who did you talk to?

CG: Mostly the crew, we didn't do any inter-plane communication, plane-to-plane. That was the duty of the pilot.

SH: Who would you talk to most often?

CG: You don't talk to any one specific person. In other words, I'm in my turret position, and I'm watching my zenith, portion, of the sky; which is from nine to three, the bottom side. Now if I spot an enemy airplane, or even a friendly airplane, say at seven o'clock high, I'll turn my mike up and holler, "A plane seven o'clock high." The whole crew is alerted to the position of the enemy plane. So, the top turret aims at that position, and the same thing with the side gunner on the seven o'clock side. As the plane would change position anyone who saw it would call whether it's high, low, straight or whatever, so we know where the planes are about us. Anybody who saw a plane in their zenith would call.

SH: When you would take off to go to a target, how many planes would usually be in your group?

CG: Generally, it's about twelve, we had six planes to a wing. In other words, six planes here and six planes there, and we fly in a tight formation. The tighter you keep the formation the better you were; like they say, the number of guns is more important that anything else.

SH: How many missions did you fly?

CG: Thirty-six actual missions. I got credit for fifty missions because a lot of them were beyond our boundaries, so, they gave us two missions for one. If we flew out of a five hundred mile radius; the five hundred mile radius was our boundary, we would get two missions out of it. If we flew within that five hundred mile range, we'd only get one.

SH: Do you remember your first mission?

CG: Oh, yes, the first mission was a very colorful one. We took off from Gioia del Colle, we got on the plane, got prepared like we were supposed to, putting all the equipment on and getting in our positions, but we hit landfall south of our target, that made the initial point. When we got to our IP, we turned, from inland, came out to the sea and in coming out, we saw these puffs of pink smoke. Well, everybody looked at the pink smoke, "Hey, look, it's 4th of July out there." We knew nothing about flak, or what it could do to you, so we proceeded to go. We didn't get hit by enemy aircraft, that day there weren't any enemy aircraft in the vicinity. So, looking at this flak was a joy. When we landed, the realization of what we went through, hit home. Seeing all these little holes that had sounded like little pebbles hitting the airplane. If any of what made those little holes had hit one of us, we could have been killed. The puffs of pink smoke were flak coming through the plane and it tore the plane up quite a bit. The ground crew who use to patch the holes up started to joke about it, "Just walk around and patch the holes with chewing gum," there were so many of them.

SH: Do you remember where your first mission was?

CG: Yes, Albania. Off the coast of Albania, the Germans had a little radar station and power house there, it was just to get us in a warlike mood, it was a testing ground.

SH: Being in the Air Force, were you aware of what was going on in the rest of Italy?

CG: Very well aware, yes.

SH: What were you aware of?

CG: Where the battle lines were in Italy, as we're going up Italy. Avezzano, I remember that, all these different battles they were having up the line and the invasion of Europe, and how they were coming across. Of course, when they did most of that, I was back here in the United States because I was done with my missions, but, we were well aware of everything that was going on, because the Stars and Stripes newspaper kept us up-to-date. .

SH: We will put this on pause, we have some photographs to look at.

SH: Your second mission was actually bombing targets in Italy, helping the line move up.

CG: Yes. When we moved out of Gioia del Colle into San Pancrazio, on March 3rd, we operated out of that field for a while.

SH: How much preparation was done to move forward as a base?

CG: Pack your barracks bag and go.

SH: Who built the airfield?

CG: Combat engineers took care of that before we even prepared to go there.

SH: Did the engineers set up the runways?

CG: Yes, the engineers had all the runways set up. All the runways consisted of metal plates that clipped together to form a runway. I don't know if they bulldozed it, I guess they did, to put the track down and that was what we used for a runway.

SH: Were you well supplied, with ammunition, food?

CG: Yes, ammunition and food, you couldn't beat it.

SH: How often did you get mail? Were you able to communicate with your families?

