RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ANGELOS PARASKEVAS

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

WORLD WAR II * KOREAN WAR * VIETNAM WAR * COLD WAR

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Sandra Stewart Holyoak: This begins an interview on June 15th, 2010 with Dr. Angelos Loukas Paraskevas in Brookville, Maryland in the home of Dr. Paraskevas' daughter. I thank you very much for allowing me to take time out of your vacation. To begin, where and when were you born?

Angelos Paraskevas: I was born November 1st, 1922, on Glenwild Farm in Monroe, New York.

SH: I would like to start the interview by talking about your father and his family background. Please state for the record your father's name.

AP: … My father is Harris John Paraskevopoulas. He was born in Smyrna, Asia Minor, on 2 Assemia Street. His father was John Harris Paraskevopoulas and he was born in Batera on the island of Lesvos and he married a girl by the name of Pareskevi Skinna and she had a brother and a sister, Mary and Andrew. They were married, he was a tailor by trade and he moved to Smyrna and living at 2 Assemia Street in Asia Minor, and he reared five children--Panus, Nicolas, Costa, Angelika and my father, Harris John. Angelika died shortly before I was born and therefore my father named me Angelos in her honor. I do not know the birth order. One was killed in a war with the Turks, one disappeared, my father and uncle Costa came to America. What happened, in Asia Minor as I told you the Turks and the Greeks were fighting and whoever wins the war they would just kill off all the others so everybody would leave. Two or three blocks up the street from where my father lived was Onassis, the father of the famous Aristotle, who lived in Argentina, had a tobacco farm. He was shipping him tobacco and he was selling all the tobacco products in Argentina, when the war ended he bought multiple cargo ships and became a multimillionaire. My father at that time was a famous marathon runner. … I have a picture of him with all his medals and he ran in the Greek Olympics in 1908 in the stadium that's still there in Greece. … He came in sixteenth, he had a little problem with his shoes. … He was a great runner and in fact he never stopped running, he was running and walking all his life. He decided the revolution was going to start again between the Turks and the Greeks so he went to Athens. He knew English very well and he was teaching English in Athens. Where and how he learned English is unknown. He decided to come to America and boarded a ship in Piraeus in Greece. The night before the ship was going to sail, a Jewish fellow in a row boat came up to the ship with his two sons, and he got a hold of my father, and he said, "Harry you take care of my two sons and when you get to New York I'll take care of you." Now, I don't know the significance of that term, "I'll take care of you," because when I went to Ellis Island, I found my mother's history beautifully, my father, I couldn't find a thing. He came in 1911, but I found out that they had misspelled my father's name. They put "D" instead of "P" and when he was naturalized on April 8th in 1923, he changed his name to Paraskevas, and … in Washington they corrected the name from a "D" to a "P." So, I went back to Ellis Island and I couldn't find anything, everything was handwritten. You had to answer about twenty-six questions, they could misspell a lot of words. So, he came to America and on October 13th, 1911, … he tells the story that you had to have fifty dollars to enter Ellis Island. I said, "Well, did you have fifty dollars?" He said, "No, … one Greek had fifty dollars," he said, "but by the time the physician got over with you and cleared you, the fifty dollars went to the next person so it would get in fifty people with the same fifty dollars." The people in first and second class did not have to go to Ellis Island, the ship would pull into New York Harbor, 51st Street, and the physician would go aboard the boat and the people in first class would be examined and go right into New York

City. … Did my father have that kind of money to ride first class? I don't know or did that Jewish fellow arrange it that he be checked aboard the ship, I don't know, that's a possibility because he's not on Ellis Island as of that date. The government when he was naturalized … changed his name to Paraskevas. He lived on 329 East 32nd Street in New York City. My mother was born in Czerwona, Poland near Krakow on April 9th, 1895 and she died in 1973 at the age of seventy-eight. My father was born on January 1st, 1888 and died in 1982 at the age of ninety-four. My mother was born in Poland. Her father's name, Filipak, traces back to King Philip of Macedonia. Loukas Filipak. He was married twice, with the first wife he had twelve children, the second wife, Catherine Godfryd, was part of my family. She's Austrian, so I have Austrian blood in me too, Polish, Greek and Austrian. He married Catherine Godfryd, and they had six children, Philip, Sophie, Bronia, my mother, Celia, Maria and Anna. Philip and Sophie came in 1911 and 1913 to New York, and Philip went straight to Chicago and started an electrical business, it was very successful, but he died young, he had a rheumatic heart. I met his daughter, Loretta Lord when I took my boards in obstetrics and gynecology in Chicago. Sophie stayed in New York. She lived on 208 East 21st Street. … My grandfather, Loukas Filipak was a great sculptor, he carved everything out of wood. When I was in active practice, Poland put out a book of all the famous artists of Poland and his picture is in there carving a wooden statue. … I wrote a letter to my two aunts living there, Maria and Anna, I said please look in the churches, find something that he carved. They looked and looked, they said, … "We had many wars with Russia, Austria, and Germany. They bombed and bombed, there's nothing left, all his statues are gone." Maria wrote a letter, and said, "I found a cross that he carved," and I said, "Well, I would like that." So she put it in a wooden box and went to the post office. The communists were running Poland at that time, the 1960s. She went to the post office and they said, "What's in that box," she said, "It's a statue of Jesus on the cross," and they said, "Let me look at it, who carved it?" She said, "Loukas Filipak." They said, "No, this has got to go to the museum, you can't ship it out of the country." She took it back and she hid it. She's afraid the communists were going to come and recover it. Six months later we smuggled it out of Poland. In 1914, World War I was starting. Their mother called them all together, "Anyone of you want to leave, leave right now because war is terrible." She said, "We've been at war all the time, and … leave and don't feel bad about it." So, my Aunt Cecilia, age seventeen, my mother was nineteen, went to Antwerp, Belgium and caught the last boat before the war started and they came to New York on July 27th, 1914, and they went to live with my Aunt Sofia in New York. My mother when she came here belonged to many Polish organizations and theatrical groups. I have pictures of my mother working for the Red Cross uniform on. She was on the stage all the time with the Polish organizations performing in plays and different acts. It's amazing, there were three sisters living in New York, all Polish, they all married Greeks. There was a Polish community and a Greek community. My Aunt Sophie married Costa Papacosta and had eight children. Aunt Celia married John Pappas. He died of TB. They had one daughter, Anita, and that's the only daughter she had, she never married again. My mother married my father, Harris John Paraskevopoulas. … My brother John was born on October 2, 1920, in New York City. They bought a farm up in Monroe, New York. It was called Glenwild Farm, thirty-two acres with a thirty-two room guest house and a barn. They had cows, horses, pigs, and chickens. I have a picture of my mother pregnant feeding the chickens when she was seven months pregnant with me. I was born November 1st, 1922 at 2:45 AM. My mother went into labor at 10 o'clock in the evening and my father got in a horse and buggy and went downtown looking for the doctor. They said, "He's at a Halloween party," October 31st. He couldn't find him, so on the

way home he knocked on the door of this farmhouse on the bottom of the hill from our farm, Mrs. Brundrant and said, "Bronia's in labor." So, she got into the horse and buggy, came up there and she delivered me at 2:45 AM, November 1, 1922. My godmother, Mrs. Haifter and my Aunt Celia were in attendance. Eight o'clock in the morning the doctor came, he went up in the bedroom to check my mother, and my Aunt Celia said, "I didn't deliver the baby, my sister did." He said, "Well, there's nobody in the other bedroom." "Where is your sister?" She says, "I don't know." He went downstairs, my mother was cooking already. So, he put her in bed, and said, "You stay up there for seven days." My Uncle Papacosta was a great photographer. He came up and took pictures of the farm. All the famous people from Broadway used to come there, they had a thirty-two room guest house. My mother was such a good cook, they loved the food. They would all come to Glenwild Farm. My father fell in the well, he would have drowned, because the water was ice cold, they put a rope down, they finally pulled him out. One day they couldn't find my brother, John, was two years old, finally at ten o'clock at night they found him sleeping with the pigs. In 1950, I took … my twin sisters, my mother and father and we went to Monroe to Glenwild Farm and my mother and father were shocked. Not one board was changed from the day I was born. We toured the entire farm including the room I was born in. My father bought the farm from Macy's Department Store, and when Macy left, as a gift to them, he left them two figurines on the fireplace in the guest house. I still have those two figurines, gorgeous pieces. In 1924, traveling to New York was a problem. My father had an old farm truck. One Saturday he decided to go to New York City to visit Aunt Sophie and Aunt Celia, it was a Saturday night, seven o'clock, he's driving down Park Avenue with this farm truck and a big Irish cop pulls him over to the side, he says, "Hey, get that thing off Park Avenue on a Saturday night," he said, "You go down 8th Avenue, just get out of here, or I'll give you a ticket." So, they went, they visited, and they came home late at night, around midnight, and they got to Monroe and there was a big hill and it's raining cats and dogs, I mean, he couldn't see, and the lights in those days on the cars were very weak, comes down the hill, didn't see the stop sign, … pulled on to the highway and a big semi-trailer was coming down the road, he saw my father and he turned that truck to the left and went about five hundred yards into the farm, into the deep mud. … My father was so shook up, he saw the truck, he didn't stop, he kept going, he got home, turned the key off, and never drove again. … This is a true story, never drove again in his life. … He was a marathon runner, so he walked everywhere. The truck sat there, he never drove it again. We left Monroe in 1924. When he got off that boat, he went up to Saco, Maine to visit a cousin of mine, Peter Paraskevas and it was too cold up there so he went back to New York, enlisted in Cooper Union, graduated as a design tool and die maker. He got a job with Henry Zuhr, and worked for the rest of his life for Henry Zuhr in New York City on Lafayette Street. Because he was a design tool and die maker, people would come in with inventions and go to my father, "Harry, I invented this thing, but you have to cut it from fifteen steps down to six steps to manufacture it and also improve it so we can make it smaller and more attractive." Gillette came in with the first safety razor to my father, he said, "Harry, I got an invention here, it's a razor." They used to use a straight edge. My father had a half a dozen of them. When I first began to shave, I used a straight edge razor. So, he said, "Harry, I have a new invention, I have a razor." It was a single blade razor, and he kept bringing them home and … I wasn't using it, I was too young at that time, but we had dozens of the Gillette razors, and finally they perfected it and put it on the market. Then, Hemingway came to him, he said, "Harry, I have a home in Key West, Florida. All my salt shakers, they get moisture in it, I can't use the salt shakers, I got to throw it away." So, my father told him what kind of salt shakers to devise, a glass one, crystal, he

devised a pheasant to screw on the top, you press the tail, the mouth would open, you turn it over the salt would come out and he told him to put some rice in the bottom of the salt shaker and the salt will stay dry. Hemingway came back, he said, "Harry, it works beautifully." … I had those salt shakers at home and they're gone, they would have been collector's items. The shakers, and this Gillette razor, we had the original, but as kids we played with them, and we ruined them. Then, a fellow came in with a slicing machine for bread and he said, "Harry, I have a machine that's going to slice bread." So, they bring in dozens of loaves of bread, but they were falling apart. My came home with bags of bread, we didn't have to buy bread for six months. They called Tasty Bread to make the bread firmer so as not to crumble when slicing it. The slicer was a great success. We no longer feasted on sliced bread, we went back to rolls and rye bread. All the toys were made out of metal in those days, they had no plastic. They came to Harry and said, "We want to devise a machine that can test the paint, scratch it to make sure it doesn't crack." My father working with them invented a scratch tester. All the toy factories were buying these machines to test the paint. All the other companies tried to duplicate my father's machine, and they all came back to Harry, "Nobody can make a machine like you do" and when he retired, Henry Zuhr gave him the patent. Universal Aviation came out with a plastic called Lucite and they came to my father to devise new dials for all the planes and telephones to replace the radium dials and strobe lights. They gave him a year to do it, he did it in three months. A German doll maker came to him and said, "Harry, I got a doll here, I want the eyes to open and close, I want the kids to feed the doll and wet the diaper, and then, I want the doll to say, 'Mama.'" … He had all these little gadgets. He and my father worked together, they put out the first doll that would close the eyes, open the eyes, and wet the diaper, and say, "Mama." In the 1920s you had to use two hands to light a cigarette. My father devised a gadget that held a pack of cigarettes. You held it in one hand, squeezed it and a cigarette popped up. On the other end was a cigarette lighter. While driving a car you used only one hand, the other hand was on the steering wheel. My godfather, George Paches was a dentist on Rockefeller Center, New York. My father on Fridays would go and visit my godfather and he watched him work. He was a dental mechanic making the fillings and molds for the teeth, you know, the fillings for the teeth. When he put the filling in the oven it would explode if air was left inside and he would repeat the procedure. My father devised a vibrating machine removing all the air and it was very successful. So, they had a convention in New York, they said, "Bring your invention over here," and so he went to New York to the convention, and he talked to a lawyer, and the lawyer says, "Yes, this is beautiful," he said, "I'll research it for you to make sure they don't have a patent on this." He comes back, and he says … this thing was patented the week before my father came in, and so, my godfather said, "Harry, did you register that?" He said "No." He lost the patent. Every dentist in the world used it, he would have been a multimillionaire. In those days it was the Depression, he had no money, he couldn't fight it, and he lost the invention. He was doing that kind of work all his life. My mother and father purchased a farm, thirty-two acres in Monroe, New York. It had a thirty-two room guest house, barns and a farm house along with cows, pigs, a beautiful horse and carriage for guests to tour the countryside. My father met very prominent people in his work who vacationed in Monroe and he became very interested, it became my birthplace. In 1924, when my father had that accident and almost was killed he decided that it was too much traveling up there, and they decided to sell the farm and they moved to 403 9th Avenue, Roselle, New Jersey. Downstairs was our cousins the Papacosta family. Our two families consisted of nine children. There was a woods in the back with a hermit living there and my mother used to say, "Stay away from that person, that's a hermit don't you dare go near him." Well that stimulated

