

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH WALTER PETER NELSON

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Mr. Walter Peter Nelson on May 21, 2004, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth. Mr. Nelson, thank you very much for coming in today.

Walter Peter Nelson: You're welcome.

SI: You have traveled a great distance today and we appreciate that. To begin, your father was born in Sweden.

WN: ... Yes.

SI: Can you tell me a little bit about him? Why did he immigrate to the United States?

WN: In Sweden, in that period, a little after 1900, their economy was shot. ... The Industrial Revolution was underway and what had been a totally farm economy was changing. Where my father lived was on the water, his father and grandfather had been sailors. ... His natural father and his stepfather, each had drowned, ... one of them in the South China Sea, on a cargo ship. When he was twelve years old, he was finished with school and was apprenticed to work in a carpenter's shop in a little village near Kalmar, the old Hanseatic trading city on the Baltic Sea. At that time, the migration from Sweden to this country was going strong. The steamship lines made it very easy. ... Emigrants could book passage to New York from Sweden, from Gothenberg, for twenty-five dollars. It wasn't much of a ride, but it got them here. ... The skill he had was as a carpenter. He had learned that, ... I'm trying to think of the word, he was "apprenticed;" that was the word I was trying to think of. ... He came here, to New York City, and, back in those days, there were places where people from various countries gathered, boarding houses, if you will. ... There were a series of them in Brooklyn, on Atlantic Avenue, from what I have been told, and they went from Ellis Island to this boarding house and, in short order, he was working as a carpenter ... for some contractor. ... After that one year in Brooklyn, he was about eighteen or nineteen, and decided that he and his brother ought to start a business of their own, which they did. It was construction, but most of their work was putting flooring in. ... Am I getting too bogged down?

SI: No.

WN: ... For several years, they were involved in building the station platforms for the elevated subways in New York City. You know, they were wooden in those days, like decks are today, and then, he decided he didn't want to stay with that and he got into the flooring business, which was more of a carpenter's job, and what he did then, for the next fifteen years, until he died, was build that business and, of interest, he would go to Sweden, or his brother would, and recruit some strong, young boys, seventeen or eighteen, pay for their passage here, put them in a boarding house, with a promise that they'd work for a year, and a couple of them stayed with them permanently. Well, with that, he started putting flooring into apartment houses in New York and, eventually, migrated out of New York up into Westchester, ... to, specifically, Mount Vernon, where I was born, grew up. When I was eleven, he died. I was left with my mother and sister. My sister was married the year he died. He died of cancer and my mother was hard pressed. ... The property she had [that was] of any value were two houses; the one we lived in

and another one that my father had taken in payment for a flooring bill some years before. She had an income from that second house and very little else. ... Meanwhile, my sister married and my mother felt she had to get a job, so, she did and got a job as a cook. She had a cousin who was a cook for a well-to-do family in Philadelphia, the Wideners, if you know Widener College, that family, and she went down there and visited her, my Aunt Hannah, and stayed with her a while, to see what cooking was like in a kitchen like that, and then, she came back and life began to be a little different. ... She got a job, ... there were several over the years, but she wound up in the home of Oscar Hammerstein in New York, the playwright and lyricist, who had an invalid wife and my mother took care of her, traveled with her for about ten years, and then, Mrs. Hammerstein died. Oscar Hammerstein thought a lot of my mother and provided [for her] when she was older.

Meanwhile, I had gone to live with my sister, out in Plainfield. I went to high school in North Plainfield and, in my senior year, or before, I started talking about college, Rutgers. My mother wanted me to go, and so, I applied here and was admitted. I had to go to summer school in Winants Hall that first summer before I started, to make up three credits. ... Then, I came to Rutgers in the fall of 1940, Class of '44, and lived in Hegeman Hall on the second floor.

In the ... spring of '41, there were recruiting people on the campus, a lot of them, from all the services, and I was in ROTC. ... Anyhow, I went with my friends and took the big step and volunteered, on a deal with the Air Force that I could become an Aviation Cadet and go to pilot training. So, they said, "Okay, you're in." I had a physical, this, that and the other. ... At the end of the school year, ... we had asked, "When are we going to be called up?" and they said, "Well, we're not certain and you have to fit in with the overall training plans." So, I said, "Okay," and went home. I didn't know what was going to happen, so, I told them here, at Rutgers, that I wasn't going to come back and they said, "Join the ranks." ... I mean, a lot of guys did the same thing. I got a job at Mack Truck. ... They had an engine building plant in Plainfield ... and one in New Brunswick. They made the castings for the engines here and those castings were brought to Plainfield and the finished engines were made in Plainfield. ... A friend of the family ... worked there and his name was ... John Ising, a great guy. He was a production engineer and I worked there until I left, when I got the call to go into the Air Force. Interesting job, I thought. They ... made all of the bolts and nuts and washers and rods and what have you from raw steel on lathes, automatic lathes, and parts would get misplaced and there'd be a lot of scrap and so on and ... the production manager is responsible for all this and there were some labor problems at the time and they suspected there was shenanigans going on. Well, anyhow, it was my job to find these bins of parts that had been made and, supposedly, gone to inspections, and then, to stock, and then, no one could find them, that sort of thing. ... The next spring, I waited until, I think, February of '42, ... December 7th had come and gone and, in the early spring, I was called up, given some time, I've forgotten how much, ... and then, set off for the Air Force.

SI: What were your first days at Rutgers as a freshman like? How well did you transition from high school to college?

WN: Well, in high school, I had done okay. ... I played football in high school. North Plainfield wasn't a very big school. We lost a lot of games, but, anyhow, I had been brought

over here by the coach to see some football games and I had an idea [that] I'd like to try out for football. All of that happened and I was led to the 150-pound [team]. In those days, they had a 150-pound team and I went out for that and enjoyed that and we had a schedule of games played here and, also, the stadium was brand-new, by the way. ... That was the first view I ever had of Rutgers, when we were brought over to see the new stadium. That was in 1938. Getting into school was an eye-opener for me in a lot of ways, with the level of teaching and things I started to hear. Very different from high school. The dormitory was a challenge. I'm sure it's always been a challenge for kids, of just jawboning and trying to settle the problems of the world and we had the war as an issue, as a subject, and one of the things [was], ... there were fellows who went off and volunteered in the Canadian Air Force and that avenue was open. ... By the way, I had been interested in flying when I was a little kid and the first time I ever flew was over in South Plainfield. There was an airfield there called Hadley and, I think, for two dollars, I went up in the first airplane there, but, going back to school, it was all entirely new. ... Chapel was required in those days. I didn't mind that at all. The basic subjects that were required were set as freshman and I had some troubles with some courses and had to get some extra help from a tutor. Part of it was the dormitory extracurriculars. ... When I left, by reason of volunteering for the service, I was one of many and I know that my Class of '44, plus '43 and '45, I know this from the alumni in the classes, that the largest percentage of people getting into the service was right in that period, ... into all the services, and it was true all over the country as well and, when I would meet people, later on in the service, ... everywhere we went, I met fellows that were in the same shape, one year of college or two years of college, and they were the ones who were in officer's training and that was the requirement, that you had to have been accepted and gone to college. ... I would say that through the spring, my mind was on it. Once we got to that enlistment office, my thoughts were, you know, someplace else. ... The facilities here were very different from now. We had a real good time. ... I mean, it was plenty adequate and growing, but I was a young kid at the time, eighteen, I think.

SI: You mentioned that the war was the subject of discussions between you and your dorm mates.

WN: Yes, constantly.

SI: What kind of discussions did you have? Were they isolationist versus interventionist?

WN: Well, I'll tell you, on this campus, at the time, there was a lot of, again, in the dormitories, ... big discussions of Communism in its Lenin type, not military Communism, but philosophical Communism, as a creed, biblical, and that was a very lively subject on this campus then. I remember a couple of guys I knew ... and the *Targum* in those days, which I was interested in, had coverage of the subject *ad finitum*, ... but my own views at the time, ... I think, were not very profound at all, politically. If anything, my family was conservative and still are. ... From when I was young, I was in the Scouts. I belonged to the junior cadet thing. ... So, I'm growing up orderly and not at all radical and I think that's the way I started. Nothing happened at school here that changed my mind. Those all-night bull sessions concerned that subject, ... that topic, ... the probability of war.

SI: In your estimation, how many students held Communist beliefs?

WN: Very few. ... I happened to know one fellow who was ardent, again, not a Stalinist-type. This was philosophical Communism, as a ... credo, as it was originally envisioned. ... He was active, but I don't think it was heavily loaded with a lot of fellows.

SI: Were there other political discussions, like how people felt about President Roosevelt and the New Deal or the situation in Europe with Hitler and Mussolini?

WN: Well, I have to separate [that] ... from my experience later. No, I had a pretty strong feeling about Hitler, anti, ... based on his conquering, his movement out ... [to] form a larger and larger Germany and [the] same with Italy, that it was military-based. ... Also, as time went on, it was easy to see that England was in trouble, I mean big, and Churchill was the winning force, really, in that war, I think. He held on until Roosevelt, finally, [committed] and December 7th came. I gather that Roosevelt was reluctant to start anything before that on his own, because of all the German backgrounds [of] people in this country. At the time, the community where I lived, there was an active *Bund*. You heard that word?

SI: Yes.

WN: This was an American-German group, uniformed, marching, martial music. They had an encampment-lodge and it was the first time I ever had beer in my life. We slipped under the gate. Every Sunday, they would gather, hundreds and hundreds of people, had a good time, lots of food, music, speeches, we heard them, couldn't believe some of the stuff we were hearing. Much of it was in German, didn't understand that, but there was enough English spoken to [understand] and, here, it was in our own town, inside a gate and all that, and there's no prohibition against it. It just went on and ... I told you that to illustrate that there was a divided interest in this country amongst the first-generation people who were here and my generation that followed were all kids, you know. ... On the other hand, my parents came to this country with an anti-German [sentiment]. ... The feelings were that they wanted to dominate Europe long before World War II, I mean, way back to World War I, in the days of the Kaiser, when my parents were young.