CG: Mail was no problem. I mean, the fellows in the frontlines had a little problem but, being in the background like us, in the Air Force bomber squadron, they treated us pretty well because you had to be in good physical condition in order to stand a flight. The flight was very grueling although it didn't seem like it. You had tension, constantly, from take off to landing, not only the tension, but the elements, the air was so cold up there and we were practically a lone figure up there, but that's the way it was; on the ground when you landed, the food was plentiful and good. The entertainment, well, they'd give us movies that were a little old, but still good. The bathroom facilities were makeshift and our showers were out of our helmets, we didn't have any shower facilities. When you washed, you got a helmet full of water to wash with; you had to warm your own water. In the winter, we heated our tents by scavenging up a fifty gallon can, or a thirty gallon can, cut it in half and turned it upside down, we'd get a piece of copper tubing, put one end into the five gallon can of gas outside the tent, feed it in underneath the tent and into the stove, lit it and that was our heat for the winter. Many times, in the middle of the night, one of those tanks took off, they'd blow up, and you see fire. Everything was makeshift, but, it was fine. We didn't really even know what was going on over there except what we read in the paper. After our flights, the war practically left us; we didn't know it, but, the stress was building up in our bodies; the stress was still taking its toll.

SH: Did you have an interaction with the Italian people themselves?

CG: We had very limited contact with them. The most contact we had with them was when they came over trying to sell products, or they'd try to get some soap, or meat, or something for themselves.

SH: Did you speak Italian?

CG: I spoke Italian, but, I didn't have the occasion to speak Italian to any of the people because they picked up English. They were out for the dollar because they had to live, they would sell these almonds, roasted almonds in a soup can for ten cents and you get a whole soup can full of roasted almonds. A guy would come in with ten to twenty pounds of the stuff and he had it all sold within an hour, everybody bought them. They were great to munch on.

SH: Were there any opportunities while you were in Italy, to see Rome, the ruins of Pompeii, or anything like that?

CG: Only when I went to rest camp, did I get to see any of that. I saw some of Naples, but not much, because we went right through the town fast; but when we got to Capri; that's where I got to see the sights. It was a beautiful place. There was an English woman there, she had been there since 1929 and she knew the island well, she became our tour guide. Now, the island itself was nothing more than a little city sitting on top of a hill. From the waterfront, we took a tram up the side of the mountain and it clanked all the way to the top. She took us to the far north end and then pointed down at the shoreline, at the bottom of the cliff, there were slabs of marble, beautiful marble that was set up like little rooms. They were the rooms that the Romans used for their bath houses. In the days of the Romans, I imagine it would have been really beautiful, a lot of what remained was crumbled. What remained up was beautiful. They had all the different olive groves and all kinds of grape vines. Then we went down to the shoreline and got into a boat. It was a rowboat, like our common rowboats we have here, and there were two of us plus the guide, a local Italian, rowing the boat that took us on a trip almost completely around the island. We went to a grotto, you can only get into it by boat, but you have to wait until the swell of the wave goes down for the opening, then you had to go in real fast, otherwise, you'd get pinned to the doorway. So, our guide would position us just outside and when the time was right, he told us to lie down; we had to lay down flat in the boat, and he would paddle like mad to get to the opening and get us through. Inside the grotto was the most beautiful scenery, sparkles, green, blue, all kinds of colors. It was magnificent in there … beautiful. Then we had our cafes in Capri where we all got drunk and acted like kids, we had our good times. Then, it was time to go back to reality and we went back.

JR: Entertainment wise, did you get shipped candy bars or magazines?

CG: No, we had the Red Cross there, they served candy, coffee and doughnuts. When we came down off a mission they would have a long table set up with a coffee pot and doughnuts. We each got a cup of coffee, doughnuts and, of course, a shot of whiskey. Then we had our interrogation. We picked up our coffee, doughnuts and whiskey, then went directly to interrogation. The interrogation was the whole crew around a table, and we would be interrogated by officers. We would spill out the events of the day, what happened to us, not to anybody else. Then they would interrogate others for their story and put together the events of the day. That was pretty much our day there.

JR: Were you still flying the *Pole Cat*?

CG: Yes, I flew the *Pole Cat* for twenty-five missions. After that she was shot down, another crew was flying it, they ditched it in the Adriatic. At that time, they reassigned my pilot, so we were flying any ship we could get to make up our missions so we could go home. I had twenty-five missions; we flew with anybody that had an opening for our special positions.

JR: What was that contract like, for example, you fly so many missions and we ship you home?

CG: You knew that when you went overseas, Italy was a fifty-mission tour; England was a twenty-five-mission tour, because England was a little more dangerous than flying missions in Italy.

JR: Was that only if you were drafted?

