

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ALBERT S. PORTER, JR.

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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HILTON HEAD ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Sandra Stewart Holyoak: This begins an interview on February 9, 2004, in Hilton Head, South Carolina, with Albert S. Porter, Jr., Bud. [laughter] This is Sandra Stewart Holyoak doing the interview. To begin the interview, with my thanks, by the way, where and when were you born?

Albert Porter: Well, I was born in 1921 and, without trying to do the math, I'm eighty-three years old and I was born in New York City. Now, the only reason I was born in New York City was [because] my mother had some problems with birth. ... There was a specialist in New York City who took care of [the problems], but I was raised in Elizabeth, New Jersey. My father and mother were born and raised in Somerville, New Jersey. ... My mother's family had a farm that butted up against the Duke Estate, so, my grandfather and the old man Duke were very friendly. ... That's where my mother was born and raised. ... My father, again, was born and raised in Somerville and his father was a stationmaster for the Central Railroad in Somerville.

SH: Did they meet in high school in Somerville?

AP: No. I'm not sure how they met, because my mother, most of her education was in the South. ... Her father, my grandfather, had a, believe it or not, corset factory in Asbury Park and, obviously, he did very well financially. As a matter-of-fact, his claim to fame, my grandfather, he invented the garter belt. [Editor's Note: Mr. Albert is referring to a flexible band of cloth worn around the waist to which garters are attached to hold up socks or stockings.] You don't have such a thing anymore, but, in those days, it was an absolute essential.

SH: Was this your maternal grandfather?

AP: That's right, and so, they spent a good portion of the year in Florida. So, my mother spent six months in Florida, six months in New Jersey, and her schooling was back and forth; so, I don't think, socially, I don't know how my father and mother met. I have no idea.

SH: Why did they live half of the year in Florida and half of the year in Somerville? Was it due to weather?

AP: I think, well, let me put it this way; I have no idea why my grandfather wanted to spend half [the] year in Florida and half [the] year in New Jersey, since he had a factory in New Jersey, but, apparently, and, you know, that's one of the regrets that I have, I don't know very much about my grandparents and that's a crime, really. ... That's why I encourage everybody to sit down and record their life. They may not think it's interesting, but it's surprising, once you sit down and you start to talk, and that's a regret I have. I know very little about my grandparents. ...

SH: You could conjure up all sorts of stories, not knowing how your parents met.

AP: I don't have any idea. ... We have a picture of my mother and father when they were sixteen years old together, and so it started. ... They got married at twenty-eight, so, they knew each other for a long, long time before they got married.

SH: Was your father involved in World War I?

AP: No. It's just his age was such that he skipped both [the] wars.

SH: You were born two years after. Do you have older or younger siblings?

AP: I have an older brother, Frank, who lives in ... Franklin, North Carolina, and I have a sister who lives in New Jersey, Phillipsburg. There's just the three of us.

SH: What is the order?

AP: My brother is the oldest. He's eighty-six and I'm eighty-three and my sister is seventy-three. My kid sister is seventy-three years old.

SH: Since your brother is older, that may have been another reason why your father was not in the war. Tell me about growing up in Elizabeth or how your parents came to settle there.

AP: My father worked for the Chase National Bank. It was the Chase National Bank in New York. The name is a little bit different now, because they merged with a couple of other banks. ... He was with them for forty-five years and commuted from Elizabeth to New York for forty-five years.

SH: Did he go to college?

AP: No, he did not. He went to private school in Somerville. There was [a] private military school that was a high school and I don't remember the name of it. It no longer exists; let me put it that way. It seems to me, the name that comes to mind, and I'm not sure that this is [it, but] I thought it was (Nichols?) Military School. ... I could be wrong about that, but that was my father's education and my mother went to college. ... Now, my brother would remember this, because he doesn't forget anything, but I'd forgotten it, it was a Southern college, a small college, that she went [to], majored in music. She played the piano, and so, she was a college graduate.

SH: Did she ever, as far as you know, work outside of the home?

AP: No, no, she never did.

SH: What was she involved in?

AP: What was my mother involved in? raising a family and that's what it was. In those days, not very many women worked, unless they were teachers or something like that. ... I can remember, I'll [tell] you a very funny story, ... my mother was good on the piano. She was very good. So, he decided he was going to buy her a piano. Well, they didn't have any money and my father bought this piano on time, came home, told my mother that he bought this piano and she said, "You go back tomorrow and you cancel that order. We're not going to go in debt for a piano." [laughter] So, all her life, she never had a piano, but, any time she had a chance to sit down to a piano, she'd play [it]. ... I'll tell you, now, I'm way off on a tangent, but I decided that I was going to buy myself an organ and, if I bought an organ, then, I would take lessons on

the organ. ... This goes back about twenty-five years ago and I did, I bought the organ, put it in our living room in Jersey and it sat there and I never, never took a [lesson]. ... My mother would come up to visit and she'd sit down and play the organ. Neighbors would say, "Hey, somebody was playing the organ." [laughter] I didn't mean to get off on a tangent.

SH: That is a great story. Did your mother and father continue to live in Elizabeth?

AP: Yes.

SH: That is where you went to school.

AP: Yes, all through. You know, it's a funny thing, too. It doesn't happen in this day and age any more. It doesn't seem to happen, but I grew up with the same kids in the neighborhood in Elmora, New Jersey, which is a suburb, and went through from kindergarten all through high school with the same kids. That doesn't happen any more, because they're all over the place, moving here and there.

SH: Can you talk a bit about your memories of the Depression and how it affected your family or your extended family?

AP: Well, I can remember like it was yesterday. My father came home from work and told my mother that they had cut his salary another ten percent. ... That's the only one I remember, that another ten percent. So, there had been ten percent cuts before that, and my mother saying, "How can they do that? We're not going to have anything to live on." [laughter] Well, I have no idea what my father's top salary was, but he used to say to us, "Whatever you do in your life, don't work for a bank, because they're very low payers." [laughter]

SH: Yet, he stayed with the same bank.

AP: He stayed with the bank and, all through the Depression, he always had that job.

SH: This was one of the banks that was able to stay afloat.

AP: Oh, yes. It was one of the major banks in the world, the Chase National Bank, and so, we always had food on the table. We had a nice house in a very nice area of Elizabeth, and so, I can't say that they struggled at all. I can remember, growing up, people coming to the backdoor and knocking on the door, asking, "Have you got some food?" you know. No, we did; we didn't live high, that's for sure, and my mother was probably one of the tightest people in the world. Thanks to her, we made it through. [laughter]

SH: I just have to back up to this story about the piano. Did he offer to buy the piano before the Depression or was this after the Depression?

AP: This was before the Depression, soon after they got married.

SH: She had that bent already.

AP: He just felt that she should continue and he was right, you know, but, hey, as I say, my mother was tight and she didn't want to go in debt. ... Oh, we had a mortgage on the house, I'm sure, but, as far as going into debt for anything else, no, she wouldn't do that.

SH: Growing up, did you have contact with your extended family? Were your grandparents still living?

AP: I don't even remember my maternal grandfather. I can only go by the stories that were told about him. I was too young. We moved from, or my father and mother and brother and myself, moved from Somerville to Elizabeth when I was about three years old. I thought to myself, and everybody should do this, "What's the first thing you remember?" ... The first thing I remember is the smell of the barn, because they had this farm in Somerville. That's the smell of the barn, and the second thing I remember is a neighbor, when we moved to Elizabeth, chasing me down the driveway. That's the second thing I remember. [laughter]

SH: Why was he chasing you? [laughter]

AP: I don't know. I was a new boy on the block, you know, and I was only about, at that time, three years old.

SH: Great stories. Did your mother and father have brothers and sisters?

AP: My mother had three brothers and she was the only girl and my father had two sisters and three brothers.

SH: Did they live around the Elizabeth or Somerville area?

AP: I don't know what the story is on that, but ... my father's brothers and sisters all ended up in Elizabeth, New Jersey. Now, why, I have no idea and my mother's two brothers ended up in, two of the brothers, ... Florida and heavily into real estate and did very, very well, as a matter-of-fact. The other brother, two brothers ended up in Florida, and the other brother was in World War I and wounded and came back, ... had a pension, a lifetime pension, and married a girl from Canada, who was French-Canadian. That's another story.

SH: [laughter] Did you all gather for holidays, like Christmas and New Year's?

AP: Yes, and one of my father's sisters always seemed to be the one that got all the family together for Christmas or Thanksgiving dinners, you know. ... That sister, Lulu, married a very, very religious person and, always at the family reunions, my first exposure to somebody saying grace. That's something we just didn't happen to do in our family, but, in this family gathering, he always said grace and [it] always ended up as a sermon, you know. [laughter]

SH: Did your family attend church?

AP: Oh, yes, I'm a lifelong Episcopalian, so is my father and mother, and the only reason I'm Episcopalian is, that's what I was brought up as, yes, always attended church.

SH: Did you become an acolyte [an alter server in the Episcopal Church]?

AP: In the small church in Elizabeth, All Saints Church in Elmora, and it was a very small church. So, my father ended up in the vestry and my brother and I both sang in the choir. We both acted as acolytes, you know, on the altar. I never knew what I was doing, but that's the way it was. [laughter] Oh, yes, I can't say that I'm the most religious person in the world, but I still go to church.

SH: What about your education? You said you went to Elmora.

AP: Well, I started with the Elmora Elementary School, which is only a couple of blocks from our house, and that took me through the sixth grade. ... Then, I went to junior high school, it was Alexander Hamilton Junior High School, in Elizabeth and that was a three-year school, and then, [to] Thomas Jefferson High School, which is only a three-year high school. ...

SH: That was strictly an all-boys school, right?

AP: Yes, it was. I'll tell you, my brother and I always kidded my father and mother, I said, "You searched all over the United States for a town that separated the boys from the girls when they got interested in each other," you know. [laughter] So, our education was retarded. [laughter] Yes, it was an all-boys school. I was very active in athletics and I was a catcher on the high school baseball team, played on the soccer team, played in the band. I played the saxophone. My brother played the drums.

SH: Really?

AP: Oh, yes, and so, my mother always felt that we should have a musical education or something. ... It was junior high school where they gave you the opportunity to pick an instrument and they teach you how to play it. So, for some reason, I picked the saxophone, terrible instrument to play by itself, you know, to amuse yourself; it's not a very [good instrument], anyway. I ended up playing in that junior high school band and in the high school band. I wasn't very good.

SH: What about your academic course? What were you heading towards?

AP: I took, in high school, [what was] called the college preparatory. [laughter] I've got to tell you another funny story. My brother always felt he was smarter than I am and, to this day, he feels [that] he's smarter.

SH: That is an older sibling's right, you know.