SI: Your mother was born also in Sweden. Can you tell me a little bit about her? Did your parents meet in Sweden or over here?

WN: ... No, they met here. ... They came from opposite ends. My mother came from a background of living on a farm in western Sweden. In Sweden, ... if you owned land, which her parents did, there was recognition of it and can trace back the ancestry. In Sweden, in a town by the name of Växjö, where we have been, for forty dollars, we bought a computer run on our family that goes back to the year ... 1030 and only because they owned property, through church records and what have you. She came ... with that background and she and her sisters and brother all came at once. In Sweden, they have the inheritance law of "primogeniture." When you have property, you don't break the farm up into five pieces. It stays together and the oldest child, not oldest male, ... in this case, it turned out to be a sister, and her daughter is exactly my age, still living on the same place in Sweden, and we see her from time-to-time. Well, anyhow, my mother came here and met and married and started a family and, supposedly, it was going to

be the grand [life] and my father was doing very well. He died early in 1933, which was fairly early in the Depression, and his business had been fine. For him, [the] New York general area was growing, and they had more work than they could handle. Then, he was diagnosed with cancer and he lived for about two-and-a-half years and his brother took over the business and it promptly went *kaput*. ... It was not his thing and there was my mother, left to provide for us. As I told you before, my sister was old enough to be married, but, right out of high school, she had worked for the Metropolitan Insurance Company for a couple of years in New York. Then, in those days, you could get from where we lived, up in Mount Vernon to downtown, 19th Street in New York, where Met is, Metropolitan, for a nickel on the subway. My mother had the two of us and she saw that it wasn't going to work out. So, I stayed with her for about two years and I was ... eleven and twelve, ... I'd be in the seventh and eighth grades. I went to live with my sister and brother-in-law. I stayed with them one year only and my brother-in-law was transferred. He worked ... in New York and he was transferred to Albany. I was boarded out, in Plainfield, to a family that we met in our church and I lived with them for all through high school and, when I was at Rutgers and came home, going home was to there, and ... they're all gone now, but they were like my second home and it was very nice. ... Meanwhile, my mother became independent, ... as I told you before, and so, we visited her and she came out. I met the Hammerstein family very early and they were very nice to us. As a matter-of-fact, I wound up getting some very fine sports jackets from him. My mother lived until she was seventy-four.

SI: You signed up for the Air Force before Pearl Harbor. What was your motivation for getting involved so early?

WN: A combination of two things. I wanted to fly and, if ... we're going to be involved in the service, I wanted to be in the Air Force. It was either that or the Navy, but I had grown up much interested in flying, it was a big subject, and then, I got to be of that age and, here, feeling a sense of responsibility. In ROTC, it was much described. I think that had an influence. I knew I was ... a prime subject, I was in good shape and so forth, and the way it worked out, other friends of mine who waited a little longer; you could have waited and been drafted and what have you, but you didn't have much choice then. Ideologically, yes, it was there, too, that I had a sense of history. ... One of my majors was American history and I was very aware of the history of this country and of World War I and, also, we grew up sort of being Anglophiles in my family. Growing up, I never learned to speak Swedish, because Swedish was never spoken in our house, never. My mother, long before, had said to my father, "If we're going to learn to speak English well, we want to, and kids growing up with us, that's the only way to do it." So, that's the way it was and it just happened that we had some English friends around, neighbors and what have you, and we kept hearing the news from England at the time. ... They took a bashing in England in the early years of the war from Hitler. So, it was a combination of ... wanting to fly and sort of a sense that, "[If] I'm going to be in, I'd rather be doing what I want to do," and here was an opportunity to go to pilot training. So, that was that.

SI: Where were you when Pearl Harbor was attacked? How did you react to the news?

WN: Literally? I was in church. Literally, we were in church and someone came in and made an announcement. ... A social affair was going on in our church. It wasn't a church service, it was a social affair and he made the announcement. We were glued to the radio from then on.

I thought, "Well, I'm going to be called next week, ... or certainly in the next few weeks." ... Then, later on, I came to understand what was going on and we weren't geared up at all. ... In those days, the Air Force was part of the Army, the US Army Air Force. I was an Army officer first, and then, during the Korean War, became an Air Force officer, but, in the period just after Pearl Harbor, there was dumbfoundedness and confusion for a while and finger pointing in every direction, politically, and then, gradually, over the next months, things were geared up at Mack Truck, where I was. ... That's when all the plants around started having guards. Up until then, I'd never seen guards around the plant of any kind and, ... down the Shore here, they had watchers and they had watchers all over at night, for aircraft coming and so forth. So, that all built up awareness, ... and then, the government had bond selling going on. That was an awareness thing, and then, the draft was started [in 1940]. So, the awareness level got bigger and bigger and bigger as time went on and Fort Dix, near here, became a big, big center very fast, Army recruitment [center], where you go when you first get in, and, in the papers and listening to the radio, all of that, the awareness built and a lot of patriotic type stuff developed and some of it was memories from World War I. "We Want You," that poster, ... that had come from years before.

SI: Do you remember rationing?

WN: Sure, gasoline, and I had a car, but I drove a bike to work, ... so [that] I could have gas on weekends, [laughter] frankly. Then, there was food rationing, but that didn't seem to bother us. ... We had a garden for the first time. We dug up out in the back, planted tomatoes and such, and there was a shortage of meat, as I remember it, and coffee and it always was, "It's gone to war," you know, that was the answer and that was about how it was. Meanwhile, I hadn't given Rutgers much thought while that was all going on, then, finally, I wound up being called up. ...

SI: At the factory, were you producing trucks exclusively for the military?

WN: Engines only, ... that's all Mack engines. The finished engines were shipped to Allentown, where the trucks were assembled, and then, they started getting the government contracts and it took all of their production, one hundred percent of it, and then, they started growing and growing. ... During the war, I would hear from friends there and it just kept growing and growing and bigger and bigger, but I stayed with them almost until when I left, after I'd been notified that I was called up. ...

SI: You mentioned labor problems where workers may have been taking parts. I know that labor was dealt with differently during the war and, also, there were fears of sabotage in the factories. Was that a concern?

WN: At Mack, yes, it was. It wasn't a big one, but they had the guards, and then, they had internal guards, too. ... They're not only guarding the perimeter, but they had guys walking around inside, not in uniform, and I knew that from the job I had and, in fact, there were those who thought I was one of them, from doing what I did. It turned out, ... I think there was an attitude inherent that some companies that were really rough on ... labor, really, in labor negotiations and so on, and there was a discontent and some people ... who had a bent towards

that and they would feel that they got brownie points for doing things that didn't do the company any good. So, dumping a load of parts that were good into the scrap meant ... more overtime or more work; that was the issue. ... So, that had to get straightened out and, after the war started, that stopped. First of all, a lot of women ... came to work and it was a whole different ballgame, and then, we had price-and-wage stabilization. Things, for a long time, were, "This is the way it is," and that put an end to that kind of stuff, yes. [I] hadn't thought of that in a while. Anyhow, that was pre-war, pre-service for me.

SI: What was your introduction into military life like, reporting for duty and so forth?

WN: [laughter] Well, I'll tell you, it was funny; just very briefly, I was called to report to Newark, got to [the] Newark Reception Center, ... in my civilian clothes, had been told to bring a toilet kit and that's all, and so, we all arrived there at the reception center on a certain day, ... about fifty, all of us Air Force aviation cadets, pre-flight, and put on a bus and taken to a railroad siding and put into ... either two or one car. ... Pretty soon, a train came in and we got hooked onto the end of it and this was, like, a troop train and that train took off from Newark that afternoon, crossed over into New York and went up on the New York Central tracks to Albany and cut across all the way out to Erie, Cleveland to Chicago, stopping here and there and picking up another car. The train was long, got to Chicago and turned south and, eventually, we wound up in Nashville, which was an official, big reception center and got off the train and feeling terrible, I was, and got onto buses and were taken to the camp and, the next morning, ... "Anybody feeling not well, come to sick call." So, I went, along with a whole bunch of guys, and I had pneumonia. So, I spent the first ten days in service in the hospital and I got out of there and was processed in. ... This was still in my civilian clothes, in the hospital, [laughter] and I got over that, and then, went from there down to Maxwell Field, which was a totally different ballgame. That's down in Montgomery, Alabama, and [it was the] Air Force Headquarters at one time, a beautiful place and still is. I had basic pre-flight training there; was there for about four months. ... It was modeled after West Point, had square meals, toeing the line, teaching you etiquette, teaching you how to eat. You ever heard that expression, square meal? "You look straight ahead, gunners got the food," like in camp, and then, the pre-flight, the school part of it, was interesting, all pre-flight, introduction to the weather, flying, and so on, theory of flight, and then, from there, I went to gunnery school. This was four months and it was down in Florida. ... You're in the back of a truck with a shotgun, went through a course in the woods, and then, the clay pigeons would come shooting out and your reaction time [was tested]. You had to learn to lead ... them. So, we did that for six weeks, I think it was. Well, it was interesting. ...

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SI: Please, continue.

WN: From there, I went to primary flight training. Flight training is divided into three areas, primary, basic and advanced. ... You learn to fly in primary, solo and all that. I did that down in Lakeland, Florida. It was a ballgame. We had a great time. ...

SI: Which plane did you train on?