CG: No, if you went to England, you knew you had twenty-five missions, but those boys really had the tough part. I understand for every twelve airplanes they sent out, only half came back and they were shot up too, they seldom came back with a full crew. You were lucky to be assigned to Italy.

SH: Primarily, what were your targets?

CG: Mostly marshalling yards, oil fields, oil storage tanks, airfields, things of that nature, which in itself, was pretty dangerous, too.

SH: Where were you bombing?

CG: We went to Ploesti, we went to Austria, we went into Germany, the southern part of Germany, and our longest run was into Lyon, France. That was an eleven-hour flight out and back. That's when we came back on fumes, we were almost out of gas.

SH: Before we started the tape you talked about some memorable runs that you made, would you like to repeat that for the tape?

CG: Well, the memorable runs were a couple of real bad ones, like when we were going up to Regensburg, Germany, that was a particularly hard one. That's where we got jumped with everything, planes and flak, and that's where I got one plane myself. I was pretty lucky, I got one.

SH: Can you elaborate on that particular run?

CG: There's not much I could tell about that, except that it was a crazy day, we were shooting at everything that moved. It was really something, and as for that particular airplane, I couldn't tell you where it was or anything. Well, I just got it, it was one of those lucky things, you get an enemy plane in your sight, fire and hit it. We were lucky to come home from that one. Another time, when Andy was killed, is one I can never forget. We went to Sophia, Bulgaria, it was just a marshalling yard, you know, where they gather all these freight cars and get them together to carry ammunition and everything. Well, the Germans had quite a few of them there, and we had

to keep hitting them so that we'd knock down their supplies. We got over the target, it looked pretty good, I think we had to feather an engine, so we fell back out of formation, we hung back, and as we were going along; a P-38, which was escorting our flight, was in trouble, he was out of ammunition. He needed some cover, so he flew beneath us and we covered him the best we could, but on the way home, just before we hit water's edge, we got hit by two ME-109s. One came from the front, one came from the back. The one that came from the front is the one that got Andy. It shot up the front end of the plane. Andy was in the nose turret, it caught him. That's the one that did all the damage, it splattered his brains all over the plane, they must have hit him with a .20mm, it took the top of his head right off, you couldn't even see him. When they took him off the plane we couldn't even look at him. The other plane came to the rear, he was about six o'clock high and he was out too far, but, even though he was out too far, I could see he was firing, I opened fire. When I opened fire, I just kept spraying in his direction. I don't know if I hit him or not, but he peeled off right away. I don't know maybe the other guy called him away, whatever happened, he took off.

SH: Were you aware that Andy had been hit at that point?

CG: Yes, because, I think it was the bombardier, hollered into the mike, "Oh my God, he's hit," and that was it. We all knew. When we landed, the pilot said, "Stay back, don't come up front." We all got up and went out the back, we were not allowed to go up front, that's when we knew it was bad.

SH: Was there a funeral for Andy?

CG: Yes, we had a twelve-gun salute, a small military funeral. We buried him, we got in full dress uniform and went to the gravesite, just the crew, nobody else, because you bury your own men.

SH: Were there any other incidences where members of the crew were injured on your missions?

CG: Nobody else in our particular crew was injured. We had a few, in other planes, other crews that were injured, but not very seriously. One was a kind of comical, in fact, we always used to kid him about it. He got his Purple Heart for being shot in the ass. [laughter] Going over the target area, we carried extra ammunition in boxes, eight inches wide on the back of the plane. They stacked them between the two gunners, so that it would be out of the way, right in the middle of the plane, and there were about three boxes. Going over the target, you don't have to worry about enemy aircraft, all you have to worry about is flak. So, what we did was get back into the plane and crouch down and put on our helmets. He was sitting on the box, his heine is sticking out over the edge, and flak came up and got him. He got a Purple Heart for getting shot in the ass. [laughter] It wasn't our crew, it was another crew.

SH: What time would you leave for a mission?

CG: You generally get up about five or six o'clock in the morning to prepare, you had to take care of your needs and eat breakfast, take off was usually around seven or eight. You had early take offs.

SH: What time did you usually get back to base?

CG: Usually between three and five, according to when you took off.

SH: Were you grounded for a certain number of hours before you could fly again?

CG: They spaced it out. I flew missions one after the other three or four days in a row, then I would stay down for two days and then fly again. They tried to keep it so you didn't crash mentally from stress, because the stress of the flight was more than you actually realized. The stress was very hard on you, they never show that in the war movies and television shows.