us, we were kids. We would sneak by and see what he's doing, he was cooking his own food outside the shack. We would sneak back there and walk around and run when he would come out. My first recollection of anything in my life came at 403 9th Avenue in Roselle, New Jersey. By 1927 I was five years old. I remember playing with John and my cousins. Every affair, they had a party. … All the parties would last from Friday night to Sunday night. It was prohibition, so my father would go to New York and get ouzo, and all the wine, whatever they can manufacture. One day he was coming home in the subway with a big gallon of ouzo, that Greek liquor, and he was on the subway and the thing was leaking. A big Irish cop walked by, "Oh, that's mighty nice soda you got there," and he kept on walking by. For the kids, the bathtub had big cakes of ice, I mean those large ones loaded with soda, root beer, orange soda, cream soda, whatever you wanted. We couldn't take a bath for Friday, Saturday, Sunday because the bathtub was full of ice. So, the kids would play and drink all the soda they want and the grownups had their affairs and the cooking was twenty-four hours a day, come in and eat, that's how they celebrated. Christening, birthday parties, anything for an occasion they would have a big party and the whole neighborhood would come in. So, one of the neighbors got a little suspicious and called Mr. Peterson and he was our next door neighbor, he was the captain of the police force of Roselle. They complained that there's liquor. Mr. Peterson knocks on the door and he says, "Harry, you have no liquor in here?" "No, Mr. Peterson." "I didn't think so," and he walked away. Every party, they would do the same thing. Across the street was a cherry tree and a pear tree, we had all the fruit we wanted. Next door neighbor was a vegetable man and his truck was loaded with all kinds of fruits, we would say give us an apple or give us a banana, and we lived it up as kids. In 1927, we moved from 403 9th Avenue. We went to 728 Drake Avenue, Roselle. Now, we had a home, a beautiful home and there was John, Paul, George, and myself. Anita was born in 1928, at home. All of us were born at home. … February 18, 1934, my mother went into labor with twins. They rushed her to the hospital because she began to bleed. Three o'clock in the morning, they're banging on the door. … I woke up my brother, John. I was twelve years old, Johnny was fourteen. I said, "Johnny, there's someone knocking on the door." We look, it was the cops, they were banging on the door. My father was hard of hearing, he couldn't hear anything, he didn't hear them banging on the window, banging on the door. So we open the door, it was the cops. We woke up our father and they rushed him to the hospital, and my mother almost died. I think she had, someone told me fifteen transfusions, she was hemorrhaging when she delivered the twins. The twins were seven pounds fifteen ounces each. The twins came home and my cousin … Helen from New York came over to take care of us because my father had to go to work. … She would send us to school, cook our food, take care of my mother until she recovered. In the meantime we had an eighteen inch snowstorm. I built a big igloo in front of the house. As we're growing up on 728 Drake Avenue, my father began to make beer. He'd buy the hops and the yeast, and let it ferment. We would collect all these soda bottles because in those days you buy a tall bottle of soda and keep the nickel deposit when you return it. We went to the movies, the "Monkey House." We would buy a Kling Pie for a nickel, it came on a small aluminum plate and when we ate the pie we would sling those plates up onto the stage. Mr. Gluck the manager stopped the movie and told us to cease doing it. He finally collected all the plates before entering the movie. My father decided to make beer. We saved all the bottles, he told John and I, to bottle it, add one half teaspoon of sugar, you add too much sugar it would explode when opened. So, every fifth or sixth bottle we'd put a teaspoon of sugar and sure enough one would explode when opened during dinner. So, every year around October or so, we would always make beer enough for the whole year. We made a proposition with my

father, "Listen, we make all this beer, how about root beer for us?" He said, "No problem," so he made root beer, we capped the bottles and put it away. In one month's time they're all gone, we drank all the root beer. Why? He had it down the cellar on a shelf and we had access to it. "Get root beer we have some guests at the house," there's no more pop, well he found out we were taking the bottles, putting it out the cellar window, my mother would give us a hot dog, we'd go out and make a fire, cook a hot dog and have a … bottle of root beer. So, he put a wall across the cellar and he boarded it and he put a lock on it, put the beer and the root beer behind locked doors. Well, out came the screwdriver, we took the hinges off, we got in there, and got the root beer anyway. We had a nice backyard full of vegetables, we had a little stream back there. We'd go sleigh riding in winter and fall into the water, come in soaking wet. We played ball in the front street and every time we hit the softball onto Mr. Mariano's yard, he would keep the ball, he wouldn't give us the ball back. Mr. Smith across the street every night he'd go over there to get the ball back, he was … tough. When I broke my arm as a kid, Mr. Mariano got a dozen eggs and tore a piece of hemp apart, made a compress, wrapped my arm and it healed perfectly, never saw a doctor. I was sleigh riding and I put a four inch gash in my leg, half-inch deep. My father took iodine, poured it in there, I jumped through the ceiling, and he took care of it, it healed. They never went to the doctors. We went to grammar school, Harrison Avenue School up the street, and we walked to school. My mother made all our clothes. I was going to school with silk shirts. I said, "Mom, kids don't wear this type of shirt." She said, "You wear them, don't worry about it." We had four boys, all two years apart. When Paul was born he had blonde hair, I mean really blonde hair, my mother never cut it, long blonde hair and it would curl, they called him "Tootsie." He'd go to New York, they called him "Tootsie." Everyone called him "Tootsie," they thought he was a girl and my mother said, "No, he's a boy." Everyone always called him Tootsie, so we called him Tootsie. So, he goes to school the first year, he's in kindergarten, he comes home and boy did he give us hell, he said, "My name is not Tootsie!" I said "It isn't?" "My name is Paul." I said, "Mom, what's his name?" She said, "Paul Theodore." I said, "I thought it was Tootsie." For one month boy did he get angry until we called him Paul. We lived on Drake Avenue. Warinanco Park was two blocks away, a big park, had a playground. All summer long we were in the playground, we'd take a sandwich and go there, we'd come back at night. In those days the doors were open all the time, you didn't have to lock the doors and you didn't have to worry about a thing, but my mother had twins and my mother was busy. Seven kids, had to cook, had to wash, clothesline, no washer and dryer in those days, everything on the clothesline, in wintertime froze stiff. In the summer months, she called John, Paul and I. … The twins must have been three, four years old I guess. … We had a twin carriage, and our mother said, "All right, here's the schedule, one of you take care from ten to twelve, one from twelve to two, one from two to four. Here are the bottles, here are the diapers, you take them to Warinanco Park and change shifts." So, as soon as we walk to Warinanco Park all the young mothers, "Oh, the twins are here, the twins are here," boom I would take off. My ten to twelve shift was taken care of by these mothers. I see Paul, I said, "Paul, where are the twins?" He said, "Some lady is taking care of them." "John, where are the twins?" We come home at four or five o'clock at night, the twins are not home. My father comes home from work six o'clock, he says, "Where are the twins?" "Pop, I don't know." … Boom, he went to the park, we found some mother taking care of them, he'd bring the twins home. The next night the police came over, and said, "Harry, the twins are in the police station, someone dropped them off." So, my father would go up to the police station two miles down the road, come back with the twins. This went on all summer like this, somebody was always taking care of the twins, they were in

somebody's home and all that, they would wheel them back or my father had to get them, they were never home for supper, because we would run off. The mothers took care of them. They had a big stadium, they had shows every Wednesday night, ethnic nights, Polish night, German night and every Wednesday night the stadium was packed and we would go to the show. Then, at night as we got older, the Depression years were hitting hard, my father started to be out of work. In 1937 things got really bad and the neighbors said, "Take John and take Angie out of school." In 1937 I was fifteen and John was seventeen, you could get working papers. At age fifteen, I began working in a bakery with a cake maker from two AM to two PM for a dollar. Making cakes and cookies, and John had his driver's license, he was working for Mr. Mikos delivering milk. When I wasn't working in the bakery we would deliver milk from ten at night to six in the morning and go to school. It was getting tougher and tougher, and they said, "Take John and Angie out of school and put them to work, get their working papers." I went to school and Mr. Buster gave me my working papers and they said take him out of school, my mother said, "No, they go to school. I'd rather lose the house than have them out of school." We kept on working but it reached a breaking point, and they had to sell the house and we moved into an apartment. There were seven of us all going to school in this upstairs apartment, my father took the front porch and made a bedroom out of it, closed it in. On 728 Drake Avenue, we had seven of us, the girls lived downstairs, … all the boys lived upstairs in the attic, my father converted it into a big bedroom, so we all lived upstairs. When it rained, my mother caught hell because we had to play inside. So, we all went upstairs, my mother stored all the clothes up there, we took everything apart and we put on shows, put on the clothes, adult clothes, we'd put on acts. My mother would go up there, it would be a mess. Everything had to go back into the baskets and into the cloth bags, we're all young boys at that time. We moved to this house on 910 Chandler Avenue and we lived upstairs and we were going to school, we were doing good in school, did our homework. … In 1939, I went to CMTC, Civilian Military Training Camp. General MacArthur devised that during the Depression years to keep the kids active, have a military camp. I went to CMTC during the summer months at Fort Dix in New Jersey, military camp. We were firing the M1 rifle, we were riding the tanks and firing the guns. We were putting on gas masks and going through five hundred yards of gas, poisonous gas. … Every Sunday General MacArthur would come up from Washington and we would have a dress parade and march in front of General MacArthur and he would give a speech. I would spend [time] in military camp for the first summer. In 1940, I went to CMTC at Fort Hancock, New Jersey, and we were firing three-inch antiaircraft guns at a plane pulling a target. The shells were twenty-six inches long. … We had to stand back because the recoil on the gun was twenty-six inches. We had a crew of six, one would elevate the gun, one would rotate the gun and one would finally say, "On target, fire," bam, and then, they would radio back whether we hit the target or not. Then, we had a fourteen inch gun, the barrel of that gun was fifteen yards long or so, it had a fourteen inch barrel on it, it was on a turret. It had to be operated by motors it was so powerful, such a big [turret] made of cement and all the ammunition was underneath. We'd load that gun with four packs of gunpowder, then stand back. … We had to wear ear muffs and that shell went twenty-five miles out over the ocean, there were some battleships and destroyers out there, and they would tell us if we hit the target, lucky we didn't hit them. When Johnny, my son was in Boy Scouts he camped out at Fort Hancock. It was raining so hard they had to go to sleep underneath the turrets, because the tents couldn't hold the rain. It was flooding. When I went to pick him up, he was underneath one of those turrets. I said, "Johnny, I used to fire that gun over your head up there." We kept our summers busy, John and I caddied every summer at Roselle

Golf Course for sixty-five cents a round, and hoped and prayed for a nickel tip. I started playing golf because every Monday they would let us play golf. In 1939, President Roosevelt instituted the draft. You had to serve two years when you reached the age of nineteen, people were confused, they wanted to go to college, but they're turning nineteen. Serve your two years now or wait and let them call you up. In grammar school, I was very active. I drew all the covers for our monthly magazine, *Harrison Echoes*. I remember drawing the American flag, George Washington, Christmas trees, all appropriate for the month. Up until the sixth grade, I did all the art work for all the major holidays for our weekly assembly, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter. I remember making a stain glass window for Christmas at least fifteen feet high. Going to school, the four boys went to the public schools. Anita went to public school too, but the twins went to Catholic School, they went to Saint Mary's in Elizabeth and also Saint Joseph's in Roselle. … When we moved, we had to go to a different school and my mother wasn't satisfied with the type of education they were getting, … so they went to Catholic School. Marianne and Helena were not identical. … When they went to school, Helena was very sharp and Marianne was a little cool and laid back, but smart, so they were in the same class. Helena was always raising her hand and always being called upon, and Marianne was feeling bad, come home and complain to Mom, you know, "Helena is making a fool out of me." So, Helena says, well every time she was asked a question she would say, "I don't know," hoping that Maryanne would answer. Maryanne wouldn't raise her hand. So, now Helena says, "I'm giving you a break, and now you're not taking advantage of it." They graduated school and they did very well. I got to high school, and when I was a freshman, I was water boy for the football team and then in my sophomore year, I made the varsity team, I was playing junior varsity ball, but on the varsity team, I was a quarterback. Then, in my junior year and senior year I was playing varsity football, and then, senior year I was the captain and quarterback of the football team. My father came to all the games no matter where we played, rain or shine, he got there. In my junior year, I was president of the class and we had a class of two hundred fifty and in my senior year I was president of the student council. I had to give a speech in the auditoriums every Wednesday, give a talk on what's going on, what the students are doing, and give a report. When I graduated in 1941, I was the most depressed student around because I took a college preparatory course. There was no way of going to college and in those days there wasn't that many scholarships. I was very depressed from the tenth grade on. In the tenth grade one of my classmates, Teddy Sodomoro says, "Why are you taking a college course, working like mad, you're not going to college, take a commercial course." I talked to Mr. Stearns, my English … teacher and he was our adviser. I said, "Mr. Stearns, I'm going to change to a commercial course." He said, "You go see Mr. Freifeld, the principal." He used to go to all my ball games and I'd meet him in the hall and he'd say, "My grandson, he goes to the games, when he comes home," he said "out of the whole football team your name, Paraskevas, that's the only name he remembers. He goes home, he talks Paraskevas, Paraskevas, Paraskevas." I went in there, he said, "What is your problem?" I said "Mr. Freifeld, I don't think I'm going to college. … I think I'll switch from a college course to a commercial course." He says to the secretary, "Let me have his record." He went all the way back to the seventh grade, I had all "As." He says, "Here is what I am going to do. Your record is so good, you go home for thirty days and think it over and then come back." I never went back. I graduated in 1941, high school, and worked for General Aniline for fifteen dollars a week. I played semi-pro football with the Roselle Redskins for two years, we were undefeated. I also went to night school at Union Junior College taking math and sciences. On December 7, 1941, I was listening to the New York Giants football game when they interrupted

to announce the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. The United States was at war. December 7th, Pearl Harbor I was watching a football game, the New York Giants were playing one o'clock in the afternoon, they interrupted, and said Pearl Harbor was bombed, didn't even know of Pearl Harbor, in Hawaii. … The Japanese and the United States declared war. So, we figured, what's going to happen? Now the fellows in service served their two years in the draft. Now, they have to stay in, the war started. So, now it was December 7th, 1941. … I was still working. … I figured I'm going to be called up by my next birthday because they were calling people up in their nineteenth, twentieth year, they didn't call you up at eighteen. So, I'm waiting, waiting what to do, I'm talking to friends of mine and one is going in, another one is going in, now they're going in by the dozens. We graduated in 1941 from high school, our class had the most deaths in World War II because we had the most people there, we were the ideal age to go in the service. A lot of people were working, working for defense, they didn't go in the service so our class had the most entries into the service.