WN: Stearman PT, two wings, double wings, open. One interesting thing, the instructor, first day, each instructor had five students and he said, "Of the five of you, probably at least two are going to be sick today when we go up." ... He was sitting in the rear cockpit and the student in the front. So, he said, "What I want you to do is, if you're going to throw up, put your hand up and go like this and I'll turn the plane upside down, so [that] you can puke out and not get the plane all messed up, because if it's messed up, you're going to be cleaning it up when we land and that's a hell of a job." So, I went up and I didn't get sick, but, anyhow, that was my introduction, and then, from there, I went to, and this is my nemesis, ... Greenwood, Mississippi, to basic, and the plane that we had in those days for that was the Vultee BT-, basic trainer, 13, which was an enclosed cockpit plane, and I was about three-quarters of the way through that training and, on the obstacle course that we had in PT, physical training, they had ... an inverted V, logs piled up, with space in-between, and then, down again. I don't know if you can imagine that. Well, it was one of the things in this obstacle course and, every morning, we had PT and went over this thing and a wall. ... This morning, I went up on the top and I was going up with my friend. We got up to the very top and I tangled with him, tripped, fell down through ... the opening and landed on my whatever, down on the ground. Eight months later, I was out of the hospital. I had broken this arm here, this one here, I still have the steel [in my wrist], there and here, and some ribs and this one healed okay. This one, they had to set it temporarily until this healed, and then, they took this apart, because there were a lot of small bones fractured. So, anyhow, at the end of that, I went to a review board, standard, and given a choice. They said, "You've been out of it so long, we feel that if you want to stay in pilot training, we want you to go back, go through primary again, and then, come to basic, and then, go to [advanced]." So, I said, "What are my options?" This is after eight months in the hospital in Greenwood, they said, "Well, you've also had navigation courses, so, you can get in advanced navigation school right away and, that way, you'll get your commission within six months." ... It was a big day for me. ... I had gotten over being despondent about pilot training. Nurses had to do everything for me for quite a while. Finally, I said, "All right, let's go to navigation school." So, I did and I went to ... Monroe, Louisiana, advanced navigation school, and, in advanced, you're doing the star shooting and celestial navigation. It was interesting. ... I sail boats, I still make use of what I learned there and this was June of '44. I got a commission as a navigator and went to [my] next assignment, which was joining a crew of B-24s out in Wyoming, Casper, joined a crew, flew around on indoctrination for about a month, flying on cross-country [flights], and then, went over to Italy, going over on a Victory ship out of Norfolk ... with about fifty or sixty other fellows, about five or six crews. That was all the passengers. Otherwise, the ship was loaded with cargo and, ... from Norfolk to Naples took thirty-three days. It was in a convoy and the first night out, off the coast of Virginia, an oil tanker that was in the convoy blew up. So, the Navy ships got all excited and went dashing around, looking for submarines, it was much excitement, and then, out in the middle of the Atlantic, at about the three-week mark, we ran into a hellacious storm, really big, and the hull, just forward of the superstructure, developed a split in the welding plates. You could see it opening. ... The crew guys, and they asked for a lot of help, got cables forward of the split and to the rear of it; they ran cables and winched them to hold this ship together, and then, they watched it all the time, to see how it was doing, and then, ... we're in the Mediterranean and coming into Naples and, the day before we got to Naples, there was an explosion in the Port of Naples, an ammunition ship blew up, caused a lot of damage, and this was, supposedly, sabotage, because Italy had not been long occupied then, or that part of Italy. So, we couldn't land there and we had to go down to a small port by the name of Bari, ... which

wasn't built to take big ships. So, we had to unload in kind of an odd way, and then, got into trucks and drove cross-country to the airbase. That's ... a long answer to your question, "What were the first days in the Air Force like?" [laughter]

SI: Since you spent so much time in the hospital, how would you rate the medical treatment you received?

WN: ... Excellent, very caring. The doctors were excellent. I had broken bones. It wasn't, you know, not death threatening, but, oh, this wrist was a mess, I mean, a lot of broken pieces and they had to put them back together again and I've had full function all my life. ... They had a group of women from town, this is in Greenwood, called the Gray Ladies and they wore light gray uniforms, trimmed in pink, I think, and they were around a lot, young, middle-aged, old, and they were like aides and I had to have someone write for me, someone to read. ... I think I laid it on a little, but ... except for my hurts, I was pretty well taken care of. ... The doctors followed my progress very closely, I mean, x-rays frequently, see how I was doing. They brought in an outside orthopedic guy from some place else to do the work, actually, on this wrist and so on. So, that was first rate. ... Every Air Force hospital I was in, I was in two or three of them for this, I had my eardrums go one time, but they were fine, both in this country and over in Italy. These are US Army hospitals; they were fine.

SI: I have read that training in the Air Force could be just as dangerous as combat, with accidents and mechanical failures. Did you see any accidents or have any close calls yourself?

WN: Yes, accidents, ... in combat?

SI: In training.

WN: In training? ... One time, in Greenwood, where I had that accident, I was first in line, at night, doing night takeoffs and you taxi in, approach the runway, on a side road, ... taxi out and line up on the runway and go. I was first in line and some guy comes in landing and ... there was a big, broad, yellow line here and I was at least ten or twelve feet behind it and it's off the runway, too, and this guy came in, "Whoosh," like that, and clipped me with the end of his wing and he went spinning around, fire and the whole big mess, and I was knocked sideways, nothing happened to me, but he was killed, ... the fellow I knew from New York, and that was in training, and then, there were accidents like the one I had; you'd see the casts showing up now and then. The obstacle course was the cause of a lot of accidents, small and large. For me, I am sure I went down on their record book as one of the tough luck things, but, in general, I never saw another flying accident in training.

When we were in primary flying school, after we had soloed and we had free air time, an hour a day to practice, towards the end of our stay there, time to do whatever we wanted, we had the auxiliary fields that were away from the main field. This was outside Lakeland, Florida, and, meanwhile, ... on Saturdays, weekends, we had met young ladies at the church social in town [laughter] and arranged picnics out at the auxiliary field. We could land the planes, meet our friends, ooh-and-awe at the airplanes.

Weather, always, in flying, ... in light airplanes, especially, is a big factor, problems, if you run into some bad weather. I go to navigation school and ... part of the training there is to go off, two of you, or four, depending on the plane, the pilot takes off and you give him all directions, to go from here to there by way of a ... many leg route and, one time, we went down across Louisiana, into Texas, and got into a big, big rainstorm. ... We had just been flying over oil wells that had flames lit on top of them, a whole lot of them, and the rain came down something fierce and the pilot said, "I've really got to set it down." He couldn't see, couldn't see a thing, and he was alone, no co-pilot. So, he had radioed and said, "I'm not in good shape here," and so, we landed in the countryside and it was flat and so on and someone had seen us land. On the radio, we had told the airbase about what we were doing, but somebody in the area had seen us land and they thought that we were possibly saboteurs. So, the sheriff and a whole bunch of deputies, all of a sudden, showed up with their guns and here we were, [laughter] four guys, soaking wet, underneath the wing, waiting. But that was minor; hadn't thought of that in years.

SI: When you were navigating, was it mostly shooting the stars or visual navigation?

WN: You mean in school or after?

SI: In training.

WN: In training, ... you have to go through that, all phases of navigation.

SI: Following radio beams?

WN: ... When we were doing celestial, we had one hundred percent celestial. Then, we took larger planes and went on longer distances and took celestial shots of the stars or the moon, learned how to do the figuring out how to [use] the 209 tables, how to convert it into a position on the chart. We had that. Once, crossing the Atlantic, many years later, I still had the sextant we were given when we graduated from navigation school. We were told that it cost the government about two thousand dollars, so, if we lost it, we were going to be in deep soup. So, I kept this thing in my footlocker the whole time and, one time, crossing the Atlantic, I dug it out to see how I'd make out with it. It was all right; it was okay. ... I always regretted that that sextant was taken from me, I couldn't leave the Air Force with it, because it was a nice instrument, but navigating is going from here to there, getting there, and knowing where you want to go and how to get there. ... It was judgment as well as instruments and ... this is skipping over a little bit to combat, but, also, one thing that's very difficult for pilots or non-flyers, ... to get from here to there; do you sail a sailboat, by chance?

SI: No.

WN: Well, to get from here to there, if you try [to] just point your sailboat to a destination, an airplane, the same way, and you set a course with the front of the boat pointing exactly there, and that's, say, two miles away, and if the wind is blowing from the right, the wind is going to act on you and cause you to drift left, so, the further to the left you go, you have to turn more and more and, at one point, if you get way off course, you might be ninety degrees to the original course, right? Now, if you knew what you were doing, you'd set your sails in the beginning, not to make

good that point, but to make good a point here to the right and, if you know the speed of the wind and your speed, you can figure out drift, follow? and, for a bombardier or a navigator, that is a big, big, big subject and the pilot's approach, often, fighter pilots, in the old days at least, was, you ought to wind up here and just keep pointing to where you wanted to go, but it's roundabout. Here, you go here and, in the end, you wind up there and, if you're crossing an ocean, ... you don't know where that is, so, you wind up way over there, if you're on a long distance, and, in combat, on targets, get down on the bomb run and you have what's called the initial point, about twenty miles out, a point where the planes rendezvous and make a turn, like you're going to land, actually. You come in this way, get to a point, so that everybody in different squadrons who are going to go in have a turning point that's the same, so [that] you don't wind up coming from all directions. Well, from here to here, a pilot can look ahead and see that that's the target and starts steering to the target and the plane is actually drifting. It's the same as with a sailboat. You're going to wind up coming back like this and the bombardier isn't going to have much control. So, the way it worked out, from the initial point, the bombardier takes over with the Norden bombsight. He takes over steering the plane and the bombsight, the big secret, the big thing about Norden was that it controlled drift and you had to set it up and you had to estimate the wind, but we had pretty good estimates and, if it wasn't exactly [right], he could correct it, because he'd get a rate of varying and the pilot, in the beginning, said, "Not good, it's way over there, where we want to go." "No, no, no," and the drop point would be out here, say, and, "Whoosh," because the bombs are subject to the wind, also. So, anyhow, in learning to fly a plane, in landing, you have to what's called crabbing. You come down like this and, at the last minute, you turn, airlines do it, that's how they [land], but light planes more so than heavy planes. That's a little, two cents worth of flying. Where were we? Oh, accidents in training, yes. I saw some. The accidents that happened, that I saw, lots of were not in training. They were overseas.

SI: What types of the accidents did you see overseas?