SH: Have you seen any movies that portray what you went through fairly honestly or correctly?

CG: Not exactly, I liked *Twelve O'clock High*, but it wasn't completely accurate. It was portraying what happened in England, not Italy, so, what happened in Italy would be somewhat different.

SH: The B-17s were in England.

CG: Yes, B-17s were in England. We had a few in Italy, but mostly B-24s, which were longer range, heavier bombers. B-24s were an improvement over the B-17s, and, of course, they made more improvements with the B-29s.

SH: When you were flying all your missions were there any superstitions that people practiced to keep safe?

CG: Not that I'm aware of.

JR: Did you guys like stand beside the plane after each mission?

CG: No, none of that Hollywood stuff.

JR: Red Cross, coffee and doughnuts were pretty much after your missions?

CG: Right, you got off, and ran, happy to get off.

SH: Did you get any care packages from home?

CG: I think my wife sent one, but we really had no need for anything.

SH: How often did you write home?

CG: Not enough, I think I'm a poor writer. I couldn't express what I wanted to.

SH: Did you see any of the other Allied forces in the missions?

CG: Yes, in Italy. I saw the English tank corps and infantry, Australians and French.

SH: Any stories you can elaborate on?

CG: No stories of interest, because the interaction was really nothing between us. They had their way and we had ours, that's all. The only thing, we were on top of the hill, we had a plateau, which was flat for the landing field. Then it went down into a valley. The top of the plateau is where we use to watch the movies at night. While we were waiting for the movie to start, we would watch the British take off in their bombers from the field below, they used to take off at night, they did night bombing. We use to wonder how in the world they ever flew. Their planes were made of cloth, I mean, the structure was metal, but they had cloth stretched over it, like the old planes use to be. I can't tell you how many planes cracked up on the runway, before take off. We'd watch, at night, and take bets on whether or not the plane would make it off, or not. We went on one flight at night in Gioia del Colle with the crew chief or the engineer of the plane.

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

JR: This is tape two, side one of an interview with Carlo J. Ginobile. We're just talking about how the engineers put cloth on the plane, which kept it from icing up.

CG: We used to spread this canvas material across the wings of the plane, from wingtip to wingtip, that was supposed to keep the frost off the wings, because in the morning the frost was pretty heavy. This one night, for some reason, this one particular crew didn't do it. They left their plane out there at night, without any cover on it, and, of course, the dew settled on the wings. When it came time to take off, we took off in formation, we all got in position and took off. When this one particular plane took off, he got fifty feet in the air and that's as far as he could go, because the controls froze on him due to the ice that formed from the dew that settled on the wings. That's what the cloth does, keeps that from happening. It flew about ten miles from the field, then, he lost control and dived into the ground and when we took off, we could see where the plane hit the ground. It was a huge hole and we saw someone on the edge of the crater, walking around. How in the world somebody got out of there, to walk around, was a miracle. We're carrying ten five hundred-pound demolition bombs and they all went off, including the 2700 gallons of gasoline, high octane fuel, that all blew up. It was one big puff and we wondered how this one guy made it out or where he came from. But we went on to our missions anyway. That night, when we came back, we found out that that was one of the crew members that was in that plane that crashed, and he was walking toward the tail of his airplane. Somehow in that explosion it threw him out of the plane and onto the ground and he wasn't hurt. He was disoriented, but he wasn't hurt.

SH: Did anyone else survive?

CG: He was the only one who survived. We couldn't believe what happened. How the hell did that happen, but we know it happened because they didn't have the wing covers on it, that was something I'll never forget. When we took off, we flew right over it, you could look right down into the crater. It was a deep hole.

SH: Unbelievable.

CG: That's what I say, that is the stuff they just can't teach you, you have to experience it to know it.

SH: What are some other memorable missions that you remember?

CG: Not really many, because from then on, it was just a series of marshalling yards, run of the day bombings, and fighter planes and some flak.

SH: When did you finish the number of missions that you needed?

CG: In July I finished them. I started in February and my last mission was on July 3, 1944.

SH: What happened after your final mission?

CG: What happened to me? Well, I got interrogated, then, they took my diary away from me.

SH: Why did they?

CG: Because I had vital information in here that couldn't fall into enemy hands.

SH: Are you talking about your diary?

CG: Yes, my diary, they took it away from me. They told me I would get it back, that's why my name and address is in it.