SH: What about the military academies?

AP: … Let me tell you that, yes, I'm glad you brought that up. When I was in eleventh grade, … in high school, the teacher called me in, and we had a class of two hundred fifty and she called me in and she says, "We're sending you to NYU, the university in New York, go over there to take exams for the military academies-- Bob (Warrington?), Dick Beard and you. Out of the whole class you three are chosen." I was very good in math in those days and science. So, we took a whole day, we went to NYU in Washington Circle, … and we spent the whole day taking examinations. A week later she called us in, and said, "All of you passed. You're going to hear from the military academies." So, Dick Beard and Bob (Warrington?), their fathers were on the school board and my father had no position there. Anyway, Bob (Warrington?) came up to me, he says, "They're taking me at West Point." Two weeks later Dick Beard says, "I'm going to Annapolis," teacher calls me in, she said, "Did you hear from the Coast Guard Academy up in Newport, Rhode Island?" I said "No." Two weeks later no, she called me in, called me in until the end of the year. She said, "What happened? They didn't call you, you were accepted." … When I was in the military service I couldn't figure out why I didn't go to the military. So, I think Dick Beard said, he said, "Did you get two letters from your senators?" I said "No." … They didn't tell me that I had to get two letters, my father didn't know about it. I asked my father, "Did you get a letter to … get two letters from the senators?" He said, "They would do it automatically, the teachers tell you to go, you go." He said, "No, my father got two letters and Bob (Warrington?), his father got two letters." I didn't get the two letters. So, in a sense I felt low down, no I didn't feel low down because already I was a naval cadet. … So, what happened came November 1st, 1942, I'll be twenty years old. So, I got a letter from the draft a week before. I said I'm not going to go in the Army because I spent CMTC, I know what the Army is like, I was in through high school, and then Fort Hancock and Fort Dix, I said I'm not going back to the military, I'm not going to march anymore in the military, in the Army. So, I'm talking to friends of mine, they said, "Well, go to the Air Force, become a pilot." So, I got my brother's Model-A Ford and I go to the Federal Building in Newark and I went to the Army Air Force, I go in and they said, "All right, take this examination." I took the exam, he said, "You passed. … Let me give you a physical," he said "you passed." He said, "We'll call you in two weeks." This is a Saturday, I said, "Tuesday, the draft board wants me." He said, "Oh, you're too late," he said, "we're going to take two weeks." So, up the hall was a naval aviation program, so I walk in

there. He says, "Take this exam." I passed it, gave me a physical, I passed it, he said, "Report to 90 Church Street on Monday morning--my birthday--November 1st. The draft notice was for Tuesday, nine o'clock, you have to register before that. So, I go to 90 Church Street, 6:30 in the morning. All day long we took exams until six o'clock in the evening, exam after exam, history, physics, math, whatever you can do. So, I get called into the office, the commanding officer was sitting there and there were two officers to the side observing my posture, my attitude, and how I behaved. He says, "You didn't write down the college you went to." I said, "I didn't go to college, I just graduated high school." He said, "Well, you did better than all the other college students." So, he shook my hand, he said, "Come back tomorrow morning, seven o'clock, and get your physical." So, seven o'clock in the morning I was there, all day long we're taking a physical, they did everything. I was five foot six inches tall and the requirements were you had to be, minimum height, five foot six. I said, they're going to measure me barefooted and, I stood up on my feet a little bit he said, "Five foot seven." I didn't want to be short changed. I was 5'6" anyway, but I didn't want to be a quarter of an inch short. So, I was five foot seven. So, all day long I'm taking the physical. They did everything. Next thing you know, they're measuring me for a uniform and suddenly I said, "I must be accepted, they're not measuring me for a uniform for nothing." Measuring length, shirt, size, neck, everything. Then they said, "Report to the captain." So, I went to see the captain, sat down, he went through everything, he says, "You passed," he says, "here's your card and we'll call you." He said, "It will be a few months because you have to wait for the next class, your naval aviation training is eighteen months of training. We'll call you." So, I went back to work and they called me on May 3rd, 1942, and told me to report to Colgate University. I packed everything and my mother says, "You're going to be a pilot? You're going to be up in the air?" I said, "That's what they say." My father never said much, he always said, "God bless you, take care of yourself." So, I got on the train in Grand Central, New York and took the train, the "milk train" I called it up to Hamilton, New York. It stopped at every crossing.

SH: With your mother being from Poland, what was the reaction when they heard that Hitler had invaded Poland in 1939?

[TAPE PAUSED]

AP: … My mother was used to wars as a kid, and that's why she left. My father, same thing. "There's going to be a war, it was going to be bad." My father in 1914 was drafted into the Army. He went to Virginia and they discharged him because his feet were too flat. So, he went back to work. Now, my brother Paul was too young at that time. When the war started, he just turned seventeen, but when he volunteered he was a machinist aboard the USS *Hornet* with Admiral Halsey as his commanding officer. He was in every battle of the war, eighteen months … preparing all the islands for invasion. He said he was down in the machine room, engine room, and the ship was rattling twenty-four hours a day. My brother John was two years older than me, he didn't want to be drafted in 1939, so he went into the Merchant Marine Academy in Great Neck, New York. … He got his certificate to be a captain of a ship. He went around the world during the war. … You had to make a trip before you graduated. When he got to India, the crew went on strike because they were eating mutton every day and they complained, we're getting sick and tired of mutton, we want a different diet. So, they went on strike, they wouldn't do anything. So, here they are in a harbor in India, they couldn't go any further, the war is on,

and there were a group of Indians that were drowning and my brother jumped in, he saved their lives, and after the war, Great Neck, the Merchant Marine Academy gave him the highest honor of the school. He was a hero. He finished the trip around the world and after a little more service, he said, "There are going to be more benefits in the Navy than in the Merchant Marine." He didn't want to be a captain of a ship all his life, so he joined the Navy and he became a commanding officer of an LSD, a landing ship dock, the *Lindenwold* in the Pacific Ocean. Paul was on the USS *Hornet* and I was a naval pilot in Kaneohe Bay. … One day I get a call from my brother John, he said, "I'm here in Pearl Harbor," he said, "I have to make arrangements for my ship to come in for repairs." I finished my mission, I went over there, I had a Plymouth coupe and in Hawaii, there was Pali Pass, the mountains, you had to go over, … my engine was boiling over. I went to Waikiki Beach and I met him there, spent the whole day with John at Waikiki Beach. At that time there was only King Street in Hawaii and nothing else and a few restaurants, and the rest was all military. So, John said, "I'm going to San Francisco, my ship is going to go there for repairs." The very next day Paul came in on the *Hornet*, pulled into Ford Island in Pearl Harbor. I took an SNJ trainer at Kaneohe Bay, I landed right alongside the carrier, I got out with my parachute, my Mae West, and all the sailors on the ship are lining the deck, looking. "What's this pilot landing by the carrier?" I went up the gangplank to the officer of the day, I said, "I'm dying to see my brother, he's been at war for eighteen months." He called, "Machinist Paraskeves," all the sailors got on the side of the deck, Paul comes up he said, "Get your luggage, you got a week off." He gets his luggage, he comes down and they're looking, they're looking, and I put him in the rear seat of my SNJ, I pull the canopy back, I said Paul, "Wave to your buddies out there," and I took off. I buzzed the carrier, I took him up and I did rolls and loops, I toured the whole island, we saw the big volcano in Hilo, Hawaii, and we saw Diamond Head, we saw the whole island, and I took him to my base. I said, "Paul, I got to fly every day, this is wartime." I said, "I got to fly every day, Paul and I can't be here wasting my time." … We had a townhouse, three officers in the townhouse, and we had a kitchen, refrigerator, we had two bedrooms upstairs and the three of us were living there. I said, "Paul you stay here, there's a swimming pool in the project, and my refrigerator is full of food." I came home from a mission and Paul is not there, six o'clock at night, where's Paul, he's not there. I go out, look in the pool, he's not swimming. I went up to the officer's club and there's Paul at the bar eating a big steak, about two inches thick, the bartender is Joe Swidersky from Roselle. His father owned a bar in Roselle and he was their bartender, for the officer's club. I said, "Joe, he's going to get court martialed, he's got my officer's uniform in the officer's club, he's going to be court martialed." Paul said, "I don't give a damn." He was eighteen months at sea, he said, "They can kick me out, I don't care." Joe said, "I'll take care of him, you fly every day, he's going to have breakfast here, he's going to have lunch and dinner. You come here at night and pick him up and spend the evening with him." I would fly every day and Paul was up there. I go home, I open the refrigerator, it's empty. … He said, "I ate everything." He never had any fresh vegetables, never had any fresh meat, everything was powdered, everything was seasoned, so he cleaned me out. Finally, I had a morning mission, in the afternoon I got off, we went to Waikiki Beach, he spent a whole week with me, we had a great time, and I drove him back. I landed right by the carrier and they greeted him, they saluted him. … He met John in San Francisco, and they celebrated. The timing was perfect of the three of us.

SH: That is a great story.

[TAPE PAUSED]

AP: During the Depression, President Roosevelt was in office. He tried hard to turn the country around formed the CCC, NRA, WPA, and so forth, but the recession continued right into World War II. Consequently my father in 1937 was out of work and lost his home. Times were really bad. Roosevelt set up a program to revise your mortgage but it never materialized for my father. My mother was always concerned about her sisters in Poland. Her sister Anna and Marie, she called them, wrote them letters, she was writing to them all the time because she was worried about them. … My mother went through several wars too as a kid, and she knew a lot of Polish people around Roselle, New Jersey and she was very concerned and always wrote to them. Fortunately, they didn't have any problem. … My father had nobody in Greece because one was killed in the war, the other one was missing, he didn't know whatever happened to him and the other came to America and his sister died, and he came to America. So, over the years when we were in college and working and all that, we told our mother, "Go back to Poland, visit Marie and Anna and go back." … She refused to go, she says, "No," she said, "I don't want to go." … Then, my father, we begged him to go to Greece, to Asia Minor, and my brother went there to visit all those places. I went to Europe, … we went to Greece, we went here and there and my father said, "There's nobody there, I'm not going to go." He says, "I made up my mind." We begged him, he refused to go, he said, "No, I'm satisfied here," so he never went back. … When Pearl Harbor started, … I passed the exams to become a cadet, that's when I went back and looked back to Freifeld. I said, he got me here, and I cried at that time. He set the stage. I would not be here today if it wasn't for him.

SH: He gave you time to think about your decision.

AP: In those days, you had to take a college course, you couldn't get into college, you had to take a language and math and science, you can not go to college [without them]. After the war when the veterans came back they modified it because nobody had that training, so they opened the doors, but at that time you could not go to college.

SH: What language did you take?

AP: I took Latin, and then, I took German. In school I took Latin. I took all that in high school. In college … because I wanted to go to medical school, I had to take a language, I took German.

SH: Did your family speak Polish and Greek?

AP: No, my mother and father were determined, English only. My father spoke beautiful English. I told you he taught English. My mother spoke, had no accent at all, spoke beautiful English. I mean when the two of them would talk, their conversation would be beautiful and that impressed us. The neighbors were surprised that we didn't speak Polish or Greek, not one word. I know a few words here and there, but never, and we spoke English all the time and she said, "No, you're Americans, you're going to speak English," and it helped us all the way. … She made clothes and she made her own curtains. … My father worked, he painted the house, he repaired everything. New Year's Day we would go to all our cousins, we would go to our godparents, Aunt Celia, then we'd go to Papacosta, because they had eight children. They lived

on the East River, and so as kids we had a great time. They had eight, we had seven, so we lived it up, all the boys would go, not the girls.

SH: Oh, really?

AP: Every New Year, my father, for good luck, would take only the boys because they each gave us a silver dollar, and he said, "For good luck, only the boys." We'd come home after midnight and my mother would greet us, but the girls didn't go. [laughter] … They were very young, anyway. My father would go every couple of months, he would repair all the machines, the sewing machines, the washing machines, the dryers, repair the ovens, he repaired everything. He'd go around, they all gave him dinner, he would go, three stops, come home after midnight. One time he went over there, came home and my mother opened the door, it was one o'clock in the morning, and my mother, says, "Garlic, the garlic, what did you eat?" He says, "You won't believe it," he said, "I went to Aunt Cecilia to fix her washing machine, she gave me spaghetti and meatballs with a lot of garlic. I went to see the Fexus family, I fixed their machines, they gave me spaghetti and garlic. I went to Aunt Sophie, and she gave me spaghetti and garlic." He got off the train in Elizabeth, got on the bus, and there was a big fat Italian fellow sitting next to him, he said, "I'm changing seats," he says, "where have you been?" He smelled the garlic. My father didn't know it, he didn't know why the guy is moving. He changed seats in the bus. So, when he came home my mother told him, said, "The garlic, you smell." He says, "Oh, no wonder they moved."