WN: In landing, planes damaged in flight by flak in the hydraulic system, so [that] when it comes time to let the wheels down, hydraulically, they won't go down, so, you have to land on the belly, belly landing, and, again, this crabbing comes in there. You see, this was a pretty frequent happening with B-24s, ... landing with the wheels up, and, sometimes, it was successful. We had a successful landing, wheels up, ... but some other planes didn't. ... The B-24 had four engines. [If] you came back with two running and one conked out, you were in bad shape, a mess. ... I don't want to skip to Korea, but I will. There, the ground accidents were more so. The B-26C was a hot airplane and it had a glide pattern of straight down. It was all power that kept it going and, if you lost power on a landing, from damage or whatever, malfunction, you were in, you know, bad shape then. ... A few at our field in K-9 in Korea, it was along the shore and, just near the shore, there was a bluff and ... on the far side of it was where the planes that had been in accidents were hauled, sort of out of sight, but, from up in the air, you could see them there and they were used to scavenge parts from and one thing or another, but the incidence of ground accidents, it was always a concern, not as bad as air accidents, not as final. Combat, as I said earlier, it's not on this tape, there were a lot of people involved in every plane in the B-24s, in World War II, so, [there was] the friendship, association, knowing people who were important to you at the time. We had one case, one time, ... I haven't told you this part, yet, but, one time, we were flying lead, and right next to us [was] a plane that

was tucked in close. All of a sudden, on the bomb run, but before the bombs went out, it got hit solidly with flak from underneath, way up, split all open, came down in a [fireball]. I was watching the whole thing and all these guys, you know, we were friends with. They lived in the next tent and, in the history of the 456th Bomb Group, it was created to fight, to go over into Italy, the 15th Air Force, B-24s, ... and, during the whole life of that group, the 456th; ... I don't know if you know how the Air Force is organized. You have an air force, and then, ... the air force is made up of wings, ... four wings, and then, each wing has four groups, and then, each group has four squadrons, so, it comes down like that and one command is a wing, for either a general or a colonel, and, in the early days, when the 456th went over there, they were based in Africa, in Marrakech, this was before Italy was invaded, and their primary reason for being there was to soften up the coast of Italy, number one, and, two, to go after the oil fields that were supplying about sixty percent of Germany's oil at Ploesti and that was the main reason. ... Marrakech was long distance, so, they moved up, finally, to Algiers, right on the coast of the Mediterranean, when that had been cleared of the Germans. There, they could reach Romania, on the Black Sea. It was a long haul, but they could reach it. Well, Ploesti was the most heavily flak guarded target in all of Europe by far. They had the champion flak expert in the German Air Force ... and Ploesti isn't a little oil field, it's a whole area, seventy-five miles long. It's called Ploesti; ... it's not a city, it's an area filled with oil production wells, refineries, the works. The anti-aircraft started two hundred miles out, on land, and it's not right on the coast, it's inland. So, anyhow, they started bombing that from a high altitude and high altitude is not precision bombing; it's by gosh and by hope. I'm talking about thirty thousand feet, twenty-eight. ... That was a safe altitude, though, because the anti-aircraft was petering out up that high and they dropped down to twenty thousand feet and that's when they started losing planes. The British had been in there before, on nighttime bombing, and they hadn't done very much damage. They did some. We did some ... and along came the new expert in the Air Force, very controversial in literature that's been written, and he made the flat-out statement, "We'll never get rid of Ploesti unless we go in low," and the 456th and the other groups in the 301st Wing were the planes. At the time, they had 180 aircraft in the 456th. They went in low at Ploesti, time after time. Replacement crews and planes kept coming from this country. Finally, they called the raids off, when they had just about stopped all oil production there, but we had lost almost all our planes. That's the story, it's been told, that Ploesti was a real widow-maker, ... literally. That 456th lost, we have it in our history, something like, over time, sixty some aircraft at Ploesti, that one target, going back over and over and over again to knock it out, and the other groups had the same experience and, when they finally stopped that, ... then, there's an improvement in the Norden bombsight and it was easier to operate. It had been very difficult to do some things with it. This is going back to that drift and they made it easier for the average bombardier to use it, and so, when it came to other targets in Europe, we went back up to fifteen, seventeen thousand feet. ... Then, the flak could reach it, but it was not as lethal and we had plenty of losses at other targets. I have statistics here of exactly how many, but it was a lot and it's probably because I was out at this reunion in California last week, but the awareness of all the people who were killed, Air Force guys, is a story that, it's been told, but it ... passes into history and the people who remember it are the families.

SI: Can you tell me about your crew and your relationship with the men on your plane?

WN: ... All different type guys on the crews, as you know. We had pilot, co-pilot, bombardier and navigator. They were the officers. We had an engineer, and then, we had gunners, turrets and waist gunners. The pilots and all of us got along, you know, we just get along. Fortunately for me, the way things worked out, the pilot that I was assigned to way back in Wyoming ... had been in the Army for four years and he was a captain and quite an experienced pilot. When we got over to Italy, they immediately knew that he had a lot of experience and, by our fifth mission, we were flying lead and I came along and I was it. I was just their navigator on that crew, but I got to be lead navigator. Different responsibilities, because the way the formation formed in a series of V's, when you came to the target, when the lead drops the bombs, everybody ... has their finger on the button and, when they see them drop, everybody dropped, together. It's blanket bombing on the targets, supposedly. So, I wound up having a little more, for me at least, it seemed, interesting time. I met people in command and got involved, but ... getting along with the crew, I don't know if I've mentioned this before, the fear of flying is one thing that's one issue, that ... [if] you're too afraid to fly alone, why, then, you don't wind up flying. On the other hand, couple it with the fear of dying, and the imminent fear of dying, because you see it; we had fellows in our crew who, from the time we got into the air, this is in Italy, had a rosary in one hand and a crucifix in the other for the whole flight. These were gunners. They were very, very frightened and coupled with the fact that they didn't have anything to do. They were gunners and there was nobody to shoot down. By then, the German Air Force was no more, except once in a great while see a plane, but this fear complex became a very big thing and, in these bull sessions we have out at our organization, ... that's a discussion that comes up. "Yes, to be honest with you, I was scared." We flew alternate days, down a day, and then, fly, down a day and fly, normally, and that was often described as one day of flying and one day of worrying ... about the next flight. ... So, we had some handholding to do and we did and it wasn't only on our part. It was a very well known thing by the chaplains and, also, by the command, and anybody that came in and said, "Look, I can't fly anymore. I just can't fly anymore," well, they had a routine treatment for that and tried to put him through a realization session. ... Personally, for me it came down to, "What the hell?" frankly, ... sort of a fatalist feeling that I had then and I had it in Korea, also, "What the hell?" and, "Get the job done." Now, in Korea, we had crews of two in the B-26, just the pilot and me. When I got to Korea, well, I went to transition training in Japan, actually, for that and learned that there are just two of us on the plane and I have to describe what I did, too, but there it was entirely different. You were dependent on yourself and the pilot and he was dependent on you and, while I had ... the nomenclature of "navigator" in World War II, when I came back into service, that was changed, I became "observer." I had all the duties of navigation, but had a whole lot of new instruments to watch. When we were across the 38th Parallel in Korea and went up north, I was already under a hood. I never looked out the windows. I was under a hood and could see the instruments. We also had a combination radar and Loran ... with night vision and different ranges. When high up, also, I was interested in looking at the topography of the mountains I could see, but the new electronic gear came into its real worth at lower altitudes and, when we came down on our runs, I could clearly see and was sitting next to the pilot. We had hand signals, feel, didn't use the intercom much. Hand signals on the pilots leg, his thigh, his arm and shoulder for close-in direction. Meanwhile, I'm under this hood all the time and, finally, when we cleared the area and headed back home from the target. I'd come out and we'd eat our candy bar. [laughter] That was a true fact, how it worked. In Korea, the missions were all night flights and the main supply routes down from the border with China were our zones. There were three of them, what we called Route 1, Route 3 and

Route 10. ... A road, a river and a railroad at each ... and the Chinese were supplying their troops down at the front, It was our job, ... at night, to keep anything from moving. During the day, the jets did the same job. In the area, there would be an air controller flying in a larger airplane, at high altitude, and he had a lot of equipment. Navigation, and radar, and Shoran; I don't know if you know what Shoran is. ...

SI: No.

WN: Well, it's like Loran, but it's for a shorter range. All of North Korea had an electronic grid projected over it, through the air, from electric impulses that are sent out by the Loran stations out of North Korea.

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

SI: This continues an interview with Mr. Walter Peter Nelson on May 21, 2004, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth. Please, continue.

WN: Thank you. As I said, there was a controller in the air and ... he would relay messages that were garbled through a machine and we would get them clear and if, for instance, during the day, one of the jets had done some effective work and told of a convoy that was blocked by a bridge being down, he'd give us that information when we came up and give us the coordinates, the Loran coordinates. I could spin some dials, put those coordinates [in], just like GPS now, and the plane would home in on that exact spot ... and we'd get over there and, even though it was not our assigned area, but if there was something [there], there was an opportunity, we'd go in there and go down and take a look. Normally, we had these three highways that I described to you. They were divided into fifty mile sections, all the way from the 38th Parallel, all the way back up to China, and they were given labels, numbers, and, when we got our flight plan, we would be assigned to one of those and the job was, for a two-hour period, to do whatever damage we can in there, but you're free base. You're doing it on your own, one plane only, and the way it worked out, the operations would know what areas you had been at most frequently, so that you knew the terrain better and ... how to get around, and so, you tended to go back to the same places, ... or, if there was nothing going on there, then, move to where there was some activity. ... The most effective mission ... that I was ever on, was working with another airplane called a Firefly. It's another plane that was loaded with flares, magnesium flares, and they would go down to, oh, maybe to two thousand feet and line up with the target, road or railroad, and release that string and it would spread out over about three miles. Then, all at once, they'd all light and they had a reflector on top of each one, so that it shone down and, if you were above it, you could see, and then, the idea was you would come in, either in the same direction or the opposite direction, and come down and see exactly what was down there in the bright lights. These magnesium lights were really brilliant, ... had about an eight minute life and they would gradually float down towards the ground and, when they were under a thousand feet. Started to see details and, when they were lower than that, could see even more. There was one night, in particular, that [we] came down there and said, "Hot damn, ... I've never seen this before." There was a convoy there, on a road, of trucks that were off the road, where they had pulled off the road, but they couldn't go any place else. ... The terrain was such that there was a river on one side and an embankment on the other and here they were. ... We took a run down and saw