AP: And so, I give my brother a lot of credit for how much I achieved in school. I wasn't a brilliant student, don't misunderstand me, but he always said, "Chemistry, you'll flunk it,

because you're not smart enough. Physics, you have no chance," and he said, "French, forget it," and all those things; ... at college preparatory, you had to take those courses. Well, I was determined to, by God, because my brother flunked chemistry and he ended up with a special diploma. He had enough credits, but it's called a special diploma. ... I ended up with a college preparatory diploma and chemistry. [laughter] My next-door lifelong friend, Bobby Smith, had a pool table, the regulation-sized pool table, down in his cellar, and so, that became a gathering place, you know, for the kids and we all played pool. I was brought up on a pool table, and so, right ... close to us was one of our chemistry teachers in high school and he played pool with us. His name was Davidson, ... incidentally, the best teacher that I have ever been exposed to, *ever*. I can remember, ... he's playing pool, he's lining up a shot, ... when we could pick our teachers as a senior and there were three chemistry teachers, and he said, "You know, you boys can pick your chemistry teacher and there is no question who you're going to pick." [laughter] Still on that subject, I say he was ... the best teacher I've ever been exposed to and he used to be working on a problem on the board, a chemistry problem, [and] he'd turn to the class and say, "Now, does everybody here understand how far I've gone, everybody?" and he'd look at me or Bobby Smith, who was in the same class, and he'd say, "Bob, okay, I know you don't understand. I'll start over," and, I tell you, he was just fantastic. Anyway, I ended up as one of the highest [scoring students]; I did better in that class than any other classes. In some of the others, I struggled, like physics. ... [laughter]

SH: Were you planning to go right to college out of high school?

AP: I planned on going to college right from day one and, I don't remember, all I knew is, I was going to go to college. ... I knew my parents couldn't afford to send me to college, and so, my plan was to work my way through college and I hoped I would get a baseball scholarship. I was not blowing my own horn, but I was pretty good as a catcher, too small to be a catcher, but, anyway, I had a chance to; Duke University took a look at me and NYU and both said, you know, "If you make the team, we'll pick up;" they wouldn't guarantee me anything. Anyway, that was my plan, and then, we're up to almost World War II then. Then, when I got out of high school, I said to my father, "Look, I want to go to college," and he said, "Well, I can get you a job at National City Bank in New York." ... He said, "I don't expect any money from you at all, as long as you save for your college and anytime you feel that, ... now, you can go, you're on your own." I worked for National City [Bank] for one year, and then, I went to work for what turned out to be a defense contractor, Elastic Stop Nut Corporation in Union. Now, this was a corporation that was started by a Swede who invented this locknut and the locknut had a fiber collar that, when you put that nut on, the more vibration, the tighter the nut got. So, it couldn't work itself off. Well, the government went nuts over that lock. Every airplane, to this day, has elastic stop nuts, by the thousands. So, I went to work for them, and then, of course, the war came.

SH: Had your brother gone the same route as you?

AP: No. His first job was with US Rubber Company in New York and, I remember, he made twelve dollars-and-fifty cents a week and we're talking, now, of 1937. That kind of money is alien to you or anybody else.

SH: However, at that time ...

AP: At that time, [it was okay] and my brother made sure he spent every nickel.

SH: Did he?

AP: Absolutely.

SH: Did he move out of the house after he graduated?

AP: No, no.

SH: The rules did not apply to him. They applied to you. [laughter]

AP: I tell you; well, my brother is a special breed of cat. He couldn't take care of money then and, to this day, he doesn't know what to do with money, except spend it. He ... used to get paid on Friday, and then, he'd have to get a commutation ticket, Monday train to New York, and, by Monday, he didn't have the money. ... He'd come to me, you know, and I was like my mother, tight as [can be], and I always had money and he'd come to me and [say], "Bud, hey, I've got to buy a commutation ticket. Can you lend me [the money]?" I'd forgotten how much it cost. I said, "Oh, sure, sure," and, religiously, when he got paid on Friday, he'd pay me back, always paid me back. Then, I got tired of this; ... so, I said, "Hey, I've got to teach him a lesson." So, I said, "Buzz," that's his nickname, "Buzz," I said, "Listen, you're going to have to pay me interest, ten percent interest." He said, "Okay." It didn't bother him. [laughter]

SH: That is the lesson, right? [laughter]

AP: So, anyway, he didn't go to [college]. He ended up with US Rubber and did very well for himself. Then, ... he had a chance to buy his own tire business in Red Bank, New Jersey, which he did, very successful in that, too, and then, he got the real estate bug and decided that the tire business was too much of a problem, as far as employees were concerned, and he decided, then, to move to Florida.

SH: Was he in World War II? Was he deferred because of work?

AP: He was in the Navy.

SH: You switched from that bank to the nut ...

AP: Elastic Stop Nut.

SH: I got the nut part. [laughter]

AP: Fabulous company. I'll tell you, it was a fabulous experience.

SH: Either one of you, working in those industries, would you not have been exempt from the draft?

AP: Well, I was; I worked, no, no. Well, let me put it this way, neither one of us wanted to be exempt, anyway. I wouldn't even have considered it. I always say, I'm sure I'm right, that World War II was the last time, and maybe the first time, that this country was ever completely united. Everybody wanted to [serve]. All they had to do was wave the flag and play some music and I was ready to go. ... Elastic Stop Nut gave me and everybody else that went in the service from Elastic Stop Nut, paid us twenty-five percent of our weekly salary for a year.

SH: That is amazing. You graduated in 1939.

AP: '39, from high school.

SH: When you were graduating from high school, were you aware of what was going on in Europe?

AP: In 1939, I was convinced that, eventually, we were going to get involved in that war and, ... from the time I was about seven or eight years old, and we're going back now, my father took my brother and I out to a farmer's field in Kenilworth, New Jersey, where World War I flyers were barnstorming and giving acrobatic demonstrations and I can remember thinking to myself, "That's what I want to do. I want to fly." So, from that day on, that's what I had in the back of my mind. Now, to go into the military, and I don't care whether it was Navy or Army, you had to have at least two years of college. So, when I graduated from high school, my goal, I had a goal [to] get the two years of college, eventually, and then, I would try to get into the Navy flying program. That's another story and we'll get to that. ... So, that was my plan.

SH: What about Lindbergh? Where did he fit in your plan?

AP: Anybody who flew, I was interested in. I was very interested. That was 1927. I was only six years old, yes, six years old, and I remember that flight, because I was always, ... I guess I say I wanted to fly when I was seven or eight years old, maybe it was even earlier than that, because I can remember the Lindbergh flight and anything to do with flying.

SH: Was your family involved in politics and what did they think of Roosevelt?

AP: Oh, yes, God bless my father. I was home on a furlough and I don't remember what term Roosevelt was running [for]. I have to look at history now, it was the third [fourth] term or whatever, and so, I was home on furlough. My father asked me, ... "The people in the service, how are they going to vote?" I said, "I would guess ninety percent are going to vote for Roosevelt." "What? What?" He said, "I haven't talked to anybody who's going to vote for Roosevelt. Nobody is going to vote for Roosevelt." I said, "Dad, your problem is, working on Wall Street, you've never met a Democrat." [laughter] So, he was a rock-ribbed Republican. I guess my political philosophy is more Republican than Democratic, but I like to think I'm ... an independent. I voted for Roosevelt.

SH: You did not tell Dad, right? [laughter]

AP: He'd have disowned me. [laughter]

SH: Did your family get involved in local politics?

AP: Not really, no. I wouldn't say actively, no, no. You know, that reminds me of something. [In] our graduating class, which was all boys, as you know, there were only four blacks, of the four hundred who graduated, four blacks. Another story, my mother's brother, who lived in Florida and married a native Floridian, they were up visiting my mother and father when I was just graduating from high school. ... They were playing cards. My mother and father are great card players and they could play any card game in the world. ... They're playing cards with my uncle and aunt and I don't know how we got started on the conversation, but I used to like to zing my uncle and aunt, because they were, you talk about anti-black, oh, man. ... So, I used to like to zing [them] about that and I said to them, you know, "We only had four blacks in our graduating class of over four hundred," and I said, "The president of our senior class is black," and my aunt went absolutely ape. She said, "How can that happen?" I said, "Well," and I said his name was John (Harford?) and I said, "[He is] a very, very intelligent black and personable black, a great guy." Every time I mentioned how good this black was, she went crazy. They used to call them darkies, you know, darkies. They had black servants back there in Florida. You get me off on tangents. You keep reminding me of things. Where were we? [laughter]

SH: I was asking about the political scene in Elizabeth and how involved you were in that, as a family or just your parents.

AP: Not really actively. They voted, but, you know, [they did not run for office].

SH: Would you have considered Elizabeth a Democratic town at that point?

AP: I can remember one Republican mayor. His name was Williams, but I'd have to think, most of the time, it was a Democratic mayor. I started to talk about [the] four blacks. The way that the demographics have changed now, I'm sure if I went back to Elizabeth, in the high school, I'd probably find fifty percent of them black or Puerto Rican or Hispanics, you know. That's the way things have changed and I think for the better.

SH: In 1940, the draft comes along. You must have been right at the age of twenty-one, if my math is correct.

AP: Yes, yes.

SH: I think it was in October of 1940.

AP: I was born in February.

SH: Did you have to register right away?

AP: You know, it's strange, I don't remember registering for the draft, but I must have. I must have, I just don't remember that. I knew I wasn't going to get drafted; I was going to enlist. I wanted to go in the Air Force.

SH: This was before Pearl Harbor.

AP: This is before Pearl Harbor. ... My plan was to get the two years of college, then, join the Navy, learn to fly and, after that, then, I'd become a commercial airline pilot. I had it all figured out.

SH: Big plan here. [laughter]

AP: Oh, yes, sure, sure. Anyway, so, let's, I guess, go to [the war].

SH: I was going to say, when you registered for the draft, many people realized that they did not want to be in the infantry, so, they tried to get into the Air Force or ...

AP: Oh, a great many who registered for the draft didn't want to be drafted. They wanted to have a service of their choice and I don't know what the numbers are, the percentages, but a great number of them didn't wait to get drafted.

SH: You do not remember registering for the draft.

AP: I must have, but, you know, I just don't [remember].

SH: Did you try to join the Civil Air Patrol or something like that?

AP: I should have, but I didn't. That's a mistake I made. I'll get into that.

SH: What do you remember about Pearl Harbor?

AP: I can remember coming out of a movie. I had a date with a girl, ... and I'm very happily married, don't misunderstand me, not to this particular person, but she was a lifelong friend of mine, and, at that time, we were both, I'm not sure of the age, eighteen, maybe eighteen, nineteen, something. I'm a little off. Anyway, we came out of a movie and we hear this, somebody; they used to have extra papers, "Pearl Harbor Bombed." I said, "Where is Pearl Harbor? I've never heard of Pearl Harbor. Where is Pearl Harbor?" She didn't know. Nobody knew where Pearl Harbor was and that's when I first learned about it and I was, at that time, working for Elastic [Stop Nut]. So, as soon as that happened, then, I was going to enlist. I wasn't going to wait.

SH: Chronologically, then ...

AP: I did wait about a year, because I was twenty-one years old when I went into the Air Corps.

SH: That may explain it, because you would not have been twenty-one until the following year.

AP: Thank you.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: When we paused, we did our math and realized that Mr. Porter would not have turned twenty-one until the October following Pearl Harbor and that explains why you had not enlisted yet. According to your pre-interview survey, it is in October, when you would have turned twenty-one, that you applied to the Air Force. Please, continue.

AP: I was convinced. Now, of course, they dropped the two-year college requirement, because they needed Air Force people by the thousands, and so, when that was dropped off, all we had to do was take a written exam and pass a physical, which I did, but I wanted to join the Navy. Now, I don't know why I had it for the Navy, because none of my family; my brother was in the Navy. He had enlisted before Pearl Harbor. ...