[TAPE PAUSED]

AP: … My brother John bought a Model A Ford as soon as he could drive, 1931 Model A Ford. It was a convertible, the roof went down, the windshield, you unscrew it, and it folded over and lean on the hood of the car, and we had a rumble seat. We went all over. In 1939, Johnny and I took the Model A Ford and went to Newark. We went to the Army reserve station over there, they were selling World War I equipment. We wanted to buy a tent, 20x20 Army tent that I slept in at Fort Dix. … Three foot sides rolled up, it came to a pointed top with an open vent and a center pole and the ropes holding the tent down. We took the big pole, put it on the front fender and the back fender, it stuck three foot out in the front, three foot out in the rear, we put the tent in the rumble seat, and we drove home. John said we're going to go, Saturday, we're going to go down to the beach, Morgan Beach, Lavallette, New Jersey, we were going there as kids every summer. A friend of ours had a cabin there, his mother and father, so we would go there swim all day, they would bring us in for dinner or we'd go to the diner. We would caddie, make sixty-five cents, we'd sit down and order a bowl of soup in the diner in Seaside Park. In those days the bowl of soup was a big bowl, and the soup was a meal, I mean they had meat, they had vegetables, they had carrots, they had everything in it, and she would give us one big hard roll. … The hard rolls were about four to five inches in diameter. We said, "We'll have another roll please." There were six of us, she'd bring six more rolls. So, then we'd ask for another roll, finally, she says, "That's eighteen rolls you kids are eating." We said, "We'll going to give you a good tip, bring us another six." We ate two dozen rolls with one bowl of soup. I'll never forget this. "Boy," she says, "I appreciate the tip." We went down the shore, we rented, for twenty-five dollars for the whole summer, we had a group of ten-twelve people that played golf together, and we used to caddie, we all caddied together. So, we all chipped in and we rented this place from

Mr. Morgan, Morgan Beach, Lavallette, New Jersey, we rented on the bay side, a piece of land, and we put up the tent and put in eight cots in there. Everybody found out, they found out that we had a tent down the shore. We would go down on Friday night, we were working, we graduated by that time, we went down the shore, it's Friday, Saturday, Sunday, sleep in the tent, go swimming in the ocean, go to Seaside to the amusement park, and go to that restaurant and get our big dinner with a dozen rolls. We'd go to the fish market and the fisherman would give us a nice fish, we'd make a little fire, we would take our five pound fish and cook it, we have a dinner. The neighbors enjoyed us because we weren't rowdy, we were very nice, but occasionally there would be twelve of them down there. Well, we couldn't sleep, we had six cots or seven cots or eight cots, we couldn't sleep everybody. So, in those days you could slept on the beach, so they took a blanket and sleep on the beach, some slept on the sand, some neighbors said, "Come on, sleep in our [house], we have a room empty." They were very cordial, and Mr. Morgan didn't care. For two years we had the tent going on, 1940 and 1941, then the war came. We lived like kings down there every year, John with that Model A Ford, we would go to see all our cousins in New York. It was eight o'clock at night and we're driving up 57th Street, and there's a big limo in front of us with a chauffeur. John's car had a high pitch squeak in his fanbelt driving up 57th Street in New York City on Saturday night. A big limo with a chauffer would stop at a red light and check the rear to locate that squeak. We all had a laugh. He probably was relieved when he turned off 57th Street. Between Pop's old farm truck up in Monroe and John's Model A Ford we entertained those New Yorkers. When I was in Corpus Christi, in the last stage of my cadet training I received a letter from home. My mother was afraid to write it, because it may have affected my flying. My brother Paul was on the carrier *USS Hornet* bombing Saipan, getting it ready for our invasion. My brother John was on the *Lindenwold* unloading tanks and trucks for the invasion and my cousin Kemon Papacosta was in the Army platoon that first set foot on Saipan. He was killed by a sniper, three relatives fighting together. Kemon worked for Westinghouse. "After the war you come work for us," he was working for them, "You come back, we want you back." … While he was in the Army, he got a hold of the M1 rifle, he was firing, he invented a modified M1 rifle, they were using it in World War II, and before he was killed he put in an application to be recognized for this invention. The family after the war went to Washington DC requesting the Army to give Kemon recognition for his invention. They got nowhere. His commanding officer took all the credit.

Growing up my father worked in New York. He walked to the Roselle station, and took the Central Railroad of New Jersey to New York. He had a commutation ticket for thirty days. As a kid I would walk to the station and watch that big locomotive coming in, stop and my father would be on the other side. I could see his legs on the other side, the train would pull away, there's my father with packages and groceries. He would go shopping in New York every Friday, come back with all these goodies. I never could keep up with him because he walked so fast, I told you he was a marathon runner. I got to love locomotives, the steam locomotives, the wheel would grind and pull away. On Saturdays, I would go to Ebbets Field, watch a ball game and visit my cousins, so I said, "Pop, give me your ticket." Now here I'm a little kid with a commutation ticket, I get on the train, the conductor would look at me--Depression years--he made believe he punched the ticket because if he punched too many times, my father would run out of days, he had thirty one days to ride, cross the ferry, nickel on the subway, go see my cousins, spent the whole weekend come back, same ticket, go home. We used that ticket both ways. I would go to the Walnut Street Bridge, take a tennis ball and wait for that steam locomotive, drop the tennis ball, it would shoot like a rocket up to the sky. I wouldn't throw a

rock down because it would hit me in the head--the first rocket that was ever fired. We got used to trains all the time, ride to Jersey City, take the ferry to New York, the Statue of Liberty was to the right, ride the subways to our cousins. For a nickel you could ride all over New York, go to Times Square, go to Brooklyn, walk to Ebbets Field, and watch Leo Durocher coaching the Brooklyn Dodgers. I used to sit in left field, next to the Brooklyn Dodgers Band. Then, I would go to Giants Stadium and watch the Giants play night games at the Polo Grounds, and then to Yankee stadium, watch the Yankees, all three stadiums for a nickel, and then, they played football at the Giants Stadium and Ebbets Field. I used to watch all those games, I used to sit in the bleachers. When I got into the service, I was at Colgate for my first stage of cadet training, my athletic director was Commander Ambrose who I used to watch play professional football. He would get up on that stand with his blue uniform, he had red hair and boy he gave us a lecture. We had to do five hundred jumping jacks. … He'd walk around with a crop and if you stopped he'd rapped you across your butt. Your butt was red. After the five hundred, we had to run a mile around the track. Our swimming ended swimming the length of the pool under water with our clothes on. We had a tough program. Commander Ambrose had us climb a hill with a cadet on our back. We were the best trained cadets throughout the whole eighteen months. They said, "Where did you train?" We said, "Colgate." He said, "Well, you guys are really in shape." When we got to North Carolina, they kicked a lot of them out because they couldn't keep up with the obstacle course or anything because they weren't in condition.

SH: Really?

AP: When I got to Union College, Schenectady, New York, my second stage, Mel Hines, the center for the New York Giants, was our athletic instructor. Every Sunday the Navy let him go out and play football at the Polo grounds during the war. Bud Palmer was a Princeton graduate playing for the New York Knicks. We had a basketball team, we were beating all the colleges. I would bring the ball up and give it to Bud Palmer and he would score. When our class went to the University of North Carolina Bud Palmer joined the best basketball team in the country. They were undefeated beating every team around, all the colleges and the military teams. My cadet training lasted eighteen months. Everywhere I went for those eighteen months I took a train. I went to Hamilton, New York, finished my training there, came home on leave, took a train back to New Jersey, got the train in New York, went to Schenectady, New York, came home by train, took the train from Schenectady, New York, went to North Carolina, home by train, took the train from New York, went to Norman, Oklahoma in the Midwest by train, came home on leave by train, took the train back to Oklahoma and went to Corpus Christi by train and from Corpus Christi I graduated, went by train to New Jersey. Now, I'm going to go to Banana River, Florida, took a train all the way to Banana River, Florida, came home on leave, took a train from New York, went to North Island in San Diego by train. Three thousand miles all the way across the country, sitting straight up in coach and when we got past Chicago, we stopped at practically every small town, the people came out, the bands were playing, they gave us the best food, they treated us royally. They couldn't thank us enough because it was in the war. … Five o'clock in the morning they were there, no matter when we stopped they were there. We took the locomotive all the way to San Diego. … Then, when I was discharged, I took a hospital ship from Pearl Harbor into San Francisco, and took the train home, and I sat down, the last time I started riding trains, that was the end of it. I calculated during that eighteen months of my training, I traveled fifteen thousand miles in trains. I saw the whole country the right way, sitting

in the train by the window looking out at the countryside. … It was the most enjoyable time. I didn't mind sitting. I crossed the country twice, going out, and coming home, and after that last trip I may have rode a little train here and there, but imagine growing up with my father with the trains, and then, riding fifteen thousand miles.

SH: Amazing.

[TAPE PAUSED]

AP: … During the high school years it was nothing but the big bands. They were all over from day one. During the Depression years, we would go to New York to the Paramount Theatre. They had a movie, a comedy, and a stage show. The stage show was always a big band, Gene Krupa, Glenn Miller, Tex Beneke, Harry James, they had them all. Paramount Theatre was where I practically saw every big band that existed until the time I went into service, you could always see a big band playing. Newark, New Jersey, big band playing, if you missed it in New York, you'd catch them there. … Then, when you went down the shore, they always had a big band playing at Atlantic City, the Steel pier. A friend of mine had a Hupmobile, we would drive down, catch the big band playing in Atlantic City. I had a friend of mine going to school, Butch Swintowski, he bought every record that was ever published. I said, "Butch what are you going to do with them?" Now, he goes into the service. He said, "I love them" he said. He got out of the service, he never listened to one, he lost interest, he never bothered with it anymore. His kids probably enjoyed them. In high school, when you graduated, you always went to the Meadowbrook in New Jersey, Cedar Grove, they had a big band playing all the time. We were sitting there one night, I was a senior, and we went there for our big night. Tommy Dorsey was playing and during a break Tommy Dorsey walked by, sat at our table and sat for the whole intermission. The last time I went to the Meadowbrook was during the war. My big band days ended.

SH: Were you a good dancer?

AP: No, I was the worst dancer, Celeste can dance, I can't. She says, "You have two left feet." When we were in high school, we used to go up to Lake Hopatcong, take your date and go dancing all night. I'm dancing, I thought I was a big shot. I can wiggle, so the next thing you know a guy tapped me on the shoulder, and he says, "Get off the dance floor." I didn't pay attention to him, so he tapped me on the shoulder again. I said, "Sir, I'm dancing, please don't interrupt me." I said, "Don't cut in." The fourth time he did it, I said, "Listen, Mister, no cutting in." He said, "Listen Mister, this is a dance contest, you're kicked out!" He said, "You're out, you're not in the tournament anymore." I thought I was a big shot. He said, "Get off the floor, you're out." My date looked at me, felt embarrassed. Going down the shore with the Model A Ford, John is driving and it's getting hot, got the roof down, got the windshield down, and my father is in the back seat, we're going for a swim. I said "Johnny, my feet are red hot. What's the matter?" He said, "I don't know." Finally I got a hot foot. The Model A Ford had a wooden floorboard. The exhaust pipe had a leak and it burned a hole in the wood and it was burning my shoe, I got a hot foot. So, we couldn't drive like that because the exhaust was coming in, we were smelling it. There was an apple orchard, so he pulled off to the side of the road. John said, "Get a dozen apples." So, I got a dozen apples hoping the farmer didn't see me. We put them on

the seat and I put an apple in the [hole], we had baked apple all the way down the shore and every time that would get overheated, overdone, we'd put another apple in. When we got down the shore, we went to the junk yard and got a piece of metal and screwed it in place to cure the hotfoot. We were always running out of tires. Ollie Story was our mechanic, he was the nicest guy. I took the Model A Ford to him, I said, "Ollie," I said, "We're running out of tires." He said "Well, go in the junk yard back there, get all the tires you want." So, I got six tires and six inner tubes and give him a dollar and I brought them back and told, "John, I got six tires." We had to carry two at a time, one on each fender. Whenever you get a flat tire, jack it up and change it, take the inner tube out, scrape the hole, put glue on it, light a match, burn it, put the patch on. The battery would go dead, we go see Ollie Story, we get a battery in the junk yard to replace it. In the winter time, we forgot to put anti-freeze in, the head froze and cracked, go see Ollie. … He would say, "Take the head off," he gave us the tools, put a new head on, give him a dollar and go on your way. That's how you worked in those days. A neighbor of ours, every summer when it was red hot, would take my father and all the boys to the shore. We sweated going, went for a swim and sweated all the way home. We all had to take a shower. My mother appreciated the break with the kids away. As I look back it is amazing how everyone and our neighbors would look out for each other, always willing to give a hand.