SH: Did they promise to give it back to you?

CG: Oh, yes, they mailed it back to me, at a later date, when they cleared it with the United States. It had to be cleared before they could release it, to see what information was in there.

SH: Was that the first time they realized that you'd been keeping a diary?

CG: They did know about it, even the fellows in my tent knew.

SH: Where did you keep it?

CG: I kept it in a little box I had, something like a footlocker, I kept it on the top, unlocked. If another guy was to find it and open it up, it wouldn't have meant anything to him.

JR: Were you allowed to keep diaries?

CG: We were allowed to do anything except blab out any clue of what we were doing.

JR: Did they read your mail before they sent it home?

CG: Yes, everything I wrote home was censored, everything. I could not even tell them where I was, all they knew was, I was somewhere in Europe. I don't think they knew I was in Italy, because I couldn't tell them.

SH: Did you try to let them know?

CG: No, there's no way I could do it because everything I wrote was scrutinized real close and they were handy with that little, old razor blade to cut it out.

SH: Who did the censoring in your group?

CG: The pilot did mine. He was responsible for mine, then from him it went to the adjutant general's office, and they did it again over there.

SH: Did you use V-mail?

CG: Yes, I guess, it was called V-mail, that little envelope you opened it, wrote in it and mailed it free.

SH: So, when you left [Italy] in the end of '44, how did you get back to the states?

CG: I Came back by boat.

SH: You came back by boat from Italy.

CG: Yes. We came back by boat and I landed in Norfolk, Virginia. From there I went to Langley Field and from there they gave us a pass to go home for thirty days. So, I went home for thirty days, I reported back to Langley Field and they shipped me to Miami Beach, Florida, to the hospital. They sent me to a hospital for three months, for war related stress. Then, they used to call it, not shellshock, what the heck did they call it? Well, similar to shellshock. I didn't realize how much the stress affected me, it really took its toll. I recuperated there for three months, tearing up the town, getting drunk, and all the other things we used to do.

SH: From there what were you assigned to do?

CG: Once I got better, I was assigned to Kessler Air Force base in Mississippi. There I did a little airplane maintenance. Then I went to the Ford Factory School in Ypsilanti, Michigan. That's where they were making the airplanes. I took a crash course on the B-24s.

SH: Did you do mechanical repair?

CG: Yes, I was in mechanics all the time. That course was just to brush up on stuff. From there they assigned me to McGuire Air Force Base. I was close to home prior to another assignment to go overseas. I never went back overseas though, because the war had ended by then.

SH: What did you think your next overseas assignment would be?

CG: Oh, my next assignment would have been in Asia, I don't know where, but I knew I would be in the Pacific. But that didn't happen, they assigned me to Hospital trips out of McGuire Air Force Base. We used to fly C-47s out of McGuire, go up to Hamilton Air Force Base in New York and pick up the injured that came back from overseas. We transported these soldiers to hospitals close to their homes, wherever they were from.

SH: What was your duty on the plane?

CG: I was an engineer on that plane, the C-47. There was me as an engineer, the pilot, co-pilot and two nurses. The nurses took care of the sick. All I did was take care of the plane. I flew that until the war ended and I was booted out of the service. I had accumulated too many points. Everybody was trying to get their points, I already had mine made, I was out.

SH: Did you ever think of staying in the military?

CG: I was going to stay in, but my mother felt it was better for me to come home. I would have loved to have stayed there.

SH: When you finished up the number of flights that you needed to do, did your whole crew come back together from Italy?

CG: Yes, we all finished.

SH: At the same time?

CG: The whole group, in fact, finished. That's why at the end there, you were assigned any plane to get your missions all done, that's what we did, you accumulated your missions and went.

SH: Was your crew disbanded because the plane you were flying was shot down with another crew?

CG: Well, no, the crew wasn't really disbanded, what was left of our crew, just four of us left, we stayed together, went from place to place where we could fill in. Once in a while we'd go solo with some other crew, but it was mostly the crew together, except for the pilot. The pilot was reassigned, for some reason, after the twenty-fifth mission. I think, it was the twenty-fifth, my last flight with the lieutenant.

SH: Some of these planes in your diary have really colorful names, like the *Ice Cold Katie*.

CG: They were really, airplanes, everybody named their airplanes.