SH: Do you know where he was when Pearl Harbor happened?

AP: ... When he joined the Navy, they gave him a rate right away, because he had had a lot of business experience at that time, not a lot, but some. So, he went in as a third class petty officer. His orders were to Guam. Now, this is before Pearl Harbor, so, he's on his way to Guam, [took a] train out to San Francisco. They got as far as San Francisco when Pearl Harbor happened. So, they stopped them in San Francisco. So, he spent two years in San Francisco, in the Navy office there, and he and four other sailors rented a penthouse apartment in San Francisco. ... That's where he spent two years and, of course, he met his wife out there, and then, he wanted me to be best man. Now, I'm working for Elastic Stop Nut and he said, "I'm going to get married and I want you to come out here and be my best man." So, I went to the vice-president of Elastic Stop Nut and I said, "I need some time off and I want to go out to be my brother's best man," and he said, "We can't let you do that. We need you here." I said, "Well, then, I quit." "Oh," he said, "but you can't do that, either." So, he said, "Well, okay, go ahead, but come back." So, I went out and stayed with those other sailors in their penthouse apartment.

SH: Is that perhaps why you changed your mind? [laughter]

AP: No, no. Okay, getting back, so, then, I started to think, "Wait a minute, wait a minute, all Navy pilots have;" I thought all Navy pilots took off from carriers and landed on carriers, which isn't true, but that's what I thought and I thought, "Oh, wait, you know, I'm not smart enough for that. So, I'm going to have to go to the Army Air Corps. I need a railroad or a river to follow in." So, that's how I joined the Army as a cadet in their flying program. I started as what you called an aviation cadet.

SH: You talked about your love of flying. Had you ever gone up in an airplane before?

AP: No. The first time I ever flew in an airplane was in primary flight school. I tell you, I couldn't wait, I couldn't wait.

SH: You talked about your trip to California, to your brother's wedding. Did your family go along or was it just you?

AP: Just myself.

SH: Had you done any traveling as a young man in New Jersey?

AP: No. That's another thing, in that day and age, very few people did a lot of traveling, you know, the money, didn't have the money. It was the war that changed everything. Now, you had money, but that was my first experience, first and only experience, in traveling by train, having a Pullman car, dining car, you know. This was a new experience, a great experience.

SH: Were there a lot of servicemen on the train?

AP: Yes.

SH: What about the Boy Scouts or any organizations like that?

AP: Oh, I was in the Boy Scouts. Yes, I joined the Boy Scouts, Troop 6 in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

SH: Did you go to any jamborees or camps?

AP: No, no. I was not a very good Scout. I joined because everybody else joined [laughter] and one of my good friends, well, he was a little older, but we were in the same group of kids, he was a couple of years older, Dick (Cole?), ended up as an Eagle Scout. ... Eagle Scout, now, that's the top and I always thought about Dick Cole as being, "Boy, he's above [all], you know, intelligent, personable, great guy, born leader," all that kind of thing, but, anyway, that was, you know, [the Scouts].

SH: In October, when you enlisted in the aviation cadets, what did you have to do?

AP: I went in October 27th. You know, after they accept you, there was a period of time. They didn't call you up right away, but, then, I was called up. I was out in [San Francisco]. My brother got married in October and I was out there and my father sent me a telegram that the Air Force wants me back there.

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

SH: Side two, tape one. Please, continue.

AP: So, my brother got married on the 17th and my father had sent me a telegram that the Air Force wanted me to report on the 27th, so, I had to get right back. ... Then, I reported to the railroad station in Newark, New Jersey, and piled on, got on this train with a whole bunch of other aviation cadets, all civilians, and so, we got on this train, it took us to Nashville, Tennessee, which was the Air Force classification center, and this was my introduction to military life. On

this train, it took us a couple of days. There was a black porter on the train who was an excellent card player and he fleeced quite a few of these aviation cadets. Now, we're all in civilian clothes and we pulled into Nashville, Tennessee, in the middle of the night, got off the train and that was the first exposure. We all had to line up and somebody is giving us orders and, [now], we're marching down a street in this classification center to go to where we're going to bunk in and guys are yelling on both sides of the street, "You'll be sorry. You'll be sorry." [laughter] So, we get in our bunks and they said, "Keep your clothes on, because there's nothing to give you here in the middle of the night." So, a guy came through, said that, "Somebody is going to wake you up about three o'clock in the morning. Tell him to go to hell, because this is just a hazing they do; just tell him to go to hell." So, sure enough, "Get out of [bed]," somebody came through yelling, "Get up, get up, you're going on KP." Everybody in the barracks said, "Go to hell," and, the next thing you know, they're dumping the bunks on the floor and we ended up in KP, in civilian clothes. I had a (covert?) suit, my best suit, on KP. So, that was my introduction. [laughter]

SH: Who do you think set you up? [laughter]

AP: I don't know, some guy, some sergeant. It's part of the hazing, but, in [the] classification center, they put you through all kinds of tests. Everybody was what they called an aviation cadet. You're going to end up either as a pilot or a navigator or a bombardier, and so, in this classification center, they gave you all kinds of tests, to see what you would be most qualified for, and, of course, a lot of it depended on what they needed. If they needed a lot of pilots, well, everybody is going to end up a pilot. If they needed navigators, everybody would end up as navigators, but, anyway, I ended up as a pilot and, from there, we went down to Maxwell Field in Alabama.

SH: In Tennessee, you only took tests. Were there physical activities?

AP: Oh, yes. We did all of that, issuing uniforms and all of that, yes, yes, and, of course, we all had details to do. I can remember, ... of course, this classification center, you know, was put up and it was all brand-new and there was all kinds of crap around. ... One of our details, we'd have to pick up [garbage], put them in bags. This is, "Hey, we're supposed to be learning to be an officer and we're doing this stuff?" but, anyway. Then, from [the] classification center, I'd forgotten, now, how long we spent there, probably a month, and then, to Maxwell Field, for what they called pre-flight. Now, pre-flight was six weeks and that's where you really learn military marching and everything to do with [the] military and a lot of ground courses, preparatory to being in pilot training. So, that was, I would say, a great experience. They treated you like you were going to West Point, you know, all kinds of stuff, that you used to have to eat square meals, you know, that type of thing, when you were an underclassman.

SH: At this stage, are you being trained by other military men?

AP: Oh, yes, oh, yes. We're completely military now and I can remember being terrifically homesick in classification center, because this is a new life. This is a completely different life. None of us are used to this kind [of life] and everybody had some homesickness. ... I can remember, in the barracks, you know, everybody, you try to go to sleep, every once in a while,

you hear somebody, “Why did I do this? Why did I do this? Why am I here?” but, then, once you get in the pre-flight and [you are] getting used to being away from home, and then, developing friends, too, that’s another thing.

SH: During classification, were you aware of anyone who changed their minds or just said, “I made a mistake. I need to do something else?”

AP: No, not that I’m aware of. I’m not saying that that didn’t happen, because, remember, and it’s true today, ... everybody flies as a volunteer. You don’t have to fly. If you decide, hey, you don’t want to do this, they’ll give you something else, without prejudice. As a matter-of-fact, one of the things, I’m way ahead of myself now, when I came out of the service and I was in college, I was taking a psychology course and this professor started to talk about [the] Air Force, you know, and crews and bomber crews, what kept them together, because, he said, every once in a while, you [would] get somebody [who] said, “I don’t want to do this anymore,” you know. “First of all, they’re shooting at me,” and they’d say, “Hey, I don’t want to do it.” Well, as soon as somebody said they don’t want to do it, they were off the base like that. They’re gone, they’re gone and he said, ... “Of course, you have no idea what combat is like.” I do, because I went through it, but it’s, to put it mildly, pretty stressful and, every once in a while, you think, you know, “Boy, I’ve had [it].” I never had this feeling, but there are others, “I don’t want to do this anymore,” but you’ve been together as a family, a ten-man crew on, let’s say, a B-17. You’re so close that you don’t want to let your family down, so, you stay. I never had that feeling; I never had the feeling, “I want to get out of this,” but I know it happened. This psychologist said it happened to a lot [of men]. What kept them together was the fact that this is a family. Now, you want me [to proceed] chronologically?

SH: Right, if you can.

AP: Well, when I finished pre-flight, which is teaching you how to be military and a great, great experience, when we finished there, then, I went to primary flight school in Douglas, Georgia, to Raymond-Richardson Flying School [Aviation Company]. It was a private flying school taken over by the Air Corps. The instructors were all civilians and my instructor was Ted (Roman?) from Perth Amboy, New Jersey, and I felt, “Well, Ted (Roman?) was going to take care of me. I’m from New Jersey. He’s going to take care of me.” Well, he took care of me all right. He washed me out. That is, I got to primary, I could do everything in the airplane but land it safely. This is a Stearman. Now, a Stearman is a bi-plane, open cockpit. The student was in the front cockpit, instructor in the back. So, I had trouble landing. Now, when you landed a Stearman, as you’re approaching the runway, you can always look at a point way ahead, so [that] you can keep lined up with that point ahead of you. When you hit the ground, now, the nose is up in the air and you can’t see in front of you, you know, and I couldn’t tell whether I was lining [up] correctly once I hit. I hit the ground fine. Now, I’m on the ground, but I don’t know where I’m going and I ground loop three times. A ground loop is when you go over on a wing and it hits the ground and the plane spins around. It damages the plane a little bit, but not much. So, after ground looping for the third time, my instructor said, “We’ve got to get you another line of work.” So, he washed me out, which was, at that time, the worst thing that ever happened to me and I’ll never forget it, because it broke my heart, but I got over it. I don’t think I ever got completely over it, but it was a terrible experience.

SH: What did you have to do then, when you came off the field knowing you had been grounded, washed out? Where did you go?

AP: They called the Stearman, incidentally, “The Washing Machine,” because so many washed out with the Stearman. That’s no excuse, don’t misunderstand me, but a great many of them washed out in that Stearman, because it was a difficult plane to land.

SH: Do you know if other pilots trained on a plane other than the Stearman? Was that the standard?

AP: No, there were other planes and other pilots; I know them by the thousands now, being involved with the museum [Editor’s Note: the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum in Pooler, Georgia]. They said they were lucky. They had a plane that had a wider landing gear and the nose wasn’t up in the air. It was level, so [that] you can always tell where you were going. Many [of them] have said, hey, they’d have washed out on a Stearman. That’s only to make me feel good, you know.

SH: What happened to you afterwards? You must have been crushed coming off the field.

AP: I was, I was, I was. You know, it took me a long time to get over that, because here was my lifelong ambition, I want to be a pilot. So, anyway, then, ... once you washed out, they get you out of there fast and [I] went to Biloxi, Mississippi, for reclassification. ... Then, they sent me to radio school, out in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and I got through that. That was a long course, a long course.

SH: In Biloxi, did you have the choice to go into navigation or anything like that?

AP: No. I had no other choice, which indicated to me that they had enough navigators, they had enough bombardiers. As a matter-of-fact, at that time, and that was in 19[43], I was in the Flying Class H of ‘43, 1943, Class H, and, at that time, they had started to feel that they had enough pilots, too, could have been one of the reasons why they washed me out rather quickly, because they ... had more than they [needed]; again, that’s no excuse.