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AP: May 3, 1943, I boarded a train at Grand Central Station, New York, to begin my naval aviation cadet training at Colgate University. I felt so proud. My mother packed my suitcase with sandwiches and goodies. I mean, I was on that train eating the best food in the house. It was a milk train all the way up to Hamilton, New York. … A bus picked us up at the train station. Hamilton, New York is strictly a college town, farm country, one major street with all the fraternities on it. At the end of the street was the most beautiful inn, that's the only inn they had, and one movie theater. I don't even know if they had a restaurant, but we ate at the base. We went into the student union, they gave us all our clothes, and we had to march up to--the college was on top of a hill. The student union was on the athletic field with the gymnasium. The quadrangle was up on the hill. The most beautiful school, Colgate. The college was made of the natural stone from that area. This gray stone, big bricks, beautiful. I had a suite in the dorm, there were two bedrooms and a center study hall, and the bathroom was on the outside hall, and there would be four suites on one floor, Nugent, Noyes, Weiderman, and myself were roommates, two on each side. Every morning there was inspection at seven o'clock, and they would inspect the bed, the officer would take his white gloves and rub, make sure there's no dust and the windows were clean. It was a strict inspection. We were cadets after all, we're going to be officers. We had a study hall, ten o'clock lights out, studying is over. We marched down every day to the dining hall at the bottom of the hill to the student union. We had the best food, and then we would go to classes, and then at three o'clock in the afternoon we had athletics every day. Commander Ambrose would whoop us if we didn't do those jumping jacks, run that mile and swim. I went to my room and I tried on my uniforms, they fit to a "T," the shirts and the pants, I couldn't believe it. We had dress blues, dress whites, we had a green aviation uniform and khakis. Everything fit, I didn't have to have any adjustments at all. At noontime every day the commanding officer had all the cadets in the chapel. It was the most gorgeous chapel, and he would give us the orders of the day. The very first day he spoke to us, he said, "Listen, you're a privileged group," he says "we're going to take four hundred thousand cadets, only sixty

thousand are going to graduate." … He says that, "This is going to be the best course you ever can go through. This education is eighteen months, is going to cost the government one hundred thousand dollars each to go to through this training program and when you graduate, the first military plane you fly is going to cost one hundred thousand dollars." When the war was over I checked to see what the planes cost and there it was … ninety-seven thousand dollars, the first plane I flew, there was an article in one of my magazines. At the end of the session he gave us the orders of the day. We sang the Naval Hymn, the most beautiful song. Jim Weiderman, Joe Stanton, and I were classmates all the way through, and then, when we graduated we separated. But after the war, I was best man at Jim Weiderman's wedding and Joe Stanton came to my house in New Jersey and said, "You remember that song we sang at Colgate?" It was a gorgeous song, just typical for a naval pilot. We took ground school, we studied meteorology, aerodynamics, history and enemy planes. When I went to Rutgers, they gave me credits for the time I spent as cadets. At Colgate we had ground school, there was no flying. I took my final exams and passed and they said you qualify for the next stage. I took the train, went home on leave, and came back. When I came back I went to Schenectady, New York, Union College, it was right on the edge of town, beautiful quadrangle, another picturesque college. We began flying. It was 1943, it was September, I took my first flight in a Piper Cub. The rule was you had to solo under ten hours or you're out. Ninth hour, my instructor said, "All right, solo," plus all the other cadets that qualified. We would circle around and land, circle around and land. I came in for a landing, my wheels touched down, the next thing you know, a plane comes right over me and lands in front of me. I jammed the brakes on, turned to the right and I saved the plane, I didn't damage the plane at all, my instructor came walking over, he congratulated me, he said that's good judgment, he said that cadet behind me was too close and too fast. He was supposed to land behind me, but he was too close, he didn't want to hit me so he went over me and landed in front of me. I never forgot it. We flew one hour with the instructor and then one hour solo and every so many hours we flew with a check pilot. My final check flight, the instructor wrote, "Good Student." We did spins, stalls, and dead stick landings. The next stage they had a plane called the Howard, it was an open cockpit. The instructor [was] in front, and I sat in the back. There was a one-way radio, he can talk to me, but I can't talk to him. He said, "Let's get the winter gear." The winter gear in those days was sheepskin. The sheepskin jacket and boots and gloves were bulky. I couldn't get on my leg up on the ledge, you had to step on the wing to get in the cockpit. I couldn't get in the cockpit. I said, "I can't get in the cockpit, the clothes are too heavy." He boosted me, got me on, I sat in the back seat, he said, "Let's go." I went like this [with my thumbs down], I said, "I'm not ready," but he didn't look in the mirror, he didn't see me, he took off. I don't have my seat belt on because the clothes are so big the seat belt won't stretch, I couldn't get it to extend, there was something wrong with the seat belt, it was twisted or something--I had to untwist it. Meantime, he's got the plane up in the air, turns the plane upside down. I have no seat belt, I'm looking at my parachute where the rip cord is, I'm making sure, I'm looking down, see woods, I see a lake, I see cars so as he's turning the plane around he did a slow roll, so when you get up here you're hanging. I haven't got a seat belt on. I'm looking where to land, … I grabbed the rip cord, but the plane is going upside down, I'm going to fall out, I said maybe I can stay in the plane, so I took my feet, I braced it against the cockpit, the panel and I pushed myself against the back seat. Lucky it was all metal, it didn't break. I pushed myself and I took my arms and the cockpit was so wide, I was holding on the side, there was a little molding there and I was praying, I said get this plane around. Finally, he got it around. I was upside down in the cockpit with no seat belt on. I didn't tell him that. He

said, "Did you follow me on the stick?" I said, "Yes. Yes, I followed you." I followed the rip cord. We flew the Howard with open cockpit, it was cold. I passed that check flight too. In ground school, navigation was the main subject because you had to know fifty-four navigational stars and you had to know all the constellations. If you're in the Pacific, you get these books for the Pacific Ocean, and if it was twelve o'clock in the Pacific, you had to take your time to Greenwich, England. All the books were based on the time in Greenwich, Connecticut. So, if it was twelve o'clock over here, what's the time in Greenwich, England? You went to your book, got the longitude, latitude, and converted it back to your area in the Pacific. … So, when the war first started, the pilots, they took three months of training and shipped them to the Pacific. They didn't take navigation and they didn't take any ground school. One of my chief engineers out in the Pacific was a naval cadet, when it was three months they told him to go to the Pacific, he said, "I'm not ready." … He refused to go, they shipped him back, made him a seaman, and he became a flight engineer, he said, "I refuse to fly," he said "I wasn't trained." He said, "I'm going out there, I'm going to probably dogfight and I have no training." Anyway we were well-trained in everything. Navigation was a key course plus all the others. Now I left Union College and it was still 1943 and I went to the University of North Carolina, took a train to University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, beautiful campus, big campus, major college. Colgate was tiny, but they played major college football, but North Carolina was a big place. I get over there, it's only ground school and athletics, no flying. It was our major place for ground school, you had to pass everything. The ground school came to me easy, especially navigation, it came to me like nothing, I went right through it, I knew all the fifty-four stars, I knew all the constellations, I knew how to navigate, they gave me different things to calculate out, trips you made, you're flying from San Francisco to Hawaii, calculate, shoot the stars. You took tests and put us in a link trainer, we used to shoot the stars in a link trainer on the ground. You think you're flying, but it sits on the ground. …

SH: The training was on the college campus?

AP: Yes. Link trainer is a machine, you get into it. … It's right on the campus, and we used to sit there and you think you're flying. You take off, you land, you shoot the stars, and everything. I was taking ground school in North Carolina and athletics was very strict, basketball, boxing, wrestling, track, and so forth, and we had to run the hundred yards in under fourteen seconds. In my final week I had to run the one hundred yards under fourteen seconds so the instructor said, "We're going to make some adjustments. First of all, it's freezing weather, you can't take off your sweat pants, you can't take off your sweatshirts so therefore we are going to take one second off because of your uniform. We're going to take one second off your time because there's ice on the track," it was freezing, you had to run over ice. "We're going to take another second off because of the temperature." The temperature is cold, ice and the sweatshirt, so they took three seconds off, so if you ran seventeen seconds, you ran your fourteen seconds, you're qualified. So, they had an officer on one end and we were standing there, and I'm watching the cadets and the officer said, "Now, watch what I say, I'm going to say," … he had a handkerchief, "I'm going to say on your mark, get set go. When the handkerchief reached bottom, take off." I'm watching him, he's going like this, he's moving his arm down, on your mark, get set, go. The other officers at the other end, he had a stopwatch and when he saw the handkerchief go to the bottom he pressed the stopwatch. I'm about the sixth one to run. I'm watching him with his rhythm, watching his rhythm. He said, "On your mark, get set," and I took off, the handkerchief

wasn't at the bottom yet, I took off. I ran like a rabbit, I came down the end, they guy presses the stopwatch, he said "Who are you?" I said, "What's the matter?" He said, "You broke the world's record." I said, "What do you mean I broke the world's record?" "You ran an eight second one hundred yard dash without taking the three seconds off." I was fast in those days. "What's your name?" I said, "Cadet Paraskevas." "What college did you go to?" I said "I'm a high school graduate." He said, "Well, you broke the world's record." He said, "I'm not taking the three seconds off and you're not getting eight seconds either. I'm going to give you eleven." He said, "I can't put that down, they'll be coming up to me saying, who's that guy?" He gave me eleven. … We worked really hard in the obstacle course. Then, they said, "We're going to give you a survival test. You're going to go camping out, and we're going to give you rations." Everything was rations, little things, coffee, tea, everything, meat, everything, it was little rations, you had so much for seven days, we're going to camp out seven days in the hills of North Carolina and it's winter time. We get out there, we cooked a little supper, I don't know what we ate, but we ate something, I get into the sleeping bag and I wake up next morning, it's three inches of snow. I said holy Moses, but Carolina by noontime, it's all gone, all the snow is gone. Now we're out there, we're cooking, we had to make our own fire. I had the rations and I had coffee. Well, I wasn't a coffee drinker, but those cadets were. I'll never forget them, they loved their coffee, John Murphy and Robert (Roulette?) and there was another fellow he stayed in the Navy, made it a career, they loved their coffee. I said, "You could have my coffee," and I threw it on the ground so they all dove for it. One guy says don't touch it, and he took his machete, he had a big machete and he cut the guy's toe off his shoe. We had these heavy boots; he … didn't cut the toe, but cut the tip of his shoe off. You could see his toe. John Murphy, he said, "Don't touch that coffee," and he cut his boot. They shared my coffee every day because they loved it. We camped out for seven days, we survived. Then, they put us in the mountains. It was ten o'clock at night, pitch black, the sky was clear though, the moon was shining, pitch black and they told us, "The base is east of you from this point." It was ten o'clock at night. "You pick a star in the east," he didn't tell us where it was, we had to use our compass, find out where east was, and pick a navigational star, and you walk to the base. … They told us, "Every fifteen minutes the stars move, so if you keep following the same stars and it takes you two hours to get back to the base, you'll be heading south. You won't be going east. You got to change every fifteen minutes, you got to pick another star." That's how we were taught to find your way back to the base in case you're trapped somewhere in the islands or somewhere you have to get back, you'll know how to do it. Joe Stanton and Jim Weideman and I were out there and we got back to the base by one o'clock in the morning. … But it's pitch black, you're tripping on the twigs, and then you hear skunks, you hear animals moving in there, you don't know whether they were rabbits or tigers or what, but you say, "What's that, what's that?" Anything at night, I don't know what it is, it's pitch black. We got back, but other cadets got into town, they took a bus back, the others went to the wrong place and others got back six o'clock in the morning, and others never got back, they sent enlisted men out looking for them. They just got lost. That was one night we had to use the stars. … Then, the other time, … they told us to wake up and don't have breakfast, and they stuck us way out in the woods, daytime, about six o'clock in the morning, stuck us out in the woods. They said, "This is survival, we're not going to pick you up until seven o'clock tonight, you survive on whatever you can get in the woods." We went to a stream, there were some crayfish, we caught it, we made a little fire, we cooked the crayfish, there were some little fish we trapped them in a corner, we had a little trout, a little sunfish, and then, they taught us how to survive. They told us which vines to drink its water and eat the berries, if there's a vine climbing

a tree, they told us which ones weren't poisonous and which ones were. He says, "A good way to do it is you watch the birds, if the birds eat the berries, it's not poisonous, so then you could cut that vine and when you cut the vine, the water would pour out," you just sit on the ground and cut the vine and … you couldn't believe it the amount of water you can get out of a vine. So, you cut a strip that long, you carry it with you and you drink a little water, and you had to make sure it wasn't a poison berry. Then, there was some vegetation, they taught us which ones were edible, which ones were not, and you went around, walked around, and you're surviving. … They didn't give us any water, nothing, and lo and behold I said to Joe Stanton and Jim Weiderman, "Look there's farm over there." … So, we walk over to the farm, we sit down on the edge, ear of corn, and a little further up there was some tomatoes grown, and then along came the officer, he said, "What are you guys doing over here, this is not part of your training." He says, "Out!" He chased us off, and I thought he's going to give us an "F," but he said, "Get out of here, you can't do this." We were having a feast, so we went back to the woods, but we survived. North Carolina was very busy then finally in athletics you had to participate in one sport and you spent your whole three, four months in that one sport, one went into boxing, one wrestling, one basketball, one football, and so forth, at the end of the term they had playoffs, football, basketball and all that, and they graded you. … I was a quarterback on the football team, playing with those two hundred pounders. The football coach was from California, he said, "You throw a nice pass," he said, "you be the quarterback." I was a little guy, I was only a hundred forty-eight pounds playing with those two hundred pounders, but I played semi-pro football. … Anyway, I passed that, and then my written examinations, navigation again was the main course, history of Navy, and certain prominent people in the Navy, and I passed all my exams. … I got notice I'm going to report to Norman, Oklahoma, I took a train to New York City. When I went home, the town was so dead.

SH: Really?