SH: *The Goosy Lucy*, *The Big Mobile*, *Old Taylor*, *The Flabbergasted Fannie*, *Screamin' Meemie*.

CG: The Stork, the whole list is in the back there, the ships and their number.

JR: Did you know the other crewmen from other crews as well?

CG: No. You knew them all but, you were more intimate with your own crewmembers. The other crews all had the same thing, they all stayed together. They formed little families, and each family kept to themselves and they got together like normal families do, in meetings and things like that. We'd all eat at the same common table, you all gamble at the same table and you knew these crew members like you would know a buddy on the street.

SH: Were you ever given rest any other time?

CG: No, that was the only rest we got, in between our missions. I wasn't aware until they gave it to us. We didn't know we were going to get any rest period in between.

JR: For R&R [rest and relaxation] when you were traveling, did you ever come across cities that had been bombed?

CG: The only observation of the bombings is what I saw from the air. On the ground I never saw the destruction that was there. I mean, in Italy the destruction wasn't that bad because, remember, we didn't do that type of bombing into Italy itself. The part of Italy I was in was the southern part of Italy. The northern part of Italy got hit a couple of times, but there was no real destruction of Italy.

SH: How often was your group given escort by P-38s fighter planes?

CG: You mean on the flights? We had escorts, like when we went on a bombing run, on some of the distant runs, we had P-39s and P-47s. The P-38s would be more strategic, below us, they flew on the bottom as protection, the '47s were better at higher altitudes so they flew above us, and that was protection that way, but, they never really flew all the way with us, because their range was limited. We had a five hundred mile range; they only had a three hundred mile range so they were limited to where they could go. They could take us in so far and that was it.

SH: Did you ever become friends with any of the pilots on these other planes?

CG: Yes, I talked to them, we were friendly, but not in a buddy, buddy sense.

SH: Did you keep in contact with any of the members of your crew once you came back home?

CG: No, I'm sorry I didn't, but they didn't do it either. One or two died later in life, we're practically all gone.

SH: What was the reaction when the war ended in Europe?

CG: I was stationed at Fort Dix, McGuire Air Force Base. I was flying C-47s out of there.

SH: What was the reaction here in the States to that news that the war had ended in Europe?

CG: I guess, it was good, but I don't recall it myself because the day the war ended I was on base somewhere, or in flight.

SH: What was your reaction when you knew that the war was over with Japan?

CG: Well, as soon as the war was over, I knew that we wouldn't be sent overseas.

SH: What was your personal reaction?

CG: I didn't have any because I was attached to a hospital ship and I didn't think they were going to move me anymore, because I was doing an essential job of getting these sick boys home to their place. There was an awful lot of them lined up to get home.

SH: Where were you when you received the news the surrender had taken place in Japan?

CG: That happened in July of '45. I must have been on a flight somewhere because I don't remember anything specific about it.

SH: People in different cities talked about the reaction of the people, for example, dancing in the streets. Can you recall anything like that?

CG: No, I don't remember that crazy stuff you see on television that they did. Like the upheaval they had in New York, I don't remember any of that. I didn't do it, my reaction probably was more calm.

SH: What are you most proud of that you did as far as the war effort was concerned?

CG: I don't know, it was just a job for my country, that's all. I can't think of anything in particular. I did the job assigned to me and was able to carry it out; I guess that's fulfilling enough.

SH: Through all of these experiences, and all of that training, how do you think it impacted the man you are today?

CG: Well, maybe I'm a little wiser about the world. From a little kid I grew up into a man. That's all. It didn't really impact me too much. Looking back now, I wish I had changed some things in the beginning, I would have continued my schooling. That's what I regret most, not

having the schooling I wanted. Before the war, I had the intention of going to Drexel University and pursuing electrical engineering, but the draft came along and I didn't have my high school education completed, that all worked against me.

SH: Did you ever use any of the GI Bill benefits?

CG: I used it to go to electrical school, to learn electricity, because at that time I had a child.

SH: When did you marry Mrs. Ginobile?

CG: May 4, 1946, we got married.

SH: How many children do you have in your family?

CG: We had six, we bargained for six, we got six.

SH: Well, that's wonderful. Do you have any other questions, Janeann?

JR: You were courting your wife while away at war, what was it like maintaining a long distance relationship and did you ever write home love letters?

CG: Well, she was pretty busy at home. I wrote a few letters, I don't know if she dated, or not, but whatever. It was pretty casual writing back and forth.