SH: I just wondered why they sent you there.

AP: So, then, they sent me to radio school.

SH: What time of the year were you in Sioux Falls?

AP: All I know is, I spent a whole winter in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, my first experience with forty degrees below zero, snow up to the rooftops, [laughter] but, then, I got hurt playing baseball and it was a rather major injury, and so, I spent a lot of time in the hospital. ... I was there, it’s a long course to begin with, and then, plus, the fact that I spent some time in the hospital.

SH: Were you in a civilian hospital?

AP: No, no, it was a military [hospital] I was in.

SH: In Sioux Falls?

AP: Oh, yes, sure, sure.

SH: When did you get through with Sioux Falls?

AP: When did I get through there? in 1944, [through] radio school. Well, let me tell you a little funny story about the radio school. The first night, that radio school went twenty-four hours a day, three shifts, they were throwing out radio operators by the thousands, which indicated to me they were losing a lot, too, should have told me something. [laughter] Anyway, first night, they give you headphones and play the speed that you're going to have to learn Morse Code [at] and they gave you the speed, that starting speed, and it's, "Dot, dash, [dash], dot," [and I thought, "Well], that shouldn't be too difficult." Then, right after that, they play the speed that you had to take before you graduate and it's, "Dit-didit, da-da-dad." "Oh, my God, I just washed out as a pilot, I'm going to wash out of this one, too," but they said, "No, you know, eventually, it will come to you. [laughter] Now, it's the sound that an A, a B or a C makes, not the number of dots and dashes, it's the sound that those combinations of dots and dashes make that will come to you, the sound of an A, the sound of a B," and it's true. After a while, you listen to so many hours and, all of a sudden, it comes to you. So, I made it through.

SH: You were playing baseball, not in the winter, in Sioux Falls.

AP: No, no.

SH: You were there long enough for spring to come.

AP: Oh, yes, oh, yes. It's a delightful [time]. Incidentally, I've never met such nice people in my life. That was a great experience out there.

SH: You are talking about the civilians.

AP: Yes, yes, people I met and, of course, anytime in the service, if you're in any spot long enough, you're going to meet a girl. [laughter]

SH: What was available in Sioux Falls? Was the Air Force the only service there at that point?

AP: Yes. It's the only service.

SH: Was there a USO [United Service Organization] or Red Cross there?

AP: Yes, yes, yes.

SH: What did they provide for you?

AP: I never got involved in that, because I very quickly met a girl that I got involved with, and so, we socialized together all the time.

SH: She was from Sioux Falls.

AP: Oh, yes, and the family was great to me and had me to dinner and things like that. As a matter-of-fact, the father had a farm outside of Sioux Falls and, of course, South Dakota is great for pheasants. It's probably the greatest place for pheasants in the United States and he says, here I was, in the service, and he said, "You know, hunting pheasant now is no longer any fun, because we have to make sure, before we shoot the shell, that we're going to hit a bird, you know, and it's tough to get ammunition. You think you could get me some shells?" So, I said, "Well, I'll see what I can do," and I went out to the gunnery line and said to the Sergeant, I said, "Listen, I'm involved with this girl in town and I'd like to make some points; if I could give her father..." He gave me a box of shells and I [can remember] giving the box of shells to her father and he thought that was the greatest thing. [laughter]

SH: Did you ever get any pheasants?

AP: No. Oh, yes, oh, yes, I ate pheasant. Have you ever eaten pheasant? Pheasant is delicious.

SH: Did you go hunting with him for pheasants?

AP: No, no. ... You could have an opportunity to go out and work on a farm, you know, on your free time. You could sign up and go out there. They'd take you out on a truck, and then, go out and help the farmer [do whatever they do]. I never did it, but I could have. I don't know why I didn't.

SH: I have never heard of that before.

AP: Oh, sure, yes. You know, you have free time, a day off, and you could volunteer to work in a farm. They needed manpower, oh, sure. I'm sorry I didn't, but, then, again, I was rather involved with this girl.

SH: Oh, no, it is not that I wanted you to do it. I am just pleased to hear this story, because I have never heard that the local ranchers and farmers tried to recruit servicemen.

AP: Absolutely, absolutely.

SH: Great. What happened after radio school?

AP: After radio school, then, they sent me to; I don't know why [this happened, but] I ended up in Pasadena, California, preparatory to going to gunnery school. That was a great experience. I was only there maybe six weeks, but ... Pasadena is very close, of course, to Hollywood and we could always go into Hollywood on our free time, ... go to the Hollywood Canteen, which was a

fantastic experience, because, every time you went in there, there were stars, all kinds of people that you saw on the screen, you know. ... I can remember, I may use up another tape here, but I can remember walking in one day and there's a girl behind the counter, that living doll, you know, and you wouldn't know this name, her name was Joan Leslie, an actress, and she must have been about eighteen years old at the time, but an actress and ... I'd seen her in the movies. ... Here she is, a vision, absolutely a vision, and she had on, ... maybe nobody has ever mentioned this to you, but, when I was in high school, one of the fads was a beer jacket. A beer jacket was a white jacket that was three-quarters and you had your friends sign your jacket, you know. So, you'd have signatures all over your white jacket. It was sort of a canvas type of thing. So, she's got a beer jacket on. So, I said to her, "Could I sign your jacket?" She said, "Absolutely." So, I signed her jacket and I don't know what happened to that jacket and I think she's still alive, but, anyway, I'll tell you, [laughter] of course, I fell in love right away. Another experience out there, one night, I was there and there's a fellow mopping the floor, mopping the floor. Now, this is a name that you may know from history, but Buster Keaton was a comedian. Do you know that name? Buster Keaton, and there he is, mopping the floor, and I said, "Buster Keaton?" and he dropped the mop. He said, "You're the first person that's recognized me this month." I said, "Oh, great," you know. Another one was Alan Ladd. He was sitting over in a corner and I said, "That's Alan Ladd," you know. So, I walked over to him and I said, "Mr. Ladd," he got up. He was shorter than I, not much shorter, because there are not too many people that are shorter than I, and I thought, "What a handsome guy," and, yet, you see him in the movies, you don't realize that he's short, you know. That was another one.

SH: When you were in Pasadena, was your brother still in California?

AP: In the Navy, yes, yes. Well, he finally ended up in the Philippines.

SH: Was he still in California then? Did you get to connect with him in California?

AP: Yes. As a matter-of-fact, I hitchhiked from Pasadena up to San Francisco. He was still there at that time and [I] hitchhiked back. You had no problem hitchhiking in uniform. Yes, I got to see him.

SH: That is a great story. [laughter] Then, you went to gunnery school in ...

AP: Kingman, Arizona.

SH: A bit of a change from Pasadena.

AP: Oh, of course, I fell in love with a girl in Hollywood. [laughter] I guess I fell in love about a half a dozen times, but, as a matter-of-fact, that girl, ... her brother was in the movies. Her brother was, at that time, ... about nine years old, eight or nine years old, and had a ... very beautiful soprano voice, I mean, really good, and he made some movies. He was in *Going My Way*, which was a Bing Crosby deal. He was in another one with Dick Haymes. He was in about four movies. Now, his sister, who I got involved with, very, very beautiful, and she was an extra in a couple of movies, never got any credits.

SH: This was in Pasadena.

AP: This was in Pasadena and I met her in a USO in Hollywood, the USO. ... I can remember, she was sitting in a chair, reading *Life Magazine*. I thought, "Hey, boy, she's pretty," and I got [to] talking to her and she said, "Well, you know, we can't date, but we can meet outside and maybe talk about this." [laughter] Anyway, ... she played the piano. She entertained, anyway, great family, another great family. Now, where am I?

SH: You are getting ready to go to Kingman.

AP: Kingman, yes. First, we're going out to the range.

SH: Did you go to Kingman by train?

AP: Yes, went by train, you know, from Biloxi, Mississippi, out to South Dakota by train, all the way across the country by train.

SH: Then, from South Dakota, by train to Pasadena.

SH: Right. In the States, I never flew from one spot to the other. It's always by train and Kingman, Arizona, we're going out to the flight, not the flight line, the gunnery range, for the first time. I had never shot a gun in my life. I knew nothing about guns. My father was not crazy about guns, so, this is my first experience. Now, I'm going to become a gunner. I'm a radio operator, but, now, you have to go to gunnery school. ... We're in this bus and I hear this boom, like a cannon going [off]. I said to the instructor, I said, "What kind of a gun is that?" He says, "That's a .50-caliber machine gun, but they're just shooting off single rounds. That's what you're going to learn to fire." [laughter] Then, one of the things you had to do to graduate was to disassemble a .50-caliber machine gun and assemble it blindfolded and I've got no mechanical [ability]; I do have mechanical ability, I just don't display it. ... I thought, "I'll never be able to do that," [laughter] but, you know, after you take it apart, put it back together hundreds of times, you can do it blindfolded. Anyway, then, after gunnery school, they sent me down to MacDill Field in Tampa to become a member of a crew of a B-17. Now, I'm a radio operator. You can stop me any time you want, because it's hard to stop me once I start.

SH: I do not want you to stop. [laughter]

AP: So, I remember going into the base theater down there and there were a couple of hundred of us. They were naming B-17 crews by numbers, so, I'll never forget our numbers, Number 699. They named the pilot, the co-pilot. The pilot was from Texas, co-pilot was from Arizona, the navigator was from Texas, the bombardier was from Ohio and, now, I know I'm taking too much time.

SH: No, no.

AP: And so, then, they named the radio operator, Carl Sarver. I thought, "Well, that's not my crew," and he was from Kentucky. ... The very next position, ball-turret, "Porter," me, from New Jersey. [laughter]

SH: You thought it was going to be a Southern crew. [laughter]

AP: So, they go through it. The tail gunner was from Georgia, waist gunner was from Ohio, the engineer was from Illinois. So, what I'm saying is, any crew, they can be spread out all over the country. So, here I am, now, we're getting together for the first time, meeting each other for the first time. I said to the pilot, "I'm not going to be here long, because it's a mistake." I said, "I'm a radio operator," and he asked me, "Porter, how tall are you?" and I said, "Five-seven." He says, "That sounds just about right for a ball-turret." So, apparently, in fact, they had more radio operators than they knew what to do with. So, that's how I ended up in the ball.

SH: Okay.

AP: The first time I saw a ball-turret was in a classroom at MacDill and we had an instructor [who] had flown combat, just come back. He said to us, "You guys are going to be the luckiest fellows on your crew," because he said, "You're going to be in the safest spot on the airplane." He lied, but he said, "There are two reasons for that. Number one," he said, "the turret is armor plated, the only part of the airplane that is, and, secondly," he said, "when you get over a target and the flak is coming up thick and heavy;" let me say a word about German flak. Every German city was well protected by hundreds of antiaircraft guns and they use to throw shells up by the hundreds. ... They could always figure out our altitude. If we were flying, let's say, at twenty-five thousand feet, they could figure that out, so that they could set those shells to explode at twenty-five thousand feet, which meant you had to fly through this stuff and you couldn't do anything about it. So, it's the luck of the draw, whether you get hit or you don't get hit, and we lost more planes in the Eighth Air Force by flak than we did by German fighters, many more. Anyway, so, he said, "When you get over a target, ...the flak is coming up thick and heavy, so, you get the turret going around [in] a circle, as fast as it would go. It's a power-driven turret," and he said, "because flak has a tendency to ricochet off a moving target."