AP: Well, there's nobody there. People were working every day, there's nobody to go anywhere. A friend of mine was home on leave from the Navy, Noel Cram, we went to Times Square, New York City, on leave. I had a date, he had a date, and we went to New York City. We got to New York City and it was raining. So, we wanted to go to a night club and the girls named a nightclub, and I said, "Let's go to it." We get into a cab, it's raining cats and dogs. I said, "We want to go to this night club." He said, "It's right there, one block," meantime he put the meter down, he says, "You're going to pay for it, anyway." He [the cab driver] drove one block, we gave him a tip, we paid for one block. He said, "There is it right there. You from New York?" I said, "No." We're coming home, I had my brother's Model A Ford, get to Jersey City, we're out of gas, and gas was rationed during the war, you had to have coupons. … We had no coupons. I thought I had enough gas to get to New York and back--I misjudged. Johnny didn't put enough gas in the tank. Gas was nine cents a gallon, it held nine gallons. We get to Jersey City, I pulled into a diner and walking around, I said to the guy, "I got to buy gas." He saw my uniform, he said, "You have no coupon?" I said, "I have no coupon." So, there's guy sitting there at the end of the counter, so he gets up, he walks around, he walks, he's looking around. He says, "Could I help you?" I said, "You know, I got to get back to Roselle, New Jersey. I'm out of gas." He looks around, he says, "I got a coupon." "You have a coupon?" He says, "You can get a gallon of gas." A gallon of gas, that would get me home. I says, "What do you want for that?" I thought he was going to say five dollars. "Give me fifty cents." I gave him fifty cents, I put in

the gas and I got home. Now, I'm going to Norman, Oklahoma. I get on the train in New York City. … Every time I came home I went to Grand Central Station to Hamilton, Schenectady, New York, North Carolina--Grand Central Station. So, I get in Grand Central Station, the train ticket is to Chicago, and then, Chicago I had to change trains to the Santa Fe to go to Norman, Oklahoma. Going from New York to Chicago was just a comfortable ride. Now I get to Chicago, switched trains, and we head for Santa Fe, all filled with servicemen, no civilians at all, and that train was a mile long, steam engine puffing away. When it went around the bend I could see the whole train. I was sitting in coach, sitting up, coat and tie, naval uniform on, and we couldn't roll the window down or you'd be black from the soot. The windows had to be down. … We're sitting straight up and we're stopping at every hamlet and they came out with a band … and the food. You can't believe the food they gave us.

SH: The townspeople fed everybody on the train?

AP: … They had stations and the cadets were feeding, unbelievable. These country towns of six hundred people gave us the best treatment ever. They gave us little things to remember them by, little pins to put on, and they gave us the name of their town. The mayor would be there, the councilmen would be there, and the people and the band. We always had a band playing, and we would eat and hop on that train, you couldn't take much time, and hop on and go down the road, ten, fifteen, twenty miles whatever it was, stop again, eat again. Anyway, we got to Norman, Oklahoma and now we're in town, we're there at midnight. We got there late. So, we had to sleep in a hotel, we slept till the morning and said, "How do you get to Norman, Oklahoma, the University of Oklahoma?" The naval base was just on the edge of the university. We were always staying at colleges, Colgate, Union College, the University of North Carolina, the University of Oklahoma, and then Corpus Christi. The base was just outside the campus, but we would go to the campus for certain things every now and then, not too often. In Oklahoma City we ask the people, "How do you get to Norman, Oklahoma, we're going to the naval air station in Norman, Oklahoma?" They said, "You take a trolley." We went to the trolley, it was one car. We get on the trolley, it was loaded with the servicemen and civilians. We get on, … the trolley takes off, and it's a single track. I asked someone how far is Norman, they said, "About twenty, twenty-five miles out in the country." We left Oklahoma City, we didn't see a tree, we didn't see a house, we saw some cattle and we saw oil wells, nothing. Occasionally, an isolated tree, and then, the trolley would stop, no man's land, and a civilian would get off. I said where in the world are they going? The farmhouse, way out there, … that is the farmhouse. They're going to walk over the field, the corn fields. … They are going to walk, unless someone's going to pick them up. Then we go so many miles, you go to a siding and let the other trolley going the other way pass us. We called it the "Tooneyville Trolley." I got to Norman, I settled into the base, got all my instructions. We would go off on leave on a weekend, that could be Saturday, we'll leave in late afternoon when our flying was over. We get on that Tooneyville Trolley, we go into Oklahoma City at night. It's pitch black out, the same thing, the trolley stops, pitch black, somebody gets on, somebody gets off, it's black, I don't know where they're going. We get into Oklahoma City, we spend a little time over there. Now, we're coming back after midnight, we had to be there for Monday morning flying. Coming back around midnight, and it's loaded with sailors, and they're feeling good. The trolley gets going and now they're rocking the trolley. The conductor stops the trolley, says you're going to get us off the track, "You guys stop that," somebody kept rocking, rocking every time they stopped, but they didn't do anything with them,

he just told them to behave. … We were the cadets and the people would get off again, pitch black, you don't see … even a light, and they get off and they walk. We rode that Tooneyville Trolley back and forth for all our breaks. I'll never forget that trolley. We got to Norman, Oklahoma, now we're flying the N2S Stearman, it's a biplane, and we're way out in the country. … In the daytime you look out and you could see Oklahoma City, there are a few buildings way out there, twenty-five miles away and nothing but farms. They had a tower with a circulating light and whenever that light was red, that means get back to the base in a hurry, a storm is coming, a dust storm, grasshoppers or whatever it was--we had grasshopper storms--or fifty mile an hour winds. You see that red light get back in a hurry, and also keep your eye on the white light that's circulating because you get out there and if you don't see the base, you don't know where to go because you have no compass, you have nothing, you have no radio, and Oklahoma City is too far away, you can't go there, there's no other airport, so you better know where you are. We get out in the country there, we're doing loops and rolls and stalls and everything else, they gave us more advanced flying and we had a landing area a mile square, no runways, land wherever you want, just land, put the plane down. One day the red light was flashing, fifty mile an hour winds were blowing, the plane is standing still. Cadets were called to grab our wings to hold us on the ground. One time I'm going to my plane and suddenly the sky was pitch black, I said, "Oh, my goodness, look at that storm," an enlisted man said to me, "That's not a storm, those are grasshoppers." Three-inch, four-inch grasshoppers, millions of them, took them a day-and-a-half to clean all the streets and the airport, we couldn't fly for a day-and-a-half.

SH: Really?

AP: There were six inches of grasshoppers on the ground. I never saw such a thing in my life. Then, we got out there another time, the red light flashed again, and the sky turned yellow, dust storm. Now, in the dust storm you can't see, we have no instruments, we had to get back. We got back in a hurry and the sky turned yellow with dust. The servicemen were cleaning the streets, grasshoppers and dust. We had to take ground school, navigation was again the main subject. We came at the end of the session in Norman, I passed all my flight tests, I had no trouble. I never flunked a check flight in ground school, navigation was the main subject, it was all afternoon, three to four hours of navigation tests and one day I'm going to breakfast and Joe Stanton says, "Your name is on the blackboard. The commanding officer wrote you a letter, you got a '4.0' in navigation finals." He said out of all the pilots, sixty-thousand pilots that graduated, I was the only pilot ever to get "4.0" in navigation, a four hour test, I knew the stars.

SH: Why didn't you save the letter?

AP: I never went to the front office to ask for a copy. I passed my ground school, I took another train. I went home, came back to Oklahoma, and took a train to Corpus Christi, Texas. I knew this country backwards and forwards. I knew every hamlet and I just read a paper and one of the magazine's headline says, "The best way to tour America is by train, in coach." … I said, "Yes, you're right." I saved it by the way, I got it home. I get on a train and go to Corpus Christi, King's Ranch owned all the land down there, thousands of acres. During the war he leased three big airfields to the Navy--Cuddihy, Kingsville, and Beeville. The cadets were split, so many at each base. You were flying the SNJ Texan, it was a fighter plane before the war and now it was a trainer. We had instrument flying, night flying, and emergencies and formation flying. The

formation flying with cadets was unbelievable because if you can get caught in their slipstream your plane will flip, your plane goes upside down. In Norman, Oklahoma, we had night flying. We're out in the country, you had to follow the white light of the plane in front of you, and look at the white light in the tower. On occasion, a cadet picked up a star and followed it only to crack up out in the country on a farm.

SH: Was it demoralizing?

AP: No, because they didn't announce it. Not seeing a cadet, we thought he flunked out. I completed my basic training in the SNJ Texan and all the cadets had to decide what type of pilot he wanted to be: fight, torpedo bomber, multiengine, land or sea. I decided to be a multiengine seaplane pilot. They only took a small percentage for this category. We took tests and I qualified. When I first flew the PBY Catalina, I though the plane was going to fall apart hitting those waves. It didn't take me long to fall in love with the seaplane. My career as a naval pilot from that point on was very dramatic. I not only flew seaplanes but I flew every plane the Navy had both land and sea, single and multiengine, including fighter planes and utility planes. I was constantly in the air, my log book is a story book, very adventurous. From Colgate to Kaneohe Bay I felt so proud of my tour of duty. Imagine during World War II, I flew thirteen different planes: Piper Cub, the Howard, N2S Stearman, SNJ Texan, PBY Catalina, PBM Mariner, PB2Y Coronado, PB2Y Privateer, C-46 Commando, PV-1 Ventura, F4F Wildcat, F6F Hellcat, and SNB Beechcraft. Joe Stanton immediately went into the Coast Guard and made a career of it. Jim Weiderman didn't pass his final check flight and the Navy made him an officer aboard a ship during the war. When Jim Weiderman got out he became vice-president of Litton Industries. I was best man in his wedding. Jim married a girl named Dorothy Powers. Her father Mr. Powers was president of Varick Pharmaceutical Company. He hired me during my summers off going to college and medical school. Every Thursday Mr. Powers and I played golf together at the Hudson River Country Club with presidents of two other drug companies. On the first hole they said, "The usual twenty-five?" They all agreed. I didn't know what twenty-five meant-- $25, $2500. I played my heart out and Mr. Powers and I won. At dinner that night they handed me twenty-five cents? I was in my last stage of flying as a naval aviation cadet in the PBY Catalina twin engine seaplane dropping bombs on Padre Island and submarines pulling targets. I passed my final test flight, my ground school was completed. I passed all exams and now all the cadets waiting three days for the posting of the graduating class. I can't explain the feeling seeing my name on the list. I was on cloud nine. It was amazing when I registered as a naval cadet, it was on November 1st, my birthday. When I took my exams to qualify it was on November 1st and when I graduated and received my wings of golf it was on November 1st! Admiral Mason pinned the wings on me and I saluted and he said, "They can't pronounce your name but those wings are yours. They can't take them away from you, congratulations." Now I finished, I'm going home on leave. … I'm now a pilot. I go over to the flight room, "Do you have any planes going to New Jersey?" He said, "We got a twin engine Beechcraft going to Cape May, New Jersey." I said "Cape May? I live in the northern part of New Jersey, Central Jersey." I said, "I'll take it." … I didn't want to take the train because that takes two to three days. I got in that Beechcraft, they dropped me off at Cape May, it was night time. I got to get to north Jersey. They said there's a train, I hop the train, it took me halfway up there, they let me off, I'm in central Jersey now. "I have to get to Roselle, New Jersey." "Well, you could hitchhike," someone said. I go on the road, a guy picked me up. He said, I'm going to Carteret, New Jersey

which was two towns over from Roselle, but now it's after midnight. I get up to Carteret, I said, "You sure you can't take me to Roselle?" … He says, "I'm going to New York." "Here's Carteret." He dumped me off, it's midnight. There was a night club in Linden, New Jersey, and I knew this guy called "Hot Dog," … he goes there to get a beer now and then. I said, "Let me call him up." I knew he wasn't in the service because he had a heart murmur. I called this tavern, … it was called the Roselle Tavern, I says, "Is Hot Dog there?" He said "Yes." I said, "Hot Dog I'm in Carteret here, come and pick me up." He came down and drove me home. … I got home two o'clock in the morning. I visited all my cousins in New York. The Papacosta family was living in New York, they were living on the East River where we used to go as kids. I go over there and Helen and Atis were there. They said, "Come on, we're going to take you out." We went night clubbing, they gave me "Alexanders," I began to feel woozy. I spent the weekend there, said, "I'm going home and can't wait to get back." So, now, my next station was Naval Air Station Banana River, Florida. I hopped the train riding down the East Coast. … I toured America. I stopped everywhere, Washington, DC, Chapel Hill, Carolinas, all that, Richmond, Virginia and all the other towns. I get to Florida, stopped at Jacksonville and I have to get off at Cocoa to go to Banana River. I'm on a train, I'm waiting, so I decide to get something to eat and the train stops, I'm having lunch. … They don't announce what station, I'm looking, I don't see a thing. Suddenly, the train starts to move and the conductor opens the door and says, "Cocoa." I said, "That's me." He says, "I'm looking for you on the whole train, you're the only one getting off here. There's hundreds of servicemen," and I'm the only one getting off. He pulled the emergency cord, the train stopped, now I'm a good bit from the station with my luggage. I'm standing there with two pieces of luggage, and then finally I see a truck coming, he said "Are you Ensign Paraskevas?" I said "Yes." He said, "Oh, we're looking for you. He came with a naval truck and picked me up and took me to the base, to NAS Banana River, which is now Cape Canaveral. We're going to fly a PBM Mariner twin-engine seaplane. We flew over the ocean, we were doing bombing runs on submarines pulling a sled. We dropped depth charges on submarine patrol.

SH: Did you see any submarines?

AP: We spotted a sub off the coast of Florida. We set our stop watch, drop a flare where we think the submarine submerged and then drop depth charges in a pattern hoping to make a hit and then look for an oil slick. We spotted a convoy while on patrol late at night and radioed back to central command. It was probably a supply convoy for German submarines. Suddenly, we're leaving NAS Banana River and only Cahill, Herb Kahler, Stan Davis and I are leaving for San Diego, California. I went on leave and took a train from New York to San Diego, three thousand miles across the country. I saw America the right way.

SH: Did you ask if there was a flight?