this, but we were on top of it too quickly for us. We came around, looped around, came down the other way and, on the first bomb run, ... this was the normal practice, we had the bomb bays loaded with ... proximity fuse cluster bombs. These were antipersonnel, frankly, and they would break up things like trucks and people. You dropped them all. We did that, and then, came around a second time and, across the front of the B-26C, there were eight .50-caliber machine guns, and in the nose, a .20-mm cannon. When we got all of that going, the convoy would, like, lift up like a carpet being lifted and everything sort of tumbled forward and fires and one thing or another. ... Every time we opened the bomb bay doors or pushed the safety buttons off the guns or the cannon, a film would start to run. So, we always had film of our missions and this one became a classic ... for showing around in the Air Force and *A Good Night's Work* is what it was called and commended for it and so on. That was one of the tactics. On the other hand, the Chinese, and they were Chinese, the North Koreans did the grunt work for the Chinese, carrying and lugging and driving, and the Chinese were the ones who were the professionals and ... were the antiaircraft gun crews and what have you. They would move antiaircraft guns around. You got to know all this stuff, but ... they were mobile, on the back of trucks, and they would drive them up a country road, halfway up a mountain someplace, and, by the way, when you flew up from South Korea to North Korea, when you crossed that borderline, it was the end of the lights. South Korea was all lit, where our troops were and the cities were, but, up in North Korea, it was ninety percent pitch-black. ... There were some lights, here and there, but not many. All of a sudden, there would be a light and it was blinking, maybe, on, off, irregular, but on again when they heard a plane and ... you knew they were aiming their guns, because you could see the lights. You could see it for a second, and then, it would be slightly off and these were the tactics, they were trying to lure you, but ... that was easy to figure out. ... It was one of the things they did, and then the other I remember was, if you were down low, and then, attacked, under a thousand feet, the Chinese Army troops with guns that could shoot that high, would set up patterns shooting at you, if they had time. We had some fancy flying done by our pilots. Some zigzagging and approaching it from different angles, a few surprises like that on the wings. We had guided missiles and they were heat seeking and, if an engine was running in a truck, or generator, it would aim towards it and that was the first of the heat seeking armaments the Air Force had that I knew of.

SI: Did the pilot operate the weaponry or did you?

WN: Pilot did the aiming of the guns, because ... they aim with the plane. ... On the bombs, I would line the plane up, remember, I told you before about drift, I would do the lining up, ... these were hand signals to the pilot, sight through my scope on the target and call the release to the pilot. ... Another thing that we could do, when into the approach, you pull the throttles way back, so the engine sound went down lower. ... On the ground, they would not be too sure which direction we were coming from. This B-26C, as I said, ... was all power, it was a widow maker. The plane was developed at the end of World War II. It was never used then, because it never got operational until ... late in '45. They were all dispersed out into the Air Force Reserve units around the country, because they were fairly new at the time. ... Then, when the Korean War started, we needed a night fighter-bomber, as I said before. They gathered up all of these B-26Cs from the Air Force Reserve and the Air Guard and shipped them over to, first, Japan, where they were armed and reconfigured and new types of instruments put on them, and then, flown over to Korea for us. We had a supply of new ones coming in every week, ... until, finally,

about six months before the war ended. I was there for the end of the war. My last mission was the last day of the war. I was up with a couple of other planes that night, the last six months, we had to do with what we had, got no more planes. It was the end of them and my understanding is, now, that there are none left to speak of. There are a few demonstration and museum pieces, but they're all gone. ... This is going back to the end of World War II, I was in Italy when the war ended there too. At that time, we had a lot of practically new B-24s. They had kept coming over and they were brought over by ferry pilots. They were brought over and delivered to our place, and so, as luck would have it, when it came time to come home, why, we latched on to a new plane and we brought it home and came home by way of Marrakech, down in Africa, and down to Senegal, where the distance between the coast of Africa and the coast of South America are closest, and across from Senegal there is Dakar, and then, ... in Brazil, a place called Fortaleza. We flew home that route, and then, up to ... Puerto Rico and Florida, and then, out to Topeka, Kansas, and landed a practically new B-24 that had about ten missions and had been there a few months. We landed it and we had to wait a day to get transportation back to where we were going, so, we watched the operation there. After that plane landed and got all our stuff out of it, a tug came, a truck, to pull it and pulled it out behind the hangars. There was a field of B-24s as far as you could see. There must have been six or eight hundred of them that went into mothballs and never flew again and they, eventually, were scrapped and that was the end of them. ...

SI: When we left World War II, you had just arrived in Italy. Was your base in Bari?

WN: No, we off-loaded the transport ship in Bari. From there, the little town in Italy, Cerignola, this is in the part of Italy that was very *Fascisti*, still. Because it had been occupied not long, we had perimeter guards around the place all the time. ... Anyhow, we drove over to this little town, ... there were two little ones Stornara and Cerignola and, around those two towns, there were four airbases, the four groups 452nd, 454th, 456th, which I was in, and the 458th, that made up the wing and that was controlled from one of the fields, where the headquarters was located. ... Covered about a twenty-five-mile arc and we operated alone and together. We had a big, big, big [mission] going to Pilsen or some big target up in Germany, where they wanted a big effect, why, then, all four would work together and we could send up four hundred airplanes. Every time we went out, we flew over the Alps, by the way, going from Italy ... up to Austria and Germany. So, you got this view. I gave our crew a travelogue of the mountains up there, beautiful, and we saw them in the fall, we saw them in the winter and we saw them in the spring. ...

SI: Was flying over the Alps dangerous?

WN: It was if you didn't have your full power, but, normally, no. ... Going up there, when everything was fine, you want a "for instance?" I don't like to tell you all the hairy stories, but we were on one of these big, all-out missions, a lot of planes, and the target was just outside Vienna and it was a ball-bearing factory and a railroad, ... they called them marshalling yards, a freight yard, where the trains are put together. We get up there and we're flying lead for our group and, in the formation, the lead pilot and plane is not the one out at the head of the V. He's normally in the second V, just a custom. [laughter] I don't think, from the ground, they could pick out who was who, but that was the way it was. We were hit by antiaircraft guns, and lost an

engine right on the bomb run. The engine was hit and the pilot feathered the prop and the fire stopped. ... For a minute or so, there were flames all over, but, when he shut down the engine, the fire stopped. We left the formation. The plane had only three engines and we gave the lead over to the number two plane, ... because we were going to have to limp home. The whole fleet couldn't be governed by our speed. I looked ahead, how high we were and what the rate of descent was. We're gradually losing altitude with an engine gone, and looked ahead to see how far it was to the peaks that we had to cross. That was always the issue and we knew where the peaks were less high. We went off in that new direction and held our altitude, got across okay, about fifty miles or so. It took twenty minutes or twenty-five minutes to cross the Alps, and then, ... started letting down and, gradually, as we were returning, we finally got down over the Adriatic, over the water, where it was safe. When you have only three engines, they each have to supply more power to keep the plane up, two is even more, so, they use up gas faster, and then, we were losing altitude. Finally, we made landfall down where we had to make the turn to come in to our base and we knew we were going to run out of gas before we got there. While we were still up at about fifteen hundred feet and crossed the shoreline, [we] had to make a decision whether we were going to ask the crew to bail out, as long as we were over land and it was fairly flat, and so, on the intercom, we got the answer, "Well, what are you going to do?" they said to the captain, and he said, "Well, I'm going to take it down ... and it'll be wheels-up and we're going to find a field that's been plowed." We see that there are a lot of fields down there that had been plowed softer, and the likelihood of ... [there] being any big rocks is less. The gas tanks ... were reading almost empty and we came in, ... into the wind, and we found a field and everything was going great, except, up at the end of it, there was a stonewall across the field. We came in and landed, a lot of bouncing around and, finally, the plane started slowing down, and the pilot changed the direction just a little bit to give us a longer drag time and we came to a stop about thirty feet from the stonewall that was about four feet high. The captain shut everything down, quickly, because there was gas all over the place, all got out of the plane and went a ways off and [were] sitting there praising the pilot. ... After about an hour, somebody showed up and, from then on, things started to happen and, by that night, we were back at our base. ... I can tell you something, that same area that I just described to you was where I earned ... one of the DFCs [Distinguished Flying Crosses] that I have. Down on the coast of Italy, down there, I have a map. This is for you. You want to see any of these photos, maps and charts?

SI: Yes, absolutely.

WN: ... I brought this home; it is mission stuff. This is a flak map of Southern Europe. This is the Adriatic, Northern Italy here. The demarcation line, Allies-German, was down there. This is up in Austria, that's Vienna. These puffs indicate flak installations, but, ... coming down the coast, coming home, ... the Alps are right here, coming down the coast of Italy here, go down a little bit further, our base, here, these names are Stornara, remember, I told you about this. Now, you see the coastline? It goes out and this peninsula is out there in the Adriatic, like this; the mountains, four thousand feet here. If you stay well inside, you can make this shortcut and save time, if fuel is low. Otherwise, it was much safer to fly outside the eastern point of Cape Gargano and the 4000 feet mountains inland on the cape. We were returning from two missions that day and leading our group. When we got south of the Alps, ran into thick low clouds, we couldn't see. Well, the procedure when you can't see is to spread out the formation. If it gets

really, really bad, you spread out a lot with lights on. The procedure was, as you come down the coast, if you can't see was to let down low so you can see the ground or water. On this day, we had our whole group and this was a long mission. I had made a turning point for the group to follow south of the eastern point of Cape Gargano then turning southwest to the coast and on to our base at Stonara. Some planes were damaged and were down low. This four thousand foot mountain [range], most planes couldn't get up and climb over it and we weren't going to see it in the fog. We flew down here and made the turn and came to our base. Now, one of the other groups, same condition, left the target area the same time, more or less, that we did. Had the same experience coming down here, but ... one of their command guys said, "Look, we're going to run out of gas," or, "We have planes very, very low on gas. We've got to save the forty minutes to go around the cape. Well, what they didn't know was, they weren't here, they were right about here and ... they took the flight across the cape. When you fly a group formation, some planes are low and some planes [are] up ... they are stacked. Well, even in the bad weather, they are loosely stacked that way, but way out. They lost four in those mountains. We had our Colonel with us that day when we came down and around the cape. Everybody got back in, not necessarily to their own field, but they landed at some field. They had alternative landing places, that we could go to, any one of the four, if we had to and there was one that was closer than our own. Anyhow, we all got back there and this other group, the 452nd, had two planes hit the mountain within twenty-five, thirty miles of their home base and there was a big to-do about that, an inquiry. I don't know if there was a court-martial or not. This is an account for when I was in Korea, I met a guy who wrote for *Air Force Times*, which was the Air Force paper, and he was a correspondent for them and came to our base at K-9 in Korea and spent about a week there and he flew a mission with another pilot, a good friend, but he lived with us. ... He was in the barracks with us. So, we got him ready for the flight and talked to him ... and this is the way he described it. If you'd like to have it, why, you're welcome.