SH: Comforting words? [laughter]

AP: So, all right, now, I'll tell you, first mission, nobody had ever shot at Mrs. Porter's little boy in his life and we're over Hamburg, Germany, and the flak is coming up thick and heavy. ... Honestly, I'm scared, you know, not knowing what to expect and, here I am, in this turret, all by myself, and thinking at that time, "What am I doing here? What am I doing here?" So, I had the turret going around in a circle, as fast as it would go. Now, we got back okay and, now, we're being interrogated by a debriefing officer who wants to know how the mission went. The first question is addressed to me. He said, "Porter, how was the bomb drop?" I said, "Bomb drop? I don't know." I said, "I had the turret going around in a circle, as fast as it would go," and he said, "No, you're supposed to watch the bomb drop." He says, "You've got the best seat in the house," and it's true, really. So, from then on, why, I paid attention to the bomb drop. I've got to tell you, if you don't mind, a little bit about flying combat, the first mission.

SH: I want to hear about this.

AP: Let me tell you, we're going on our first training trip as a crew and, as we were approaching the airplane, my pilot said, "Wait a second, guys, wait a second. I don't care what other crews do, don't misunderstand, I couldn't care less, but, on this crew, there is no such thing as rank. We're all in this together." Now, my pilot was nineteen years old, the tail gunner was eighteen years old, the waist gunner was eighteen years old [and] the radio operator was eighteen years old. I was one of the oldest on the crew at that time, anyway, and we socialized together. It was great. Anyway, a couple of the things that happened, most of the crew training is, first of all, getting to know each other and getting to know what our responsibilities are, particular [our] position on the plane. ... Flying navigational trips, say, to New Orleans and back and whatnot, this was pretty boring for a gunner, because we didn't have gunnery as a crew. I learned how to operate a ball turret, but we didn't have any air-to-air combat or, let's say, shooting at targets in that part of our training.

SH: Had you had any of that in Kingman?

AP: Oh, yes, oh, sure.

SH: We just touched briefly on Kingman.

AP: Coming out of our ears.

SH: You did not tell me about any incidents that you remember at Kingman.

AP: Well, no, as far as the training is concerned, we used to do a lot of shooting at moving targets. In other words, there was always a session where a plane is towing a target and we're shooting at it.

SH: How safe was that pilot?

AP: [laughter] I don't know of any ever being shot down, let me put it that way, and, of course, a lot of our training as a gunner was with a camera, rather than shooting. You were taking a picture and you could always tell whether you were getting anywhere near the target or not.

SH: Really?

AP: Oh, yes. If we're shooting live ammunition, every fifth shell was a tracer, which you could see going through the sky. Even in combat, every fifth shell was a tracer, so [that] you can always tell whether you're hitting your target or missing it. Let's see, any experiences about Kingman; I can remember being very impressed with Arizona. Now, things have changed since then, but, [in] World War II, you could go out at night, sit out at night or go by the pool. I guess we had maybe six swimming pools.

SH: Really?

AP: You go by the pool, sit and look up at the sky and it's like you could take a handful of stars, just grab them. I never saw anything like this, just absolutely fabulous, because there was no such thing as soot. ... Everything was just as clear as a bell. Things have changed now.

SH: There is a lot of smog.

AP: Smog, smog, you bet. You go close to any city and you're going to get smog, especially around that area of the country, and, oh, they used to say to us, "Don't send laundry out, you know." The only place you could send laundry was to Los Angeles and, if you sent [out] laundry, you never knew whether you're going to get it back or not. So, they said, "Look, if you want to wash your uniform, go in the shower with your uniform, soap the uniform and just come out of the shower, and [then], go outside and, just like that, it'll dry," and it's true, it's true. It was so dry that we all did that and it used to shock me how quickly everything dried. Now, water, you couldn't get enough water, because of that climate, and we used to line up at a water fountain, you know, and you finally get your turn. You drink and drink and drink, and then, you'd finish and get at the end of the line again. [laughter] Oh, gee, whiz, it was something, something. That's about all I can remember about Kingman, being very impressed with how dry it was and, of course, I developed [a tan]. I have a tendency to tan and, when I finished the gunnery school, I had a brief furlough and I looked like an Indian. I looked as black as [an Indian]. [laughter]

SH: You got to go home on that furlough.

AP: Yes.

SH: You went on the furlough between Kingman and reporting to Florida.

AP: To Florida, yes. As a matter-of-fact, when I got on that furlough, my family, mother and father, their favorite spot, summer spot, was Seaside Heights. ... They always rented a place for a month, and so, it just so happened, when I had the furlough, they were there and I went down and stayed with them. Now, I used to drink quite a bit, being in a crew and flying, drank more than I should, and, one night, I had too much and, that morning, I wasn't feeling well. I said to my father, "I don't feel good," and that's not like me and I complained most of the day and he said, "Why don't you go down to the Coast Guard station and have them check you out?" There's somebody out there. It wasn't a doctor. I forgot what they called him.

SH: Corpsman.

AP: Yes. So, I said, "I think I will," and I went down and he said, "Get on this table," and I got on the table, and then, he hit me here and I went through the ceiling. He said, "You've got appendicitis. We've got to send you to the hospital," and the nearest hospital was Fort Dix. So, they got the ambulance and took me to Fort Dix. Now, I'm in bed in the hospital and feeling lousy. The doctor came through and he checked me out and he said, "We could probably treat you," okay, but he said, "I need the practice. Do you mind if I take your appendix out? I need the practice," and I was so sick, I said, "Doc, I don't care what you do." [laughter]

SH: It was a successful practice, I assume.

AP: Now, you know, in the service, they won't release you from a hospital unless you're ready to go right back to whatever you were doing. You know, ... you convalesce in the hospital. You feel fine, but they won't let you go until you're ready. So, I thought, when they're ready to release me, I thought, and I was involved with a girl, again, in East Orange. ... Don't get me started on that; I'm thinking about the women in my life, but, anyway, now, I'm ready and I thought, "Well, I'm going to send a telegram to Tampa, to the commanding officer, telling him that I'm just being released from the hospital," requesting what they call a delay en route, and I thought, "He'll probably give me two or three days to get back there." I get a telegram back saying, "Take two weeks, two more weeks." [laughter] Now, my father and mother are tired of having me around, because I was going home on weekends, and my father said, "There's a war going on." So, anyway, I got two more weeks. [laughter]

SH: Did you spend it at Seaside Heights or did you go back to Elizabeth?

AP: Oh, no. We spent the whole time in the Jersey Shore, which was great, just great. [laughter]

SH: After that was when you were down at MacDill.

AP: Then, I went to MacDill, and then, we're in crew training. Now, as I said, a lot of it is just flying around, putting in time, and I remember that all the crews are in this base theater and the safety officer comes out and he's very grim, you know, and then, he says, "Take a look around you, because the crew next to you may not survive. We always lose one or two crews in training." He said, "There's a saying here, 'One a day in Tampa Bay.' We lose a plane a day." That's a little exaggerated, but, so, he's trying to scare us. He said, "We haven't put any class through here that we didn't lose a couple of crews." Well, we fooled them. We didn't lose any crews. We had a couple of blown tires. We lost an airplane, our crew lost an airplane, caught fire, and that's another story.

SH: Please, tell me that story. You also said that this was the first time that you had someone training you who had already been in combat.

AP: In combat, yes, oh, yes.

SH: Could you talk about those two things, please?

AP: Well, it's just that he mentioned to us in training; [all right], let me explain the ball-turret. It's a power-driven turret, so, you couldn't get in that turret on the ground, because there wasn't that much space between the ground and the turret, only about that much space between the turret and the ground, and so, we couldn't get in it until we got in the air. Now, once we got in the air, for me to get into the turret, we had to hand crank the turret so that the guns pointed straight down and that brought the hatch into the airplane. So, you'd get in, close the hatch, turn on the power, and then, you're off and running. In the turret itself, as you got in, you're sitting like this, just like that.

SH: Sitting in a regular chair.

AP: Just like that. Now, you can move that turret and, of course, lots of times, you're in any position you were in, depending upon where the turret was. ... You controlled the turret with handles as you sat there ... and on top were the trigger switches and right in front of you, of course, is a big window, a circular window. ... In the middle of that window is what we called, actually, ... a semi-automatic sight. When you turned the power on, that lit up, so that you could see there was a horizontal line, two verticals. The vertical distance was controlled by a foot pedal.

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

SH: This continues an interview with Mr. Albert S. Porter, Jr., on February the 9th, in Hilton Head, South Carolina, 2004. Please, continue. You were describing the ball-turret for me.

AP: And as you turn on the power, as I said, ... the sight lit up with two verticals and a horizontal and, as long as the target coming towards you remained between those two verticals, you couldn't miss it. It was automatic, just hit the trigger switches and you couldn't miss. Now, that's theory, because a plane, although looking from the ground on up to the sky, [it] looks like the plane is flying nice and level, well, most of the time in combat, it's bouncing all over the place. So, it was very difficult, really, to keep a target in that sight. Of course, we had in there, too, an oxygen supply, the heat supply we had to keep us reasonably warm. We all had electrically heated suits, ... then, over that, the standard leather fleece-lined jackets, pants, boots, gloves and whatnot.

SH: How effective were these suits? Did they have a nickname?

AP: No, not that I'm aware of. I don't remember ever being completely warm.

SH: I have heard about being frigid in one spot and having hot spots in another places in these electric suits. I wondered if you had suffered the same.

AP: I'm sure that there were people who had experiences where they had power failures in part of the suit. I had no problem at all, no problem at all with it. My only problem was, the first time we took off, our first mission was the first time; with all of our training, we had never had heated suits. So, this was our first experience with the heated suit. Now, the temperature was controlled by a thermostat, each suit had its own thermostat, and it was down by the foot and I thought, oh, we talked about, how far should I turn the heat up? you know, and I thought maybe halfway ought to do it. Well, halfway through the mission, I started to get cold and, as the mission went on, I got colder and [colder]. When we finished, ... [if] we'd gone any farther, I would have been in bad shape and, in the turret, I couldn't reach the thermostat to pull it up. So, from now on, I put it all the way up. I'd rather be hot than cold. For anybody that's never experienced flying combat with, let's say any [extreme] temperatures, the warmest I ever flew on a mission [was] thirty below zero and the coldest was close to sixty below and, when we finished the mission, our whole front of our outfit was solid ice from the condensation of the oxygen,

your breath, and it [was] going down the front and freezing there and one of the problems was, if you lack oxygen, you don't realize it. You're not aware of the fact and, all of a sudden, you're out. ... So, the rest of the crew, every crew used to watch the other members to make sure that they weren't passing out or lacking oxygen and, lots of times, your oxygen tube would freeze up and it would stop the oxygen flow. So, you had to make sure you always keep squeezing it, to make sure that it didn't freeze up. Now, in the plane, we had what we called walk-around oxygen bottles, little bottles. Now, if you saw one of your crew members in trouble, you want to go over and try to help him out and you'd put one of these little oxygen walk-around bottles on, so [that] you'd have the supply of oxygen to help him. Now, of course, I had nobody in the turret to help me and they always made sure that they were in constant communication with me, to make sure that nothing was happening down there that they couldn't see. So, that was a constant, position checks to make sure everybody was okay.