AP: No, we had orders. I reported to North Island, San Diego, a huge naval base, and was staying at the famous Coronado hotel. There were over a thousand pilots waiting for orders to join a squadron. I was flying the PBM Mariner constantly and they taught me how to use the Norden bombsight. Cahill and I went into town on leave, to Balboa Park, the famous zoo, and to Tijuana, Mexico. Helen O' Connell the famous singer was staying at the Coronado Hotel and her boyfriend, a famous Fordham University football player, he also was a naval pilot. I remember

seeing Helen O' Connell singe before I entered the Navy. I had dinner with Helen O' Connell and her boyfriend one evening. I would have been one depressed pilot if I never got into a squadron and remained at a hotel for the entire war not flying. I never realized this until I reached Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, and met a number of pilots in this category. That would have been the biggest void in my life. Yes, in the big band days, I used to go to the Paramount and hear her sing. She with her boyfriend and she said goodbye. The next thing you know, we're going overseas, we're going to fly from San Diego to Kaneohe Bay, three thousand miles over the ocean. I forgot what percentage of the pilots would run out of gas before they get there because they didn't know how to control the air/fuel ratio. They land in the ocean, and a seaplane tender would go out and pick them up. Stan Davis chose me to be his copilot. Stan Davis was a naval pilot, he was a fighter pilot, and converted over to seaplanes. He was a saxophone player with Glenn Miller. … We're going overseas, he said, but I'm not going overseas, I was going to buy myself a fish horn. I said "What's a fish horn?" He says, "A small saxophone. I want to play that out there because we're going to have a lot of time on our hands when we're out on those islands. So, let me buy a fish horn." We went into town, we went to a music store and the guy, he spotted one, he played it, he said, "What do you want for this?" Twenty-five bucks, he bought it. The next day we got aboard a PBM Mariner, we're going to go overseas, and we were loaded down with about four thousand gallons of gas and we couldn't take off. The plane was so heavy, it didn't have enough power, wouldn't take off. I said, "Stan what are you going to do?" He said, "Well, we got to take it in and talk to the commander, ask him to get another plane, this plane just won't take off the water, hasn't got enough power something is wrong with the engines." So, we brought it back and they said, "No, they need you on the Pacific right away," he said "you can't wait for another plane." He says, "You're going to go overseas by a destroyer, go aboard a destroyer." We got our orders and we're walking down the gangplank to the wharf to the destroyer, and there's a band playing *Sentimental Journey*. Stan says, "Let me go over there and say hello to the boys," I don't know who they are … , "but let's say hello, I played for Glenn Miller." He goes over there, it was Tex Beneke. … Glenn Miller was killed in the English Channel and Tex Beneke took over his band and that was the Glenn Miller band, he knew all the players. We had a long talk, Tex Beneke and all the players, we're shaking hands, and I said, "Come on Stan, we got to go abroad that destroyer, … they'll leave without us." He said goodbye with his saxophone, we get aboard the destroyer, we called it a tin can, it was a smaller destroyer, it wasn't a major one. Anyway, we get out there, the first night we hit the most severe tropical storm, you have, a hurricane. The waves were fifty feet high, we were under water for four days, the destroyer would hit the wave, the front end would be out of the other side, and we go crashing like this down, we'd be under water, come up, for four days. I was so sick, we couldn't go outdoors, all the hatches were closed, we didn't dare go outside, we would sink. I couldn't eat, I didn't eat a drop of food, I lost weight. Finally the fifth day, the water is like glass, the dolphins are swimming in front of the destroyer. I went to the head of the ship, and all the dolphins leading us to Pearl Harbor, and peace and quiet returned. I finally ate a meal, and we pulled into Pearl Harbor. Pearl Harbor was on the west part of the island. … It was Oahu, in Hawaii. Anyway, we had to wait, … they had to pull this metal netting in front of Pearl Harbor, open it up so we can go in, and there's all these ships and I'm looking for the *Hornet*, my brother, Paul was on it, and the *Lindenwold*, John was on it, but I didn't see any of them, and we pulled in to Pearl Harbor.

[TAPE PAUSED]

AP: They gave us clearance to go into Pearl Harbor. They pulled up the metal net and we entered. You never saw such a change in your life, all the crew of the ship got on one side, we were coming into Pearl Harbor. As we entered we saw the *Nevada* and the other sunken ships. … The crew was silent, not a word, because there was history there and the *Arizona* was there. [Editor's Note: Mr. Paraskevas is discussing the ships that were sunk during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 7, 1941.] … By the way, there was a high school classmate of mine, his name was Stewart Walsh, he was killed on the *Arizona* in Pearl Harbor. Here we are going by these ships and the crews made it look like New Year's Eve with all those sparks flying. You couldn't believe all the activity--not a word was said. We docked, got off and caught a naval vehicle to Kaneohe Bay. I went back after the war, Ford Island was all weeds, very depressing. I couldn't believe what I saw, they had the memorial there, the *Missouri*. They were impressed, but I was sad, because it wasn't Pearl Harbor, they let it go. We got in the special van and they took us … to Kaneohe Bay. Only one road went through Honolulu, King Street. King Street leads you to Pali Pass, which is the road that goes over the mountains. This is the shortcut going up the hill. You see the beautiful orchids, and flowers unbelievable, color, you're in Hawaii. The average temperature was seventy-one all year round. We get up this mountain to the top and the van stops, this is Pali pass, this is where the King, when the Polynesian tribe conquered Hawaii committed suicide. The new tribe took over Hawaii.

Now we're on top, we could see Kaneohe Bay, you could see the whole Pacific Ocean, beautiful view up there. We get in the van, we're going down. Well, if you want to see a suicide road, it's all … hairpin turns going from two thousand feet down to ground level. … There's no railing, there's just a little stone ridge and if you hit it you could break it and you're gone. The busses coming up the other side are scraping the brick. They have no windows in those busses in Hawaii. If it rained, too bad, you get wet. My Plymouth sedan used to get to the top and start to boil. You're driving in low gear because you can't go fast, you're driving first gear, second gear, it's overheating, and the busses overheat too. Today they put a tunnel through there, you only go up to see the memorial and the beautiful view. So, we got to Kaneohe Bay, the commanding officer greeted us, and he said, "You have orders to replace pilots in the Pacific Theater." But the commanding officer said, "We have a vacancy for three pilots, do you want to stay here?" We said, "Yes, let's stay here." We accepted the job, and I never left. It was the best place to be for me because I enjoyed flying so much. I was a flight commander at age twenty-two. In that squadron at Kaneohe Bay, I flew the three seaplanes, the PBY Catalina, the PBM Mariner, and the PB2Y Coronado. I also flew the PB4Y Privateer, PV1 Ventura, C46 Commando, F4F Wildcat, F6F Hellcat, SNJ Stearman and the JRB Beechcraft. We flew to Midway, all the way down to north of Australia, we covered the whole Pacific. I flew to Midway many times, to Johnson Island, to Canton, to Funafuti, South Pacific and back, and I flew to Midway with the PBY, the PBM Mariner, and the Privateer. I flew to Midway in the C46 Commando, the twin-engine utility plane. They're still being flown today. Then, out of Kaneohe Bay, I also flew the PV2 Ventura, the plane that Amelia Earhart was killed in, Howland Island, the South Pacific. We had multiple problems with that plane. I was flying all over the Pacific. I was the youngest pilot in the squadron. I was only … twenty-two at that time. Multi-engine pilots, some of them were career men, and they were older. Some had families, their attitude was different. I wanted to be in the air. But, I was the only one in the squadron who knew how to navigate. When we went to Midway they would take me. I would shoot the sun, give them a fix, tell them when

you're going to reach Midway, go to Palmyra, go to Canton, go to Funafuti, go to Johnson Island, I did all the navigating. Of course, a multi-engine pilot, you just sat in the cockpit, we would open the hatches on the side, you look outside, you see a beautiful day. … The greatest plane to fly is a seaplane. You fly the Liberator, the Privateer, you can't walk. … You have catwalks, fifteen inches wide to cross the bomb bays. You sit in the cockpit, because you can't walk, you can't open up a hatch, you can't look outside. The seaplane, you go to the back of the plane, open a 4x4 hatch and look outside. We had a bunk room and a galley. You flew all night, you needed a snack. I did all my navigating on the flight deck. The radio operator was on the opposite side with all his equipment.

SH: How many would be in a crew?

AP: We would have two pilots and a crew of six. On very long flights we had three pilots. I would navigate and fly at the same time. I would shoot the stars, the moon, the sun. I loved it and then I would sit and fly. Going from Hawaii to Midway the coral reefs are the most beautiful in the world, pastel colors. By 2050 they will all be gone, temperature change and pollution are the culprits. They're green, blue and pink colors, you can't believe it, and when you get on an island and go to the edge, you see thousands of tropical fish, the most gorgeous fish and when they see a shark coming, they all run. Anyway, I was flying to Midway, the commander said, "Get a fix." The sun was up, it was eleven-thirty, I shot the sun at eleven-thirty, at twelve o'clock, and a half hour later. I had a triangle, and I said, "You're going to land," I'll never forget it, "You're going to land at 12:26," and I was being cute, I said, "and-a-half." … We came in at 12:26, he called me back, he said, "Who are you? I've been in the Pacific during the war and nobody ever gave me a fix like that right on the nose," and he said, "you added a half second to it." He never forgot that and every time he went on a long distance he chose me as his copilot. They made me a flight commander, I had my own crew, but they still demanded that I fly with them because I did all the navigating. I loved navigating.

SH: What was it like to go to these different places? When you were there, the war is winding down.

AP: … No, this was during the war. All the islands were functioning at peak capacity. Every time the Americans captured another island the Japanese lost another portion of the Pacific.

SH: Some of these places are now considered secure.

AP: Yes, right. When I flew to Midway, you had East Island and Sand Island the Americans sank their carriers and bombed their battleship. Lieutenant [George] Gay was on a raft all night watching the ships go under. Midway had no air conditioning, they had the Gooney birds [albatross] on the island, now it's a sanctuary for Gooney birds. They breed there, they leave, and they come back and breed, nobody can live on the island, only the … government workers that take care of the Gooney birds and the nests. During the war we had to call a half hour before, they took a jeep and they ran it up and down the runway to get the Gooney birds off. The Gooney birds have a wing span of eighteen feet, they take many yards to take off. If there were Gooney birds there, by the time he takes off you're landing. They took two, three jeeps, they go up and down the runway. They get all the Gooney birds off, … but one of them will always

come and land. When we landed our C46 Commando we hit a Gooney bird now and then. The flight engineer would paint a Gooney bird on the side of my cockpit. I had twenty-four Gooney birds painted there, but he painted it with the wings open, and everybody thought they were Japanese planes we shot down. They said, "Look at this plane, shot down twenty-four Japanese planes," they were Gooney birds. I'll never forget that. The first time I flew the plane into Midway, they said, "You shot down all those planes?" I looked up there, I said, "Yes, this plane shot down twenty-four." I go in, I'm talking to people, and one of the guy's laughing at lunch. He says, "No, they're Gooney birds." I said, "Oh, you are kidding." The flight engineer said, "We're pulling your leg, they were Gooney birds," he said, "they're not planes." If you want to take a vacation on Midway, you have to work the whole week, you can't take less than a week, and you have to devote your time to the conservatory agency, and put bands on the Gooney birds. They nest, and then, they leave, they come back and nest again and leave. There were seals and walruses on the beaches. We used to swim in our underwear. We had no fear the Japanese would come back to Midway, the only place that was a little touchy was Johnson Island.

Even Funafuti was a little too far for the Japanese. The United States just isolated the Japanese and restricted their long range flying. They gave up islands, Guadalcanal on up, Canton right on the equator was 120 degrees in the daytime and cool at night. There was no vegetation. If you go on a vegetative island you need air conditioning at night. Palmyra and Funafuti were all vegetated, you needed air conditioning at night. Admiral Island, Johnson Island and Midway had no vegetation. It was cool at night, but we rarely had air conditioning so you tolerated the climate. On Midway with our windows opened we listed to the Japanese Morningbirds all night. You also had that queezy feeling that the Japanese were there. Funafuti was the only island with natives that I flew to. They lined the runway whenever I came. They loved to have their picture taken. They went fishing and brought back hundreds of fish. We lived in huts, we had no air conditioning. The refrigeration went out all our meat was gone, we had to eat rations for two days. At Funafuti they had a church when the Japanese bombed, the people said, "Oh, the church is safe." Everybody went to the church, they bombed the church, they killed many natives. They never repaired it. We lived in the grass huts on Funafuti. We lived in barracks on Midway. Johnson Island we never stayed because it was too hot and we just landed and took off, we'd rather get out of there, all that heat.

SH: What were you delivering?

AP: We had big planes, we brought a lot of equipment they needed, essential equipment. At the same time, we would patrol the ocean for Japanese ships. Admiral Nimitz was using one of our Coronados for his flagship from Kaneohe Bay, a four engine seaplane, lots of space, he was comfortable. Yes, he loved it, he made the Coronado his flagship. I used to … take a Hellcat, a fighter plane and deliver his secret material to Pearl Harbor and to Hilo, during the war.

SH: When did you report to Hawaii?