SI: Thank you.

WN: These are ... bomb run maps from Europe during World War II. These are all from our plane, these photos that I brought home, 456th Bomb Group.

SI: Were these taken at the time?

WN: ... As the bombs dropped, the film was running. It was a movie camera and this was the target. Here was the marshalling yard, railroad and something else. See how some bombs go a little astray? but, this is pretty high up, so, it's hard to see. ... Here, that's the target area being mapped. That was a very, very tight drop.

SI: Are these clouds or damage?

WN: ... These are clouds floating around. That's smoke, that's oil burning. You know that is oil and that was another target; you can't see what it was. Here, you're hitting ... some railroad cars, same drop. Here are some bombs going astray, you see. It's out in the bay. The target was probably up in here and that happened.

SI: These are very sharp images.

WN: Here, you got a pretty good view. That's a canal or river and bridges and a railroad, getting all three. They move an awful lot of stuff in Europe on canals in barges.

SI: Except for the one where the bombs went into the bay, these strikes seem pretty accurate.

WN: Yes, well, you can see, here, see all the craters? This target has been visited a few times. ... The bombs that are dropped right now are right in there, but see these temporary bridges they put up? When they'd get blown out, they would build bridges across again. Here's another one, an airfield; ... I don't know what that track is, I have no idea. Well, that's some of my stuff. Oh, there's a city getting plastered, I don't know what the target was. ... This is our own base, our own field in Italy, our own runway, and these are the revetments where the planes parked. These are olive groves where we had our tents pitched. I'll tell you a couple of stories about that. There are pyramid tents, about sixteen or eighteen feet square. The sidewalls come up about three feet high. [We] had the Italian laborers build adobe brick walls up as high as the side walls, and then, the tents fit outside it. Then, for flooring, when bombs were delivered, they came in crates and the top of the crate was a square metal piece about eighteen inches square, raised up about an inch-and-a-half. You could get a bunch of them, and we had them by the thousands, and they'd bolt together and create a floor for the tents. For heat, and was cold in the winter, ... took fifty-five gallon drums, cut a hole in the top for a stovepipe that went up and out the middle of the tent. At the bottom on the front of the drums, we cut a hole and this was an upside down drum with the dirt underneath it. From a tank outside the tent came, through a quarter-inch tubing, gasoline. ... The tubing came down across the floor, we buried it under those tiles and up and over the lip of a little cup that we had inside the fifty-five gallon drum. Then, a spigot on this quarter-inch line. The deal was to open the spigot just a little bit, and when the gas started to drip out of the end, light it. You couldn't wait long. Then, gradually, if you had the flame going pretty good, the top of that drum would get red hot and you could heat water on it or whatever. Every once in a while, something would occur that, if you let too much gas come in before you lit it, ... if it was just a little too much, you'd get a big boom and a lot of soot, that was it. One night, right next door to us, the guys came in and one of them lit the stove and, apparently, it had been leaking a little and the can under there was either full of gas or had quite a lot in it and it went, "Whoomp." The stovepipe went flying through the top. The tent burst into flame. All the guys scrambled [laughter] and, in the end, all they had was charred and burned, and I was reminded of that last week out in Riverside in California. ... I had forgotten it. ... "Aren't you the guys who lived right next door to So-and-So whose tent went up?" I said, "Yes, we were there." The last day of the war in Italy, when the peace was finally declared, we had a party ... on the base, and I haven't told you much about the base there. It was kind of interesting. Where we lived, we're in these tents, and then, outside, among the tents, we had a couple of buildings, one was a latrine and they had several of these scattered around. They had the officers' area and an enlisted men's area and a non-com area and, in-between, there were a couple of buildings and three of them ... were latrines, and then, one building, divided in half, that was the dining room, one side officers, one side enlisted men. Another building, about the same size, was divided in three, officer's club, enlisted men's club, non-com club. They were all in a fairly tight group, but not too tight, because outside every tent, we had slit trenches. They were there when we got there, frankly, but surrounded by sand bags and you were supposed to go diving in them if any air attack was made ... on the airfield. ...

When the war ended in Europe, with no more missions! First of all, a party started in the club, and then, spread out. We had olive tree orchards, around and they were about twenty feet high and, at some time or other, it became the thing to do, to climb up into an olive tree and join ... in the celebration and the song and the drinking and all that was going on. Some night! I remember that. ...

Oh, this is kind of interesting, that is, officer's pay. This is while I was in Italy and ... just came home. I was paid a monthly base pay of 175 dollars, pay for flying, \$87.50, one half of your base pay, subsistence allowance for a family, this is the check that went home, forty-two dollars, rental allowance, seventy-five dollars, for the grand total of 379 dollars, of which a check ... went home for two hundred dollars. ... My wife wound up with 206 dollars. ... If you equate that out, as we did last week, ... the hourly rate for flying missions came out to something like a dollar-seventy-five per hour.

Here's a little memory. A cousin, my mother's sister's son, was a missionary in Japan. When I was in Japan, every six weeks, by the way, we had an R&R, rest and relaxation, from Korea. Anyhow, on one of the trips, I thought I'd go and see my cousin in Kyoto, which was a very, very beautiful city in Japan. In fact, after that visit, we went back there several times, had a really nice hotel to stay in. Anyhow, I went to Kyoto to visit my cousin, this is in wartime in Korea, but, in Japan, it was peacetime and a beautiful country, Kyoto especially. I asked directions. "Oh, yes, yes," so, I went down a street and find a place enclosed by a wall a block long. On the gate was that address with his name, the Reverend Thaleen, and went in and met the family and had a very nice visit. It turned out that he worked in the hospital in Kyoto. He was ... the chaplain of the American hospital.

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

WN: ... It was a Japanese style home and ... there was another house in the property where his cook, caretaker, gardener family lived and parked in the garage was a car and ... my cousin, [who] my mother had described as "a deprived missionary off in the boonies" was living very nicely in Kyoto. Now, that's just a little aside, but a little personal thing. ...

In Europe, this is some of my handiwork, (a map of Europe) towards the end of the war, when the American troops were advancing like mad across from the [Normandy] landing, everybody was keeping these maps and the different shadings for different weeks as we would get updated. Finally, this is at the end, when the whole of Europe is all [shaded]. ... This is from the ... *Stars and Stripes*, which was the paper over there for the Army. ... When I had just come back, I thought that I was going to ... write some things about my times over there, which I never got around to, but I made a list of things that I surely wanted to include in my memory of Korea. I think we've done enough though, haven't we?

SI: Do you want to stop?

WN: I don't care. ...

SI: I have all the time in the world.

WN: Okay. This was a list of things that I have. [laughter] On the ground in the barracks, we had BOQ [bachelor officer's] quarters, ... this is in Korea, they were, again, locally built by Korean laborers, on an airfield that the Japanese had built originally, by the way, years before, which we enlarged. Buildings were built that were one-story high and had concrete walls and a floor, and a hallway down the middle and rooms on either side, one person to a room and, in the middle, there was a latrine and showers and parked in there, at her workstation, was a ... Korean woman who tended the latrines all the time. That was just the way it was. The Korean women cleaned up your room every day, too. Yak-do was the name of the one I remember the name of. ... I'm going down my list, anything that might be of interest I haven't said a word about. Oh, we had rats, lots of rats, and we also had .45 caliber guns. The rats would get up in the rafters and, "Ka-pow," ... and I remember, one night, ... we slept under mosquito netting, and, one night, ... one of these rats came down and landed on the top, ... it was all bloody [laughter] and came dripping through on the guy sleeping there. ... The houses in Korea, which we could see, had an interesting heating system, like [the] Japanese. The floor was up off the ground a little bit and they had tile pipes running underneath there and, at one end, there was a firebox with a fire in there. The draft would take the heat under the house and out the other end on the tile pipe.

Behind most houses in Korea, and they didn't have toilets; the outhouses were like outhouses on a ... lighthouse. It was just an open thing attached behind the house and back there were the fields where they grew crops and ... they call it night soil.

The period of the peace talks went on for about six months and we stayed on. They had had a truce going, but the war ... wasn't signed out and they were all gathered up at the 38th Parallel and, every day, there'd be news and, after a while, they started returning American prisoners. We had about eight guys in Chinese prisons. One of them, one of my real big buddies, ... oh, I haven't told you anything about Greenland; yes, I did, but, anyhow, ... he had been in prison for two-and-a-half years in China and North Korea and, on the last day ... of prisoner releases, my friend, Fred Pelsner, was released and his name came through in the news on the very last day. I came home shortly after that. Fred and I had driven together in his car from Massachusetts, Springfield, to Los Angeles, where we had to report to leave for Japan. So, I came back to Los Angeles and picked up his car from storage with three other guys and we all got in it. The first guy lived in Albuquerque. He drove to Albuquerque. We kept going. The car kept going until I got home to New Jersey. Fred stayed in the Air Force. He wound up being a Colonel. He wrote a book about his experiences. He went through the worst of treatment in North Korea and China.

We all had nicknames in Korea, or a lot of guys did, and this one guy, a friend of mine, was called "Ash Cake" Jones. He was a real hotshot pilot. ... This is a list of all my missions in Korea. I kept it. This is one through number fifty-five; look at that last line in there. [laughter]

SI: "Dated November 30."