SH: Were you then hearing all of the communications between the pilot and the leader and all the others? Everybody on the plane was aware of where you were and what you were doing.

AP: Absolutely, oh, yes, oh, yes. We had what we called throat microphones, throat mikes, and, when you talked, you'd squeeze it. ... I'm not sure, but that's the way it worked. When you were talking, you'd squeeze it, but communications were very easy, you know, between crews.

SH: How aware were they of what you were doing, since you were down below everybody else's line of sight, if you were firing or what you were seeing?

AP: First of all, the Germans very quickly found out, early in the war, that to attack a B-17 from the bottom is not the way to do it, because they realized that that turret gun was the most accurate gun on the plane and they didn't want any part of it, because, ... once we had that target in, you couldn't miss. So, they always came from [up] top, usually trying to ... have the sun at their back, so [that] you can't really see them. You can't look into the sun and see them. Anyway, they always came from the top, most of the times from the nose, top of the nose. Now, of course, I couldn't see those planes and the rest of the crew used to have to call out the position of a plane coming in, so that I could get the turret around to catch it as it came down and, usually, as it came down, they were going away. People would ask me, "Hey, did you ever hit any?" I doubt it, because, although I fired at them, they were going away and fast.

SH: When you were flying in formation and, like you say, in your position, the fighters were going away, what about American planes in the formation? Were they in any danger from the ball-turret gun fire?

AP: They had them stacked in such a way; I belonged to the 95th Bomb Group and each bomb group had a maximum of thirty-two airplanes. In other words, if the bomb group was sending up a full complement, the 95th, they'd have thirty-two airplanes in the air. ... Every bomb group had thirty-two airplanes. They didn't always have thirty-two airplanes available, but, if they had a full complement, it would be thirty-two airplanes. So, that group would be flying very tight formation and I mean very tight, very dangerous, incidentally, very dangerous, because [there was] all kinds of turbulence. The planes are bouncing around. ... See, I wasn't a pilot, but flying formation is very difficult, very stressful, too, as a matter-of-fact. I don't know the

statistic, I know there is one, but we lost; now, I'm getting off the track here a bit, but you've got me wound up. There are three things that bothered the Eighth Air Force and I can only speak for the Eighth Air Force, not necessarily in their importance, the order, and I'm about to get [to that, but] German fighters, German flak and weather. The weather was horrendous. The English, again, their weather is terrible, but, anyway, take off was very, very dangerous. First of all, you're taking off a fully loaded airplane, with guns, ammunition, bombs, and you're taking off, most of the time, in the fog, so that once you leave the ground, you're in fog. You can't even see your own wing tips and I remember the first mission, since I had the best seat in the house, breaking out over the overcast in the bright sunlight and seeing planes breaking out over the overcast all around, knowing that those planes were in that soup with you. So, we had a lot of midair collisions. I'm talking about the Eighth Air Force, as an air force, had many midair collisions on take off, because ...

SH: Because of the cloud cover?

AP: Yes, you couldn't see and, of course, even in combat, many times, you'd have a plane that was hit and out of control and going into another plane. It had nothing to do with combat. As a matter-of-fact, in training, [in] the whole Air Force, we lost an awful lot of kids in training.

SH: You talked about how fortunate you had been in Tampa in your training.

AP: Yes, we were very, very fortunate.

SH: When you left MacDill, your training was complete. Everybody was in the same position. At this point, you knew you were all going to Europe because of the aircraft that you were flying. Did anyone not stay with your crew?

AP: No. We stayed as a crew all the way through. When we got through our training in Tampa, we went up to Hunter Field in Savannah, by train, and it's there that they gave us all the equipment, flying paraphernalia, that we have to use in England. Now, in Hunter, a lot of the crews flew a plane [over], other crews went over by ship. It just so happened that we went over by ship from Hunter Field and we're probably over there a week or so, no more than a week, just to pick up equipment and whatnot, and then, took the train from there to Jersey City, and then, the ferry to the *Queen Elizabeth* and we went over on the *Queen Elizabeth*. We had staterooms, three to a stateroom, and, of course, this ship had six thousand, not everybody in a stateroom, but we were an Air Force [unit]. I always liked to say, "Hey, we're in the Air Force." [laughter] I've got to tell you a funny story.

SH: It was not just the Air Force onboard.

AP: Oh, no. Our pilot used to get airsick if he wasn't actually flying the airplane and up on the flight deck. So, now, he knows we're going overseas by ship and he's afraid he's going to get seasick. So, a friend of his said, "Lonnie," (Lonnie McClintock?), "get yourself a small jar of peanut butter," and he said, "On the trip over, [if] you start to feel a little squeamish, why, take a teaspoon full of peanut butter and you'll be fine." So, five days it took us and, every once in a

while, you'll see Lonnie, out would come the peanut butter, and he didn't get seasick and, to this day, he's convinced that the peanut butter saved him. [laughter]

SH: I wonder if he eats peanut butter sandwiches anymore. [laughter]

AP: That was, you know, getting back to training in Tampa, I was called the assistant radio operator, because I had gone to radio school. So, the radio operator said to me one night, "You want to try the radio? You do the operator." I said, "Yes, sure, that'll be kind of fun." Now, there's all kinds of messages coming and I'd been away from this a long time and I'm all screwed up, you know. I'm trying to keep track of what's going on. [laughter] So, I turn in this report to our radio operator, Carl Sarver. He says, "What am I going to do with this? You want me to turn this in?" and so, ... that was the last time he asked me to take the radio. [laughter] Now, we're walking back from one of the training sessions that landed and our co-pilot, Bob (Cochran?), said, "Lonnie never lets me take off or land. Anybody can fly a B-17 once you get in the air, you know, but he won't let me take off, he won't let me land." So, he's complaining about it. So, we're on another mission and we're coming across Tampa Bay and we could see the runway and we're getting pretty close to the water, you know, and I said, "Geez, we're close to the water. What's going on here?" you know, and, all of a sudden, they give it more power and he comes up to the runway and he hit the runway, "Bang, bang, bang," and Lonnie said, going back he said, "Hey, guys, guess who was [flying]? First, you try to land in the damn water." [laughter] Oh, one more funny story about training in Tampa. ... A lot of the time, when we were ... putting in time, so, it was rather boring, we're close to the end of our training, and so, they decided to start a card game in the radio room. So, the card game is going on, the pilot comes back and gets in the game and he said to me, "Bud, go up. Bob," the co-pilot, "wants to get in the game, too. He'll show you what to do." I go up. Bob Cochran said, "Bud, we're in a shallow turn. Just keep it in the shallow turn, make sure we maintain the altitude and that's all you have to do. That's all you have to do. Just watch for other airplanes, but make sure that you just keep in that shallow turn and the altitude." So, here I am, ... I'm flying the B-17, my life's ambition. I'm flying the B-17. [laughter] Then, Clarence Haugh, our waist gunner, came up and he said, "They want me to fly co-pilot." Now, Clarence is a nice guy, but not the brightest kid in the world. He's flying co-pilot, I'm flying as pilot. The radio operator, back in the radio room, suddenly realized that the pilot and the co-pilot and the gang [were there, he said], "Who the hell is flying this airplane? Oh, my God." [laughter] So, I guess I flew it for about twenty minutes, which is no big deal. Anybody can do it. [laughter] All right, we're back in combat.

SH: In training, did you also learn how to fly formation? Was that part of the training?

AP: Oh, absolutely. Of course, I had nothing to do with that, but, you know, that was part of the training, yes. Our first mission, we did fine. We came back and, now, we're taxiing through our hardstand parking and there's a jeep following us and, as soon as we stopped, the jeep came up and said that, "CO, commander of the base, wants to see your pilot right now." So, Lonnie gets in, goes off, comes back later and he said, "Boy, did I get my tail eaten out." Of course, everybody is up in the control tower watching the take offs and the CO is up there and he said, "We saw you take off three-quarters of the way down the runway and, when I saw you lift that

plane off, I was sure you were going to stall, crash and blow this base sky high,” because we’ve got bombs.

SH: This was in England.

AP: [This is] in England. He says, “Damn it, we’ve got a runway here and we expect you to use the whole runway,” and so, Lonnie said, “You know, guys, with all the training, all our training, this was the first day I ever took a fully loaded B-17 off the ground, with bombs and guns and ammunition and everything.” He said, “All I knew is, we’re going down the runway,” and he said, “I could tell with the yoke that this thing wanted to go off.” So, he says, “I pulled it off,” but, from then on, we used the whole runway.

SH: This was the first time you all had flown this plane. Had you had any training in England before you actually went out on missions?

AP: Oh, yes, we had what they called practice missions, where you go off and fake, you know, that you’re bombing something in England, you know. Oh, yes, they trained us there.

SH: How long did you train in England before you actually went on a mission?

AP: I would say we probably flew three or four missions, practice missions. They wanted to make sure that the pilot and everybody in the crew knows what [they are doing]. [laughter] So, yes, then, we flew our first and on our second and you can stop me any time, you know. The second mission is our co-pilot’s first mission, because, the first mission, they always sent an experienced co-pilot along with you. They want to make sure that our pilot knew what he was doing after all the training, and so, this was his first mission and we were over Hamburg and we got hit with flak, a major hit, and it just so happened, I had the turret in such a position, luckily, that I saw it happen. All of a sudden, there’s a gigantic hole between number one and two engines in the wing and a shell had gone right straight through the wing and did not explode. If it [had] exploded, I wouldn’t be here. Anyway, it knocked down one and two engines and all the oil came out, hit the turret, and the plane started straight down, straight down. Now, I have never experienced anything like this in my life, but the vibration caused by the two engines that were knocked out, had what they called runaway props, were spinning and causing such a vibration, it felt like the plane’s going to tear itself apart, with no exaggeration. I thought that [it] was going to go any minute. Through the intercom, the pilot is screaming, “Prepare to bail out, prepare to bail out.” Now, I came out of that turret like I was shot out of a cannon and I forgot all about the oxygen connections, the electrical connections. All I knew was, “Hey, we’re going down,” you know, and, now, ... I didn’t have room in the turret for a parachute. So, I put the parachute alongside the turret, so [that] when I come out, I could grab it [and] put it on. Well, when the plane started straight down, the chutes took off. So, when I came out of the turret, the chute wasn’t there. I didn’t have sense enough to try to tie it to the turret in some way. Right now, we’re supposed to be a well-trained, well-disciplined crew; forget it. It was absolute [chaos] and, I mean, seriously, it was chaotic. We thought we were gone and our radio operator got so excited, he came out of the radio room and forgot his chute and saw this chute lying on the floor and grabbed it. It was mine. [laughter] The waist gunner; we had what we called chest chutes that hooked on the front, and they said to make sure that the ripcord handle is on the right-hand

side, because, if it's on the left-hand side, when it opens, it will get all tangled up and wrap around you. He's on the floor. He's got it on wrong and he's trying to get it off and you've got to remember, we're in twenty-five, thirty below zero temperatures, gloves, you know. So, we dropped straight down fifteen thousand feet and you have no idea the pressure that a dive like that causes against the controls of the plane and ... it's awful to try to get [strength] enough to try to pull this doggone airplane out of its dive and, as Lonnie, our pilot, said, if it hadn't been for Bob Cochran, who was a big guy and strong, if he had been as small as I was, we couldn't have pulled the plane out and, finally, [they] pulled it out of the dive, got it leveled. Now, we only have two engines and we can't maintain altitude and, of course, we're out of the formation and you're always afraid; the Germans always looked for stragglers to knock off, and so, we were afraid of that and we couldn't stay in the air. So, he said, "Get me," to the navigator, "get me the nearest safe spot." It happened to be Brussels. Belgium was reoccupied at that time. So, we came down in Brussels, in a half-baked landing, but made it okay. Now, we're all out of the airplane, thanking our lucky stars that we made it, and our bombardier had forgotten to lock his nose guns, which were supposed to be in [the] locked position, pointing up to the sky. Now, we're all around the nose with these .50-caliber machine guns over our heads. He got in the nose and lost his balance, fell up against the trigger switches and these two .50s took off and we hit the ground, like we thought we're going to get wiped out, and so, he came out of the plane. He thought he wiped out the whole crew. So, then, when things got calmed down, I said, "Okay, who took my parachute?" and the radio operator said, "Oh, my God, Bud, I'm sorry, I did." ... [laughter]

SH: This was your second mission.