JR: Did you know when you left that she was the woman you were planning on marrying when you came back?

CG: Yes, I had planned on that because I got her an engagement ring before I left, but didn't have a chance to give it to her. I had my parents give her the engagement ring.

SH: Really?

CG: Yes, I forgot when it was, though. So, I let her know that she was taken.

SH: Can you tell us how you got your parents to give her the engagement ring?

CG: I don't know, Italians are funny that way. I really don't know how that worked. She could tell you that, I couldn't.

JR: Were you overseas when you wrote to your parents to give her the engagement ring?

CG: No, I was in Lincoln, Nebraska at that time. It was at the beginning.

SH: Did you do any training in Fresno, California?

CG: Yes, I was in Fresno for about a month, before I went to gunnery school. That was a pretty good experience too. I mean, bivouacking out in the open, with a bunch of guys.

SH: Were you ever thankful that you were in the Air Corps rather than the infantry?

CG: Yes, ma'am, oh, yes. I couldn't think of being on the ground the way they were fighting. I was afraid of it.

SH: While you were flying out of Italy and doing all these missions, you are at a distance, removed from the enemy, the closest enemy, for you, is literally the planes that are trying to stop the bombing runs.

CG: The planes and the guns shooting up at us, yes.

SH: The antiaircraft type of fire, and then, ironically, you wind up flying the wounded back to their hospitals closest to their homes.

CG: The hospitals closest to their homes.

SH: You said there were many waiting to be evacuated.

CG: Many, many, yes, there were many Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and we flew them everywhere in the United States. I was one of ten or twelve ships that took off from McGuire, went to Hamilton Air Force Base, picked up the wounded and distributed them around the country.

SH: You had talked about how tight your crew was between enlisted men and officers, that there really was hardly any division at all, was there any place that you were stationed where this was not true? Here there was a real hierarchy and officers versus enlisted men?

CG: No, it was all camaraderie as far as the Air Force was concerned. They had an officers club you weren't allowed into because it was just for officers, but when you were in town at a bar, or something like that, they're your buddy, right next to you could be an officer. There was no distinction between ranks. It was just a couple of guys fighting the war, doing what they had to do, that's all.

SH: When you were in Italy were you ever told not to fraternize with the Italians?

CG: No. Never. We were mostly on our own, to do as we pleased, except be ready for a flight in the morning.

SH: Okay, any other questions?

JR: I was just wondering if you ever ran into instances of friendly fire? Due to visibility, did you ever fire upon a plane, which turned out to be one of your own.

CG: You mean, shoot down one of my own? Well, I had a range of a thousand yards, there was an outstanding rule, if you were in range, I don't care who you were, if you didn't come in properly, you will be shot. So, what they had to do when they came in at a thousand yards, was stay out there and wave their wings back and forth, and keep waving their wings as they came in. If they came in that way, and low, they would make it in, but if they didn't, they were shot. They had to come in to the formation right because it was pretty dangerous. The Germans had our airplanes and they did come into our flights and shoot us up pretty good. We had that happen many times, we were flying in formation and a fighter comes in to the group, but it happens to be a German fighter, a German pilot that captured one of our planes. They pretty well chewed up one or two planes of ours. There were many a time, they shot down our planes that way. So, our guys had to come into the formation the right way. In Sofia, Bulgaria, a plane came in, he was very low, he informed us by communications that he was coming into us, but he still waved his wings, then I knew it was him coming in. Out there you're very nervous and very trigger happy, you're on edge all the time, you don't know what's going to happen next, you stay always at the peak of readiness. Any split moment there could be a fighter jump out of the sky at you, but, you don't know where they are, or who they were, and most readily you watched the sun because that's where they would come from. They would come out of that sun, you wouldn't see them, and it might be too late when you did. I mean, it kept on your toes all the time. The fighter pilots knew about it, too, but one made the mistake, they didn't live to tell about it.

JR: Did you ever have trouble sleeping after your missions?

CG: Surprisingly, no. I slept like a baby at night, got up the next morning ready for work. Like I said, I didn't think that the war had any effect on me at all. Until I came back to the states for duty after my furlough, the doctor looked at me and said, "You're going to the hospital." I said, "What for?" He says, "Stress." Sure enough, I was there only a couple of days when I broke down.

SH: Did anyone like the crew notice any signs of an illness?