WN: Finishing our mission was much on our minds. Anyhow, 22nd of November was the last ... mission day for the Group and we were right in there. I flew with Bob Miller. I flew with Miller, Johnson, Wadsworth, Grey, Bowman, flew a lot with Bowman, Wagner, Marzullo,

Bowman. Bowman was the son of a Congressman from Illinois who went through West Point. This will bring an interesting point up. ... He went to West Point, transferred to the Air Force, learned to fly and had some experience, but, then, came out to Korea and was flying B-26s for the first time when I met [him]. He hadn't been out of flying school very long. ... He was a first lieutenant and hot to go, typical West Point type, really. He wanted things on his record quick. ... I had been there for quite a while and many other pilots had been there quite a while. The first flight for him was an orientation flight. I went up with him and showed him around the countryside and the approaches to our field there. By the way, our field was on a grade, slanting down slightly, and at the low end of it was water, the Sea of Japan. Out about a half-a-mile was anchored permanently the hospital ship *Hope*. At night, the ship was lit up like a Christmas tree and it was a landmark for coming home. You could see it from far away. Anyhow, Jack was hot-to-trot. He wanted to make his mark before he flew any missions, we knew that his goal was onward and upward. So, lo and behold, I was the lucky guy to draw him. We had a careful way of matching pilots to observers or so I thought. I haven't looked at this in a long time. Anyhow, we went out on our first mission and he'd gotten all kinds of briefing. We got up there. He says, "Okay, where are they?" [laughter] It was all pitch-black over in North Korea, "Where are they?" and I said, "Wait a minute, my magic lantern isn't working yet," and he said, "Where are we?" I said, "We're about a thousand feet over the peaks in some mountains and we're coming up to a place where there's a valley and it's down in that valley that we're headed." So, I took him over there and I said, "Okay, now, ... I'm going to be telling you where to steer." So, we'd gone all through this before in the orientation. So, we go down and there are no lights, no nothing, and we were exactly where we were supposed to be and there was not a sign of any movement or any lights. I could see that there wasn't anything to attack. It was just black. So, he was so disappointed that on his first mission he had no action. At the end of each mission, we had a debriefing and, on the way to the debriefing, he said, "What do we tell the debriefer?" I said, "We tell him exactly what happened and he has the film and there's nothing showing, and we never fired a gun." ... Anyhow, that was the first mission, but he soon learned that it wasn't often like that. I didn't bring it, but I have some pictures home of the guys that I flew with in Korea. We're all older. ... In 1951, I was thirty and I had a couple of kids, who were home with my wife and that was par for the course over there. My attitude got around to the point where we said, "Oh, what the hell, when I'm in combat, I'll do some damage," and my West Point pilot got into it in a pretty big way, but, then, he got religion, that too much hot-shotting can get you into trouble, ... after he had been there about a month and he had seen what goes on around in Korea. One of the functions of our base, being where we were, north of Pusan. ... Evac helicopters, ... Army, would come back from the front with the Army guys who were wounded and they would land at our base. There was a landing area for them and one of two things would happen. They already had had immediate frontline care, but there were no hospitals at the front. They could be treated in the hospital ship, and that was for fractures, wounds and illness, they would be moved to the ship by launch. If they had burns or really intensive wounds, I mean serious wounds, life threatening, then, they'd be loaded into a hospital rigged plane and flown across to Japan, which was about an hour, a little over an hour, to a hospital at Sasebo. Every once in a while, ... if an Evac crew needed a navigator, they'd draw from our place. I got to fly over and back in the planes once in a while, but what I was getting at is the awareness of this movement of wounded all the time. It was there to see all the time and the ambulances and the helicopters coming in, morning, noon and night, and the launch going out to the boat and the plane going off to Sasebo Hospital. ... We had a speaker system on the base, ... it was wired, so [that] you could get

messages out quickly, and there was an awareness of that that ... could be depressing. You certainly knew that war is not the greatest.

SI: It seems as though, being in the Air Force, you were removed from the realities of war somewhat, because you were dropping bombs from the air.

WN: That's not exactly [it], you can lose [perspective], but in some other ways. ... Some guys, they get over there, whether it be in Korea or back in World War II, I'm talking about pilots and combat crews. If you started drinking and it got to be other than social, you were in deep trouble. If you couldn't stop, ... the guys who couldn't stop ... physically, you can get [in trouble], I'm talking about flying now, if you take off, ... that's bad news and it happened ... to both enlisted men and officers. But you get into a separateness, too. I was certainly aware of my family at home, but there was a separation that developed that got me involved in the issue of the day, combat. We met with the operation leadership, the Colonel, often. He flew with us. I flew with the commanding officer many times, both places, and his job was to see the job got done. On the other hand, he didn't admire anybody who did daring-do things. He didn't admire it, ever. He never praised it, "Hey, great, that's the greatest thing I ever saw," nothing like that; he wouldn't. On the other hand, he didn't ask if that's worth dying for either. I mean, he didn't go that far. After the war, this is after the Korean War, ... oh, I had signed up for a four-year [tour]. When I was recalled, it was for four years. In the first year, I was involved in a project going up to northern Greenland where the Thule [Airbase] was being built and we set up, in MATS [Military Air Transport Service], like a relay airline, just going back and forth, with, in the beginning, bulldozers, tools, men and for a year. We closed down in the winter, but flying back and forth. Then, I spent a year-and-a-half in Korea and came home from that and I still had a year to go. So, I had a choice of what to do. So, I said, "I'd like to get back in MATS," which is the Air Transport Service. It's better. You fly long flights. For a while, I was flying long flights to Europe. ... We flew Dover, Delaware, to Saudi Arabia, ... and then, stops in-between, any place, personnel, what have you. After about six months of that, there was an opportunity that I grabbed for temporary duty in Bermuda and flying weather and that was interesting, in that they had four reworked Constellations. I don't know if you remember that airplane. It was a prop-driven, four-engine [plane]. It rocked and rolled. Anyhow, they had been loaded with extra gas tanks, and we would take off from Bermuda with two crews aboard, four pilots, two navigators, two engineers and two observers, two other guys from weather and we would slow fly from Bermuda to up the coast of Nova Scotia to Labrador to all down New England, we'd fly out to the Azores and back to Bermuda. ... We're in Bermuda for ten days, and then, home for ten days and that went on for about six months and got a lot of flying time in. We had these two crews and we slept. ... We'd be up for like eighteen hours, so, we could sleep and so forth. I was usually the designated cook. [laughter] So, that was after the war, after Korea. Then, I got out, when the four years was up, went back to work. I had an ad in *The Home News Tribune* before, and determined to make a go of things and got going in the ranks a little bit, got to be sales manager, and then, advertising director, and then, a director of the company and so on. Then, we bought some other companies and I got involved with them, television, radio stations, and we eventually sold the newspaper, the *Home News*, and it is now owned by Gannett, the chain, and held onto one television station in Tennessee and six radio stations in Tennessee and one television business. We used to own a television station in Naples-Fort Myers, [Florida] we still have a channel that's ours down there and we still own an antenna and all the rest was sold.

The family owned [it] and they wanted to get out of most of the business, that is, the children did. So, I had a whole career with the Boyds.

SI: Forgive me if I am getting this wrong, but did you work with Jules Plangere at all? He was a co-owner of the *Home News*.

WN: No. ... The movement of the *Home News* went *Home News* to *Asbury*, *Asbury* to Gannett and Gannett now own the *Asbury*, *Home News*, *Woodbridge News Tribune* and the paper's printed at *Asbury's* super press and they're all doing fairly well, from what I hear.

SI: What kind of changes did you see in the business over the years?

WN: ... Look at Rutgers, the market changed. This was a really, really galloping, really a moving market. It just doubled, quadrupled. Our business just went sailing along and we were able to invest in other properties and we were doing very well and I was right in there with it. ... As I said, it was family owned, so, I was the only person not in the family who owned part of the paper. ... We don't own the paper anymore, but I own a little bit of the business. I'm still on the board and, a couple of weeks ago, I was down in Tennessee to ... our annual board meeting we have in Tennessee every year. Other than that, we have meetings, conference calls, but ... compared to what we were, I mean, it's smaller and it involves, in the family, the Boyd family, who are involved, the father, Bill, not my contemporary, his father, Hugh, was my contemporary. Now, Bill has gotten to be in his late sixties now himself, though, but he's the only Boyd in the company. ... It's going along, keeps me interested and busy. ... We moved from where we lived in New Jersey down to Maryland. I sailed a boat for ... many, many years and kept it down at Barnegat Bay and, when I retired in '87, I treated myself to a new boat and we had made up our mind that we were going to move down to Maryland on the water, on the Chesapeake Bay, because we had been down there sailing and it's a lot more freedom than Barnegat Bay, which was great. ... I sailed far more in Barnegat Bay than I have in Chesapeake, frankly. I've been involved with Rutgers, not in any great, big way, but [as] an alumni and kept track, give them a little money now and then, go to football games with old friends.

SI: Between World War II and Korea, you returned to Rutgers to finish your degree.

WN: Yes, I finished my degree right after World War II, from '45 to '48. Then, I worked for the *Home News* for two years, was recalled into the Air Force ... came back to *The Home News* in '55 and was with them until 1988. So, I was with them for thirty-nine years altogether, and then, ... after I'd been working in New Brunswick for some years, I learned about a management program up at Harvard Business School. I went to that part-time for three years and that was a really great experience for me. ... It was very helpful. It was one of their advanced management programs, APM, ... and they have it split up, so [that] you're not there all ... at once, ... a semester at a time for three years. They taught by the case study method, break down any problems that a business has into parts, and then, you looked at all the parts and you try to put them back together again to fix whatever is wrong. It helped me ... get ahead of where I had been.

SI: Was that through the GI Bill?

WN: At Rutgers?

SI: At Harvard.

WN: GI Bill, no. This is after I'd been working from '48 to '73. I had been at the *Home News* for fifteen or more years, and then, the company picked up the bill.

SI: Did you use the GI Bill at Rutgers?