AP: Second mission.

SH: Is this your most memorable mission?

AP: Yes, by far. [laughter] As a matter-of-fact, we only flew nine, and then, the war ended. We were over there at the end.

SH: You said Brussels had been retaken. You went to Europe in 1945.

AP: This is 1945, yes. We got there in mid-January and left in May. People say, "Well, gee whiz, you only flew nine missions." Yes, remember, lots of times, you didn't fly, because of the weather. The weather was so bad, you know, you hung around.

SH: How did you proceed from Brussels back to your base?

AP: They flew a '17 over to pick us up. We got back the same night.

SH: Did you?

AP: Yes, and the guys thought, you know, that, "We knew, we thought you were gone. We saw you going down," terrible feeling, to see somebody going down, you know.

SH: Where in England were you stationed?

AP: It was a little village, Horham, very tiny village, close to the Channel. We were ... the closest to the Channel and I'll tell you a little about Horham. The word got out, ... the people in Horham knew that, on Sundays, in the mess, they always served ice cream. Now, the English, ice cream was alien to them. English didn't have ice cream in World War II. So, on Sundays, in the mess line, you'd see a mother and some kids. This was against regulation, but nobody paid any attention. They let them go. So, they used to line up for the ice cream.

SH: You mentioned that there was no hierarchy within your crew between the officers and the enlisted men.

AP: None.

SH: Did that pervade the whole base?

AP: No. I can't speak for other crews. I'm sure a lot of crews were the same way. I think it was rare that a pilot pulled rank. You had to get along.

SH: What kind of interaction did you have with the ground crew?

AP: Very little, very little, because we didn't always fly the same airplane. [laughter] We flew nine missions; in the nine missions, we flew four in one airplane. So, people ask me, you know, "What was the name of your airplane?" I always say, "We didn't name the planes." We had nothing to do with it. ... The plane that we used the most, but it was very aptly named, it was called [the] *Passion Wagon*. [laughter]

SH: Do not tell me how it got its name now.

AP: I don't know. [laughter]

SH: Tell me about living in England, Horham. Is that in Kent?

AP: It's in East Anglia and, if you look at the map, we were halfway between Ipswich and Norwich. We could go to either one of those towns, by bike, very easily and we all had bikes. That's the first thing you do, buy a bicycle.

SH: Really?

AP: Oh, sure. It's the only way you could get around. The base is an immense [facility] and you couldn't walk. You could, but it wastes a lot of time. So, one of the first things you did when you got there, was to buy a bicycle and I bought a bicycle, I don't know who I bought it from. It cost me six pounds, which, at that time, was thirty dollars. So, we all had bikes.

SH: Really?

AP: And then, when we left, when the war was over, ... a lot of guys wanted to take their bikes back with them. They wouldn't let you do that. So, I gave my bike to one of the girls.

SH: Tell me about how you got to meet some of the English. What were you told about how to interact with them?

AP: Well, we were told, first of all, to be as nice to them as possible, because there was a little bit of resentment about how highly paid we were, in relation to English military people, and I'd have to say, we got paid, in addition to our salaries, I was a sergeant at that time, another fifty percent as flight pay, and then, we got another twenty-five percent because it was overseas in combat. So, I had a lot of money. Money was never any problem to any of us and we always went into London. I say always; in the nine missions, I went into London three times, always went first class, and they had, you know, compartments, class compartments, and there was always a little bit of resentment on the part of the English, but very little. You know, I did not come up against, personally, any resentment of me. Again, I'm like a sailor; I had a girl in every port. I'm not boasting. It just happened that way. [laughter]

SH: This is your story.

AP: I had a girl that I met in London and I used to bring things for her family, ... you know, any food that I could grab, and I remember going to dinner at her house and realizing, for the first time, that this particular house did not have toilet facilities inside the house. It was outside, it was another room, but it was outside of the house. The English were very, very much behind us in living quarters; at least that's my experience. Refrigeration was unheard of, for crying out loud. You couldn't get a cold beer. I can remember thinking to myself, every once in a while, "Boy, I'd like an ice-cold beer." Then, second, and right away, "Oh, no, no, I'd rather have a milkshake. Oh, boy, would I [like to] have a milkshake," but the girl I met was very, very nice. ... I probably shouldn't put this on tape. I always stayed at the Regent Palace Hotel, which, at that time, was considered one of the best hotels in London and [one of the] oldest. It had three thousand rooms, three thousand rooms, very few of them with private baths. You had to go down the hallway to take a community bath with whoever is in there. Anyway, my wife is a great one for reading English novels and, one day, she said to me, "With all the English novels I've read, I've never heard Regent Palace mentioned. I think it's a figment of your imagination." So, we were over there about five years ago. I'd gone back and went back to the base and whatnot, do whatever a returnee does, and I was in London. Now, I don't remember anything. I'm in Piccadilly Circus and I want to show my wife the Regent Palace Hotel and I didn't know where it was. So, I see this bobby on the corner. I said, "Hey, I was here during the war and used to stay at the Regent Palace Hotel. Tell me where it is." He points down at the curb and it says, "Regent Street. Regent Street, there it is, it's right down there." [laughter] I didn't associate it with the name of the street. Anyway, we went in and it hadn't changed a bit, hadn't changed a bit, still a sign there, it said, "Extra for baths in the rooms," something like that, you know, but I enjoyed it. I enjoyed London.

SH: By that time, were the buzz bombs and the V-2 rockets still coming in?

AP: Oh, yes, we could hear them and, in our base, we could hear them going over, heading towards London, never hit the base, but we hadn't been there more than a night; every night, you could hear them going over, you know. This girl lived outside of London and the first time I took her home and, of course, we had to get in the Underground and that's what they call [it, the] Underground, clean as a whistle. I'd been used to the New York subway, which isn't the cleanest in the world. This was spotless, absolutely spotless.

SH: Even during the war.

AP: Yes, yes. I was very impressed with that, but I didn't know that they shut down at a certain hour, you know. In New York, they're running twenty-four hours a day. So, I took her home and, of course, [it is a] black out, no lights, and then, I realized, as we're on the subway and going to her [place], where we got off, and she said, "You know, Bud, you're going to have to grab a cab, ... because the subway is closed and this would be the last train." I said, "Now you tell me." [laughter] Anyway, I dropped her off and, now, I'm walking down the street, trying to figure out [how] the heck I'm going to get back to London. I could walk it, maybe four or five miles, and a cab came down and it's full of GIs and one of them said, "We still have room for you." So, I got in and got back to London. [laughter]

SH: Where were some of your other missions to, the nine missions that you took? Did your missions change at all? You said Hamburg was the first one.

AP: Yes. We went to Hamburg twice. So, the other seven times, I have a list at home, but I just don't remember. We didn't get to Berlin. Hamburg was the major [target]; Leipzig was another one. You know, people have asked me; in fact, the other day, I was at the museum and they sic-ed this guy on me. He was looking for somebody that worked there. "Bud is a volunteer here. He's been here forever." So, this guy was writing a magazine article. I didn't know this until he started asking me questions and he said, "Weren't you ever concerned [about]; there's nothing in this museum about the utter devastation that you caused to Germany. There are no pictures of the utter devastation," and he's beginning [to get] all excited. He said, "Weren't you ever concerned about the people you're dropping bombs on?" I said, "No. I never gave it a thought, never once did I give it a thought. All I knew is, they were shooting at me and we're at war. Now, if there are innocent people down there, there wasn't anything we could do about it." "Let's make one thing clear," I said, "We never bombed a target with the idea of killing civilians. Our targets were always industrial targets. If we missed the target, that's part of war," and he got upset. Obviously, this guy is trying to [write] a different article about [how] war is hell. We all know that, but, to ask me, "Was I concerned about [the] people I'm dropping the bombs on?" no, not once. Maybe I was wrong, but I never thought about it, never thought about it.

SH: In the ball-turret, as you said, you really had a bird's eye view of what was going on.

AP: Oh, sure.

SH: How often were you escorted? You must have had fighter escorts.

AP: We always had fighter escorts, yes, yes.

SH: How successful was that? Were they welcomed?

AP: Very. Oh, yes, absolutely, absolutely. Well, we didn't always see them. We knew they were there. When we got hit, our first thought, and once we got the plane under control and we knew we had a chance [of] maybe ... surviving, we were concerned about Germans coming in for the straggler, and so, all of a sudden, I see a fighter plane coming towards us and it may happen in seconds, you know, and then, the top turret is firing. The waist gunner is firing and the pilot is screaming, "That's a Spitfire, that's a Spitfire, Goddammit," [laughter] and, as I said, every fifth shell was a tracer. You could see those tracers, just split seconds, going towards and going into the Spitfire. Well, the Spitfire took off as soon as he realized he was being fired at. He left and we never saw another friendly fighter.

SH: Would there have been an opportunity for friendly-fire accidents like that?

AP: I think it happened. ... I have no idea.

SH: Obviously, the visibility was such that they could not see that this was a Spitfire. Was there a signal?

AP: Yes, they could have. Yes, there was no excuse for firing at that Spitfire.

SH: Was there a way for the Spitfire to let you know that he was friendly?

AP: No, no. You have no idea of the number of hours we spent on aircraft identification. You're supposed to be able to, like that, tell whether that's a German fighter or that's a friendly fighter. First of all, a friendly fighter had no business coming into us the way he did, and so, [if] he was going to attack us, that's not the way, and so, I can forgive our waist gunner and the top turret gunner for firing at it.

SH: Had you heard stories about how the Germans would come with an American aircraft and join part of the formation?

AP: That happened.

SH: Did that ever happen to you?

AP: No. We had a German jet come in on our formation, come through our formation. Now, the Germans were so far ahead of us on development of rocketry [and] jets. We were way behind them on that. Had they concentrated on the development of jet aircraft, that would have been a close war, because we didn't have anything to compare with it. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

AP: I can't think of anything in the other missions. We got in no trouble. We were being fired on, fighters and flak, but our plane, we had no problem, and the list of missions, I just don't remember them.

SH: Right.