AP: April 1845 to June 10, 1946. I was flying to forty missions a month during the war and after the war ended I continued with the same enthusiasm because I was aggressive, but I was witnessing a change from wartime flying to peacetime flying and I decided to pursue another career. I wanted to go to college, my energy was at a high. On October 23, 1945 Lt. Cottrell and

I flew the first JATO flight (Jet Assisted Takeoff) in the Pacific. They strapped two huge jet engines, one on each side of our PBM Mariner seaplane. When we got the plane on the step I turned the switches on. "Wham," we suddenly were thousands of feet into the air, I couldn't move my head or body, I was plastered to the seat. I really thought the plane would fall apart. We're not a jet. They made a Christmas card of this flight with our plane leaving the water and the jets blasting away. All the servicemen received this Christmas card of this famous flight. On September 18, 1945, I flew to Midway and back in a PB4Y Privateer to Kaneohe Bay. Lt. Thompson said, "Come on, we're flying to the South Pacific in a PBY Catalina. Our first stop was Palmyra, 1100 miles south, a beautiful island, vegetated, no animals or snakes, you could walk anywhere. The bay was a major problem, it was a haven for sharks. Boats leaving California would vacation on Palmyra for weeks. A famous book, *The Sea Will Tell*, is a story of this drifter, he had a beat up piece of junk, went aboard this million dollar yacht. Suddenly the people disappeared and the yacht was repainted and enters Hawaii and his girlfriend said, "Where did you get this boat?" … She was with him in Palmyra and she recognized that boat and she had a feeling that was the same boat, the two people were killed. He put them into a cement block and drowned them in the lagoon. Eventually it washed ashore, and a girl walking on the beach sees these skeletons in this cage and called the authorities. … It was the two people that he killed and he's in jail, he took the yacht and he sank his junk, and he went back to Hawaii, and his girlfriend I think testified against him. We stayed overnight on Palmyra. We took off for Canton across the equator. I felt the bump. Canton is a man-made island. The small inlets have millions of beautiful tropical fish. There's a sunken Japanese ship in the harbor. Its 120 degrees in the day and cool at night, no trees. From there I flew to Funafuti in the Ellice Islands. During the war the Japanese bombed them killing many natives. When we got down there, we were living in grass huts, for water we had to collect the rain in large drums. You were allowed to take a shower only once a day. The refrigerator conked out. We had no fresh meat, we practically were placed on rations. They had a PBY that needed repairs but they were short of many parts. The commanding officer said, "Sink it." We got a Navy launch and a handful of natives and we towed it to the middle of the lagoon. We punched holes in the hull and it finally filled with water. We stood on the wing, it was 110 feet, the largest wing span of any plane. It took hours for us to punch enough holes in the wing to fill up with enough water to sink. The Navy called that huge wing "The Flying Ironing Board." It look four hours to sink it. I called the historical society after the war, said "I know where you can recover a nice PBY Catalina." They listened and made a quick decision. The PBY was in too shallow water and would be rotted away. They also had many PBYs. I would have been on TV.

SH: It would have been interesting.

AP: Leaving Funafuti, the war was over, and the sailors were waiting for transportation but the ships came only once a month. Thompson and I said, "What can we do?" We had a crew of six. Let's take some back on the plane. We put them on, then a few of them were begging, we took a few more. We revved the engines holding the brakes and then let go. Well, that was the slowest moving PBY I've ever been in, with all that weight we got halfway down the runway to the point of no return. We got to take off. You wait for that feeling of lightness. We reached the halfway point, I said, "Thompson it's still heavy, the plane is still heavy, it's not light." We got three-quarters, still heavy, I begin to feel a little cushion, but not much. We finally lifted off the runway. We raised our wheels immediately, we skimmed the ocean for miles and gradually got

up to 1000 feet flying to Canton 1200 miles east. Canton had longer runways as did Palmyra. When we reached Hawaii they were the happiest kids in the world. Johnson Island had a floating dock. The water was rough at times and you had to adjust your landing taking into consideration the direction of the wing, its force and height of the waves and their direction of movement. All our landings in these so called open sea ports we handled with satisfaction. The climate was so hot the crew would strip naked and dive into that cool Pacific Ocean. We would have two crewmen stand up with a rifle, one on each wing because of sharks. You could see straight to the bottom of the ocean and the sand is pure white and you could swear the water is only two feet deep but it's twenty, thirty, fifty feet down, unbelievable. The water in the Pacific is gorgeous, Midway, Johnson Island, Funafuti, the water is so crystal clear. I took off from Kaneohe Bay, one of the most gorgeous days, I went over to Pearl Harbor because I wanted to see if the *Hornet* was there or the *Lindenwold*, my brothers were on those ships, John and Paul. I wanted to see if they were coming into Pearl Harbor. If they were, I'd go over there and meet with them. That would be one of my first stops, then I would go fly out over the ocean, do my usual routine patrol, and then come back. Returning I couldn't see Hawaii, couldn't see Pearl Harbor, couldn't see Kaneohe Bay. There was a wall, black wall, like someone pulled a shade down. The storm extended high into the atmosphere. I couldn't see Pearl Harbor or Kaneohe Bay, both were closed. Just before I joined the headquarters squadron they lost three crews crashing into the mountains in similar tropical storms. Kaneohe Bay kept calling me on my fuel supply. I had to make a decision, make an open sea landing, my fuel was getting critically low--but the ocean was wild, the waves were monstrous, my plane would fall apart--or fly under the storm. The ceiling was only two hundred feet and the visibility horrible. Without hesitation, I decided to fly under the storm. No one does that under those conditions. I no sooner entered the storm at 200 feet when both engines quit. I dropped like a rock and bounced off the top of three huge waves. I made radio adjustments, switched to alternate air and got both engines running. I told the crew to take their emergency stations with your back against the wall facing the rear of the plane, if we crash you don't injure yourself. I got both engines running, I told the radar operator to set up the radar, he said, "I don't know how to work this radar." It was a brand new plane, first time we flew it out in the Pacific, new radar with new equipment and he never operated one like that--also he forgot the key, you had to have a key to turn it on. I said, "You didn't bring the key? He said, "I didn't know you needed one, we never used one before." I said, "You need a key to start it." I asked for a screwdriver, the screw driver wouldn't fit, the slot was too narrow. I reached in my pocket, I had a pair of rosary beads, the cross fitted right into the slot, I turned the radar on. I knew the island very well. North of Kaneohe Bay was mountainous, south of the base was flat land. I told the radar operator, "Tell me every mile on the radar." He said "Nine, eight, six, five." "When you get to three miles, give me every half mile." "Three and a half, three, two and a half." Now I said, "I'm two and a half, if you hit the coastline on the other side of the road are mountains, two thousand feet high. I said, "I'll give it another minute, I was a mile-and-a-half out from the island, I said, "I'll give it another half a mile, I'll go to one mile and turn immediately, there were mountains." I got to one mile, I saw the coastline, I could hardly see the mountains, I knew it was behind the road, I made a sharp left turn and there was Kaneohe Bay. The tower said, "You can't land the base is closed." I said, "Thank you, I'm coming in." I landed, it was six o' clock at night, I was out of gas. All my tanks read zero. I called that one of my greatest flights. The greatest pilot of all times was Charles Lindbergh. He's the only pilot to bail out four times and survive. He never hesitated. At N.A.S. Banana River, Florida, I was flying in a storm when suddenly a water spout came out of the ocean up into the clouds, millions

of tons of water. I took the plane, out it at right angles, my left wing grazed the water spout, two seconds later, I would have been gone. Tons of water fell onto the ocean and flattened it. You thought someone put a white tablecloth on the ocean. When I was in Norman, Oklahoma, … our airport was way out in the farm country. Oklahoma City was so far, you didn't even know it existed. You had to watch the tower all the time. Suddenly a dust storm would come up, yellow dust, then you see the red light, all the students must return immediately. Another time, I'm walking, I'm going to my plane and the sky turned black, grasshoppers, unbelievable, big ones invaded us. It took a day-and-a-half to clean the runway. Lucky, I wasn't in the sky. …

SH: Did you ever have to face a tornado?

AP: No. Night flying in Oklahoma was very touchy. You're out in the country, all farms with no points of reference, pitch black. The tower had circulated white light. We were making touch and go landings at night. You followed the white tail light of the plane in front of you and you kept your eye on the white circulating on the tower. A number of times the student pilot got a little vertigo and began following a white star cracking up in the country on a farm. In Kaneohe Bay, I was flying a PB4Y Privateer, four-engine bomber to Midway. We lost two engines going to Midway, but two engines is no big deal landing, but you can't take off. On a PV1 Ventura, twin-engine medium bomber, flying on patrol in Kaneohe Bay, a three-inch gas line broke loose, our plane was blue, it turned it pink, we came in with a pink plane on one engine. We shut off all the electricity, had no brakes and when we landed we had no choice, you either land and make it, or you crack up. If you land too long on the runway you crash up into the rocks at the other end of the runway or run into the ocean the other way.

SH: Was that the one where the windscreen broke?

AP: No, that's another one. I was on a PV1 Ventura, we were diving down from eight thousand feet and the cockpit exploded, I could have sworn a bomb hit us. I was looking for the fire in the plane, we lost part of our windshield, we had to come in without part of our windshield, but we slowed the plane down and nursed it in, and came in with a safe landing. On a C46 Commando, twin-engine plane, we were going to Midway and we let the wheels down, the right wheel refused to fall into place. I sent the flight engineer out to release the wheel because there's three, four different ways you can let the wheel down, he couldn't get it down, the other pilot was too big, he said, "You go out there." I went with the flight engineer in the wing, we crawled in through the struts of the wing, the openings are only about a foot in diameter and we crawled out there and there's this wheel well open, it's four feet by six feet, and you're looking at the ocean with no parachute, no Mae West [life jacket], you're a thousand feet, and you're looking at the ocean, and this big wheel is sitting in front of you. We said, "We're going to have to push it down." We pushed and pushed, I said listen, "When it reaches the top, let go, if it falls back fine, but if it falls forward and you don't let go, we're going to go down with the wheel." We got it to the top and boom, locked it into place and went back in the cockpit and sat like nothing happened. We got the wheel down we didn't have to make a belly landing on a C46 Commando. On a PBM Mariner, I got caught in a tropical storm in Hawaii, I couldn't get back to Hawaii, I told you about that wall flying in at two hundred feet and both engines quit and I got them both going while bouncing off three huge waves. My crew came in and one of the crewmen went straight to the priest. He said, "I want to be a Catholic for the rest of my life." … He was at the

dinner table, he was talking about this flight in the afternoon when everyone was told to take their emergency positions, he said, he was so frightened, he was only a young kid. … I said, "I was the pilot, father." … He shook my hand, and he said, "Congratulations, but he said he's coming in for services, everyday." I don't blame him. You know it didn't faze me one bit. I always thought of another way to get in. In other words, I'll get there. … Open ocean landings are not peaceful. If the seaplane tender doesn't get you in time, your plane is gone, it's going to deteriorate and sink. Flying an F6F Hellcat, my engine quit, I made a dead stick landing. I had six major emergencies during the war. I flew ten different planes during the war. I called the history department of the Navy, they said they checked their records as far as they could, they couldn't find anyone that had that record of flying that many planes in the Pacific. They usually only flew one plane, a classmate of mine was flying a PBM Mariner, that's the only one he flew, he never flew another plane. I came back from a mission in Kaneohe Bay, during the war, and I took the Hellcat up, went over the mountains, went to Pearl Harbor, I looked at Ford Island to see if any carriers were in there. Went out over the ocean, there's usually thirty, forty, fifty ships coming in and out. I didn't see the *Hornet*, I didn't see the *Lindenwold*. I went up, I was going to do a few rolls or so. Suddenly my oil pressure and oil temperature started to rise, it was getting higher and higher, I'm going back to the base. Now, I'm way on the other side of the island. I toned the engine down, took the excess power off, I regulated the props so it wouldn't use too much energy. I didn't want to strain the engine because if my oil pressure goes too high the engine gets red hot, and it will quit. I'm coming around the island and boy it's getting hotter, it's going through the roof, look around, I'm trailing black smoke. My engine is on fire, black smoke, the tower calls up, said, "What's the matter," I said "Why?" He said, "You're trailing black smoke." I said "Yes, I see it," and I said, "my oil pressure and temperature is going sky high," I said, "I'm coming in for an emergency landing." Now, I got to keep the wheels up because I'm at a thousand feet, if I let my wheels down and land in the open ocean, I'll tumble. I can make a belly landing and being a seaplane pilot I can nurse it down and keep the Hellcat upright, and just jump out of the plane and turn on my Mae West. I'm at one thousand feet, the glide angle on a Hellcat is eight to one, jeep my wheels up in case of an open sea landing so you don't tumble. I let the wheels down when I was sure I could make the runway. Suddenly I was a glider pilot, I landed, I had no brakes, I rolled to a stop, jumped out in case the engine caught fire. Flying in World War II, the roar of the prop planes was always reassuring, you knew your plane was functioning well, complete silence meant trouble. I lost engines flying multiengine planes but we always had another engine entertaining us.

On April 1st, 1946, April Fool's day, I flew from Kaneohe Bay to Hilo, the big island. It was early in the morning, when I left Kaneohe Bay, I always fly at one hundred, two hundred feet because once I leave Kaneohe Bay in my Hellcat, the next island is Molokai. Molokai on the eastern coast, their mountains go straight up two thousand feet and at the bottom, at the ocean level there's a peninsula there, and they housed all the lepers, people that have leprosy because they had no cure for leprosy and the skin, their fingers, they rot away. Father Damien was the priest, he was a Jesuit priest. He ran the leper colony, he caught leprosy himself and died from it, but he took care of all the lepers. They lived in these huts. The only way to get to that island was by Piper Cub and land on a small runway or take a boat because of the mountains, they came straight down, no roads. When I would fly on the eastern side of Molokai early in the morning, I would see six rainbows all the way up to the top of the waterfalls, the most gorgeous colors. April 1st, 1946, I left Kaneohe Bay early in the morning. I got to Hilo; I called up for clearance

to land, the naval base was right on the ocean, the southern part of the island. I was coming into Hilo, I got clearance for landing, I was at two hundred feet, my wheels were down, flaps down, ready for landing and the tower called me, "You're landing is aborted, take off, you can't land." I raised the wheels, raised the flaps and gave it the gun and right under me was the biggest tsunami that ever hit Hawaii. Alaska had an earthquake, huge waves left Alaska traveling at three hundred miles an hour, came all the way down to Hawaii, Hilo. They didn't get word of it, there was no warning. School buses with 159 children stopped to witness a strange sight over the water. Huge waves were monstrous, they extended high onto the shore. It was the largest tsunami ever to hit Hawaii. A few minutes earlier and I would have been swept away under those waves. I headed back to Kaneohe Bay.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: This will conclude today's session. We will start again first thing tomorrow morning, thank you.

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

Reviewed by Jonathan Conlin 05/21/2012
Reviewed by Nicholas Molnar 05/23/2012
Reviewed by Kyle Downey 7/5/2012
Reviewed by Angelos Paraskevas 7/6/2012