WN: Yes. I was married and lived over in Plainfield. I commuted. By the way, one of the guys in ... Hegeman, freshman year, name was Myron Morrell. We signed up for the Air Force the same day, long ago. We left for the Air Force more or less the same time, not the same day. He went through all the training. On the first mission as a fighter pilot, he was killed. He's in the annals here someplace. He lived in Plainfield. ... When I commuted the other three years, from our apartment in Plainfield, I [had a] share-the-ride guy. ... By the week, we traded cars, so, our wives could have the car for one week at home and so on and he is now a judge. He just retired. ... I'm glad to see what I see here at Rutgers. From all I hear of Rutgers, I followed their sports as long as we lived here. ... I didn't miss a home football game for years, season basketball, all that stuff. I've been very aware of the sports here. I hope we're on the right track now to getting a school that is more competitive in their teams, I hope.

SI: The football team is coming along.

WN: Yes. I'm concerned; the way the Big East is configured now, it's not quite the same. I have a lot of friends who live around here still. In fact, I'm going to see one of them today. Hey, this worked out fine, had no problem parking up the Queens. Are there any other questions you have? ...

SI: This could be a good place to end for now. I do feel as though we skipped over a lot of stuff, so, if there were a possibility for a second interview, would you be open to that?

WN: How long is your grant and all this going to last?

SI: We are continually funded by alumni donations, usually through classes.

WN: What kind of thing did we leave out?

SI: We really did not talk too much about combat in World War II. Could you tell me about your first mission?

WN: Well, sure. ... This is World War II. These are daytime missions. You get up early, like ... five or six o'clock, and get dressed and transportation would arrive, a jeep or a truck. ... Three or four of them would arrive and we loaded into them and went up to a briefing in the command operations office. We were told what the mission was going to be and had a briefing on it, flak, weather, formation, rendezvous, how many planes and soon. After the briefing, ...

the pilots went into one room, one operation room, and the navigators went into another for specialized information, and then, we got out of there and went back to our squadron and went and had breakfast. From there, picked up what gear we kept in the tent. I kept a briefcase, that's all I kept there, and went back up to the Operations, where I had a locker. We each had a locker up there with a parachute and flying gear. By then, we're into our flight clothes. ... In World War II, the planes were not heated, as compared with today. We wore fur lined gear, boots, pants, the zipped on jackets and hats in the winter and the temperature would get very low, way below zero up high, and clumsy as can be, and then get aboard the plane and have the pre-flight. Outside the plane, we would tell the ... crewmen what we were going to do and how long we'd be up, and so on. Most anything the briefing people had told us, and then, got aboard the plane at a radio signal to "start engines" and you started them in the first squadron, then the second, third. I would have made a flight plan for the mission. I had maps, charts, with an overlay and, at the briefing, pick out the target and the route, at the subsequent briefing, the details of the target. We're shown pictures of the target and what it looked like, what the approach looked like. Soon we took off and rendezvoused. We went up and the planes would fly in the area, picking up more to join the formation and we worked in a big oval and, on the second time around, everybody was supposed to be more or less in position, and then, we would set off. We set off for the coast, which wasn't very far away, and then, we'd make a turn north. Once we made that turn, the pilots made a real earnest effort to get into the flight formation and, meanwhile, we were going up, but we didn't go up [fast]. We gained altitude gradually, because we had an hour before getting to the front lines and you use more fuel if you go up fast. So, [we] worked our way up, finally get up to where the front was, the war front, on the Italian mainland, the Po River, generally speaking, and, by that time, we tried to be at about twelve thousand feet and to be above any local flak. ... We were mostly over the water until we got up there, and then, gradually, work our way up higher and, ... to cross the Alps, we had to be at about eighteen thousand feet and, the Alps go up to about twelve [thousand]. Then, we'd be on different legs of the mission. We didn't go the same route every time. We kept mixing it up, so that ... the German intelligence had to guess where we were going and we normally had about five different legs to get to the target area. About twenty miles out from the target area, a position on the map was designated as the Initial Point, we called it that. It was a turning point and you, as a squadron leader or a group leader, tried to turn your group over that and, at that point with radio silence, shot out a flare and that was to tighten up ... the formation, because you wanted ... to cluster the bombs in close, and then, the crew would all be getting into their flak suits or [were] in them by then. Up in the front of the plane, where I was, we laid the flak suits [down]. The navigator and bombardier were up in the nose, where the bombsight was, and the flak suits were laid on the Plexiglas below us and, about ten minutes out from the target, the bombardier would take control, through the Norden bombsight. By then, ... we were lined up and knew what the course should be and he would take over the steering controls of our plane. Now, in the other planes, this didn't happen. This is in the lead and the second lead, and then, you go to the target. If it was a target where there was a lot of flak, it was coming up then, it would be big, black puffs of smoke and some of it was white. They were fragmentation [explosives]. I have two pieces of flak that came through our Plexiglas windows over Munich.

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

WN: We had to keep chatter on the intercom down, but, sometimes, the crew people would get excited, "Hey, did you see that fighter?" you know, something like that. "No, I didn't see it. Where?" "On the side, I swear I saw a plane." ... Meanwhile, the bombardier took over and lined up and checked it and rechecked, checked and rechecked and got the bombsight set and, when the green light flashed, several things happened. Trigger's all released and, by the way, on the way down from the Initial Point, the bomb bay doors were opened. When we opened ours, everybody else opened theirs, and so, the drop and, immediately after the drop, we all had an evasive action plan. Bomb doors were closed. The crew checked to see if there were any bombs hung up. That could happen. They get caught in the clips that held them up. If there were any "hang-ups," ... the crew back there would pry them out, ... physically, close the bomb bay doors and, by squadrons took evasive action. You went left, right, up, down and, if necessary, separated. We knew we were going to do a big oval and turn to the right and another squadron would turn to the left, to keep out of everybody's [way] and get out of the flak area, [as] quickly as you can, and then, reform, but not at the same ... initial point, at a new rendezvous, close, not far, in time or distance, and then, gradually, work the planes in closer together, and then, see what the damage was. Our routine was, you looked at your neighbor's plane and somebody else was looking at you to check, from the outside, [for] any signs of whatever and, if anybody was hurt, planes I'm talking about, damaged ... from flak, the pilot would make an evaluation with the engineer and determine whether he could stay with the squadron or not. If he couldn't, why, we wished him well and he would follow us on his own. For emergencies up there (I have read recently that Switzerland was really not truly our friend during World War II, but, when we were there, we never heard that) we heard of many, many damaged planes that were interred in Switzerland, because then, you didn't have to cross the Alps. You could go into one part of Switzerland that is flat. The other was to fly into Spain, which wasn't so good politically, or, if you could get below the Alps, there were some emergency fields. One of them was on an island in the Adriatic called Vis, ... a British controlled airfield on this island, and they ran a shuttle service back to the mainland by plane. It was a convenient place and had mechanics. If your problem was a small one, they could fix it. Our own mechanics, not British were stationed there. ... They had a barrack to stay in, transportation out and medical. It was a very valuable place and it was much used. It was a regular airfield and all around it, the British Navy patrolled all the time. The Germans were, like, forty miles away, but they stayed away from there and you could land there and get back to base. Then, we'd make the trip home, gradually losing altitude, get out over the Adriatic, drop down. If the weather was nice, you could take that shortcut west of the Gargano Peninsula. If the weather was lousy, you'd go the long way around. If any other plane got into trouble, mechanical trouble, and we were down below the front or even in Italy, any part, usually the lead plane would go with him and get on the radio and tell Rescue or whoever what the dilemma was and stay with them until there was some action, whether they landed, ditched, parachuted or whatever they did. They stayed with them, so that they could get radio contact as to where they were exactly. ... That happened and that was one of the responsibilities of the lead. ... Both of the war experiences I had, for many years after I got home, I never said a word ... about any of this to my kids and I think I was typical of many, many [veterans]. In fact, from what I know in our Air Force organization, that's true and, trying to examine why, there are a couple of reasons. First of all, I wanted to get on with my life and I didn't want to be burdened with that hanging over me. I wanted just a normal life, but, then, ... as time went on, I had ... some feeling of having done some things that, really, ... I wish I hadn't had to or hadn't done. ... While I'm certainly no peacenik, war is ugly and I regretted it. In fact,

I would go a little further and say there was a time when I was ashamed, personally. This was after I'd been back ... a few years. I really didn't want to get into it. I didn't want to contact any of my old Air Force friends. I wanted to get on with my life and I'd read accounts of the war and be able to identify very clearly. As a consequence, I didn't say anything to my own kids and I have three boys. None of them [have] ever been in the service, never wanted to. My wife didn't want them to be, go into the service. I would like them to have been in the Air Force or the Navy, ... but that isn't the way things worked out. Finally, in recent years, I loosened up a little, especially since I've been retired. When I worked, ... most of my people I worked with, if they were younger, they didn't have any military experience. The place where I would run into fellows was at church, people I knew from long ago, and then, I started going to these reunions and that ... kind of leveled things out again for me. But there was that, yes, I would say, for a period, I was ashamed. ... I haven't told you this. In Korea, remember I told you about those Firefly flare lights? If we were down at low altitude and there were people there who were loaded in trucks or what have you, I could see them and what they were going through as a result of what we were doing, their last moment alive. It bothered me ... and I think that's where the shame developed, as a reaction, and I was glad to get myself thoroughly involved in business and the town and Rutgers, all else.

SI: You only felt that way after Korea, not after World War II.

WN: After the whole thing, after Korea. In the years in-between, I was so busy with school and career that ... that was my life then. ... After the first few months home, I didn't give it any thought. I was busy and that was good. When I hear people negating their service experience, ... and there are a lot of people who do, ... you know, "The lousy this, that and the other [thing]. The food was [bad]." So, that was them. I didn't have that as an experience. I thought I was pretty fairly treated in consideration and, if there were problems, they were solved. Everything was fine, except the pay. [laughter] It's better now, but not a whole lot.

SI: Is there anything else that you would like to put on the tape?

WN: No, I quit. I'm losing my voice.

SI: Thank you very much.

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Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 7/6/04

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 7/26/04

Reviewed by Walter Peter Nelson 8/27/04