CG: I don't know but I didn't notice anything was wrong.

SH: Do you think you were properly cared for in Miami?

CG: Not what the doctors did, what the town did. Anyway, we had one hell of a time there.

SH: So, you weren't confined to the hospital?

CG: No, it was a hotel that they used just for the purpose of de-stressing and unlocking our minds. The doctors worked on me about three hours every morning, that was it. Then, we were on our own the rest of the day, and, of course, we used to run to Miami proper. We were in Miami Beach, but, Miami proper, was where all the action was. That's were all the Air Force, Marines, sailors, everybody went.

SH: Did they get along?

CG: Oh, yes, television distorts that so much. You didn't see any fighting among the men. No, we didn't see any of that, at least I didn't, if it happened, I didn't know about it, I never experienced any of that, wherever I went it was very cordial. Everybody was friends, we had a common cause, the common cause was fighting the enemy, not ourselves, that's what we did.

JR: On your trip home were there any plans that you made or was there something you desired?

CG: No, I didn't want for anything, I had everything I wanted. So, when I come home, it was just a matter of getting reacquainted with the family, and, of course, to see my wife, but, otherwise, no, there was nothing special.

SH: Do you remember the name of the ship you came back home on?

CG: No, it was one of the Liberty ships. I don't remember which one it was. I remember being down in the hold, with a bunch of sick guys. In the compartment I was in, almost half the compartment was full of foot soldiers, infantry and halfway home, we had an awful bad storm and the ship rocked, tossed and turned. Well, the Air Force is use to that because in an airplane you rocked and rolled and you'd go up and down in the sky, you're going up, you're going down, you're falling, you're moving over, so you get use to that rolling motion, but the infantry, those poor guys weren't use to it and they were getting sick.

SH: Was there any concern about the German submarines at that point?

CG: No, at that point, I think, the U-boats were done. We had no problems, we were the only ship coming across, if there were U-boats out there we'd have been a great target, but we weren't concerned, it was an easy trip home.

SH: Anything else, Janeann?

JR: Not that I can think of.

SH: Well, I thank you for taking time today and sharing your journal and your scrapbook with us.

CG: You, take whatever you like.

SH: If you want to give it to us, I'd love to take it for the Archives.

CG: Yes, you can have it.

SH: Well, thank you.

CG: Whatever will help you.

SH: Again, thank you and Mrs. Ginobile.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: In going through a box of wonderful memorabilia that Mr. Ginobile has, we've been discussing the photographs, the diary and training manuals. He has volunteered to continue the interview and to talk a little bit about what is was like for a draftee on the first night of enlistment, please continue.

CG: Yes, the first night when you're inducted into the service, you're shipped out to a training camp where they evaluate you.

SH: You're in Fort Dix?

CG: Yes, that first night at Fort Dix was the first time most of the fellows had been away from home, you could hear sobbing all night long. I guess they were home sick.

SH: Were you prepared? What did they tell you to bring when you went to training camp?

CG: You brought whatever you had, because when you got there you had to ship that all back home, anyway. The next morning, the first thing the bus did was drop you off at the supply tent where you got in line to get all your gear, blankets, coat, pants, and everything that you needed. That was going with you for the rest of your tour of duty.

SH: How were you treated by your drill sergeants?

CG: Well, fairly good, but I didn't have that many drill sergeants because I only spent a short time in Atlantic City where we did a little marching and drilling up on the beaches. It was more evaluation, taking tests and that's where you got all you needles. That's the only training we had before we went to school.

SH: Are there any other memories you can remember?

CG: No, I think that's pretty much it.

SH: Okay. This concludes the interview.

CG: That incident of the barracks when you brought it up, that was funny. I remember when I was in Lincoln, Nebraska, we lived in tar paper shacks. They built shacks in the fields. All the barracks were tar paper and when you sleep at night, we had stoves in the middle to keep us warm, and you'd hear all this rattling, the field mice would make their way into the barracks, they'd run all night in the beds and a fellow there, I don't know how, but in the morning when we woke up, he had field mice wrapped around his feet to keep his feet warm.

SH: Any other unique critters that you ran into?

CG: No. That's all.

SH: Well, this concludes the interview with Mr. Ginobile. Thank you so much.

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

Reviewed by Christine Agoglia 10/27/04
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 11/5/04
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 3/16/05
Reviewed by Carlo Ginobile 8/4/05 & 12/05