AP: That one, I'll never forget, naturally, naturally. Now, when the war ended, they wouldn't let us off the base. They said, "This is an English [day]. Let the English celebrate for a day. Tomorrow, you can go to whatever you want, but, today, let them alone." So, now, we're on the base. We did what we usually always did when we couldn't get off the base, drank too much, and, now, we all had .45s, sidearms, .45s. Now, the reason for the .45 [was], they told us, "Look, if you're shot down and you're on the ground and you're being approached by [the] military, you hand them the gun, because they'll take you prisoner. The gun is to be used to protect yourself against civilians, because the civilians, if they catch you, they'll kill you," because, at that time in the war, the civilians [were angry] and that was, you know, in our minds. Anyway, so, at the end of the war, we all had these .45s and the guys had too much to drink. Every once in a while, you'd hear a shot; you hear a shot and what they were doing, they were shooting holes through the Quonset hut roofs. That's what I remember about the day the war ended. [laughter]

SH: Not a good thing to do in rainy England.

AP: Now, we're leaving and, although we came over by ship, they asked us to fly a B-17 back and we took our ground crew with us and we took off, well, from Horham to Prestwick, Scotland, spent the night there, and then, took off the next morning.

SH: Did you fly in formation?

AP: No, no. We're all on our own now. So, we took off and, now, we're over the ocean and we hadn't been over the ocean too long when we lost an engine. Now, the requirement is that if you're not halfway to your destination, you were supposed to turnaround, go back. Now, we had the ground crew with us. The pilot said, "Okay, we just lost an engine. We've flown on three engines before and we're going home."

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

AP: So, he asked everybody on the flight, "What do you want to do?" and they said, "Oh, God, keep going, keep going." So, our destination for refueling was Greenland and we got over Greenland and they said, "You can't come in here. It's socked in. The weather's too bad. Go to Iceland." Now, I don't know how far it is from Greenland to Iceland, but, so, we go to Iceland. Now, we're over Reykjavik, Iceland, and trying to land and they said, "You can't land here. The weather is too bad. The ceiling is zero. The runway is solid ice and you'd never be able to stop. Go back to Prestwick," and the pilot; now, we lost another engine. We're on two engines, losing altitude, and he said, "We can't do that. We've only got two engines; we've got to come down, got to come down." So, we found a hole in the clouds, got down, hit the runway and they were right, we couldn't stop. Now, at the end of the runway was the ocean and Lonnie said, "Look, I'll give you guys a choice. We can either try to land or we can ditch in the ocean." Nobody

wanted to ditch, the heck with that. So, now, he's trying to ground loop a B-17, I told you what a ground loop is, and we're going down the runway sideways. The B-17 just will not ground loop and we slid off the runway, before we hit the end, into solid mud and I'll never forget our pilot, Lonnie, coming out and saying, "That's the last time I'm ever going to fly in an airplane. I've had it, I've had it." [laughter] I think that that plane is still up there in the mud. So, now, we're in Iceland. We had to stay there for ten days before they sent a C-54 up to pick us up, take us back home. Now, I told you earlier, [when] Lonnie wasn't flying, he got airsick and he was airsick the whole time from Iceland to ...

SH: Where was the peanut butter? [laughter]

AP: Presque Isle, Maine, was the first place in the United States and he was tossing his cookies the whole time. [laughter] So, that was the end of us flying as a crew. As a matter-of-fact, it's the last time we flew.

SH: You did not stay together past Maine.

AP: No. As a matter-of-fact, from there, the whole Eighth Air Force was sent to Sioux Falls, South Dakota. So, that was my second trip to Sioux Falls.

SH: When you got into Maine, you had to fly straight to Sioux Falls.

AP: Oh, no, no, no. I'm sorry, I'm sorry, from there to, I'd forgotten the name of the field in Boston we flew [to]. Anyway, ... from Presque Isle to Boston and we're only there a couple of days, and then, down to Newark, ... flew down to Newark and not as a crew. ... This was on a C-54, a whole bunch of other guys. Now, I'm in Newark and I've got a lot of money. So, I hired a cab to take me to Elizabeth, [laughter] and then, we're on furlough for thirty days and we all had to report to Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Now, we're there, getting ready. We were supposed to now get ready to go to the Pacific and train in B-29s, but, while we were there in Sioux Falls, ... they dropped the atom bombs and the war ended and that's a night I'll never forget, because the Air Force took Sioux Falls over and I can remember, like it was yesterday, fire engines going down the main street. It had been commandeered by Air Force guys and they were spraying everybody and I had too much to drink. ... You know, people say, "I had so much to drink, I don't remember what I did." I remembered everything, everything, except I couldn't stand up. [laughter] I met a civilian on the way back to the base and he said, "Could I have a souvenir from you? Could I have your tie?" I said, "Yes, if you give me your tie." So, we exchanged ties. Now, I put the civilian tie on, you know, and I go to the entrance to the base and an MP said, "Soldier, where the hell [do] you think you're going with that tie?" I said, "I'm going back to my barracks." He says, "You are not." I said, "Oh, really? You think you're going to stop me? What are you going to do, shoot me?" So, "Wait a minute," and he goes in and he gets a scissors and he comes back and he cut the tie off. He said, "Okay, now go." [laughter] I was so sick for three days that I vowed, then, that I would never again get drunk, never. I have never [again]; my limit is two drinks and that's it. If I'm at a party, I drink vodka and tonic, so [that] nobody knows whether I'm drinking water or vodka. After the two drinks, then, the glass is water. No, no, I said, "Never again, terrible." [laughter]

SH: What were your plans then?

AP: Then, I wanted to go to college after I got out. Well, from there, they sent me to Wichita Falls, Sheppard Field, Texas. That's a story, too. Why they sent me there, I don't know. We split the crew; we all went in different directions. Down there, just killing time, telling them, "Hey, when are you going to get rid of me? When are you going to let me out? I have enough points." ... There was this formation and I had nothing to do and I joined the formation and this was new recruits. Now, I'm going through all the deals, the tests, and I hit the radio test, you know, and I aced it, perfect score. That was the first time that anybody had ever aced this test. Now, they get the idea that I'm a recruit. I didn't have the insignia on my coveralls, and so, I get called up by the CO of Sheppard Field. He said, "Do you realize that you are a genius?" and he tells me, "You got a perfect score in this radio test." I said, "Wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute, hey, listen, I just came back from overseas." "You're not a recruit?" I said, "I'm not a recruit, no, and I went to radio school." "You went to radio school? Get out of here." [laughter]

SH: It proves that you can learn. [laughter]

AP: Anyway, so, then, now, they want to send me to Newark with five others. There were six of us and I'm the ranking NCO. So, now, I'm in charge of these other guys. One of them is a black, just one black. So, now, we're on this train and we're getting ready to have dinner in the dining car. So, I said, "Let's go to dinner," and the black said, "No," he said "I'm not hungry." So, I didn't think anything of it, because, you know, I'm not used to this segregation stuff. I'm from the Northeast. So, I said, "Okay." So, the next morning, I said, "Well, let's go to breakfast," and he said, "I'm not hungry." I said, "Wait a minute, wait a minute, what do you mean you're not hungry?" He said, "Well, you know, they won't let me in the dining room." "They won't let you in the dining car? Why not?" He said, "This is the South. They won't let me in there." I said, "Well, we'll see about that." So, I walked off into the dining car and I said, "Hey, we have a black," and the guy at the dining car is also black. I said, "We have a black soldier back there." I said, "You won't let him in the dining car." Oh, he said, "We can't let him in the dining car." I said, "You either let him in the dining car or I pull this rope," you know, that will stop the train. Oh, he said, "Please, please, please, don't do that, don't do that. Don't you realize what ... problems that we have? No, don't, don't, please don't do that." So, I didn't, I didn't, but I was tempted to stop the train, you know.

SH: How did you feed this man?

AP: I brought him sandwiches. The black said, "I'll fix up a sandwich for him," but that was my first exposure to that type of thing, you know, except one other time, as a crew. We're in MacDill Field, we're in the base theater watching a movie and my tail gunner was sitting to my right and a guy came to an empty seat [who] was a black. He sat down and my tail gunner was, you know, a real deep Southerner. He said, "Are you going to allow that black bastard to sit next to you?" I said, "Well, certainly, why not?" He wouldn't talk to me for two or three days, because I allowed this black to sit next to me. That's how prejudicial we are, you know. I wasn't exposed to stuff like that. Anyway, so, we got back to Newark and that's when I was discharged, and then, I, of course, wanted to go to college. Rutgers, at that time, maybe they still do, I don't know, required an entrance exam, even for GIs, and so, you know, I passed and

enrolled. ... Then, they gave [me] the opportunity, maybe they still do, but this was something new at that time, where they allowed you to go on an accelerated program, where you didn't have to take summer vacations. You could go straight through, and so, I got the degree in two years and seven months.

SH: What was your major?

AP: Well, business administration, majored in marketing.

SH: You took your courses at the Newark Campus.

AP: Yes, I did, yes, and graduated. The graduation ceremony, of course, was in New Brunswick. It was the only time that I was on the New Brunswick Campus.

SH: Really?

AP: I took all my courses in Newark.

SH: Where was the graduation held?

AP: I don't remember [that]. This was in 1948.

SH: Do you remember who spoke at your commencement?

AP: No, I have the program, but I'd forgotten.

SH: Your graduation was in New Brunswick, but you said you were in California.

AP: Well, when I finished, the graduation wasn't immediate. It was months later, because, when I finished, the commencement was at a certain time; so, I was out visiting my brother.

SH: He stayed then in California. Did he stay in the Navy?

AP: No, no.

SH: Did you ever think of staying in the Air Force?

AP: No, I got out as quick as I could, because of the GI Bill, you know. I wanted to get a degree and I was at the age that I wasn't interested at all in college activities, like fraternities or sports. I was a pretty good baseball player. I probably could have made their team, but I just wanted to get it finished as fast as I could and start earning a living, you know.

SH: Did you have any memorable professors?

AP: No. I can remember one who I thought was completely incompetent and I probably am being unfair to him, really, because I just think he read the textbook, like we did, and was

reading each chapter and making assignments as he went through the book. Now, I know, at that time; oh, I do remember one. Anyhow, at that time, I think, you know, Rutgers was taking off like gangbusters, you know, and they needed professors, instructors and whatever, and so, I know that they got some that weren't worth a (tinker's?) damn and I felt a little sorry for this professor. ... I even went to ... the head of the Marketing Department and said, "Look, you've got to change. This guy isn't teaching me anything, you know, and I'm not getting anything out of his course," but they said, no, they couldn't do it. They just didn't. "[You are just going to] have to make do with what you have." I don't remember him, his name, but I do remember the economics professor's name, (Flink?), his name was Flink, Dr. Flink, and I can remember him saying, in the first class, Dr. Flink saying, "I will not bring my mentality down to your level. As a professor, I'm bringing your mentality up to my level." Well, his level was so far beyond us, it wasn't even funny. So, he says, "I'll give you the choice when you're taking tests. I'll give you a choice, either multiple choice or true or false." So, we thought, "Oh, true-false, this should be easy," but he said, "Remember, ... every negative answer cancels out a positive answer, so, you could get fifty percent right and end up with a zero and I will not ... grade on a curve. If you all flunk, you'll all flunk." Well, I think he realized, eventually, that we're all going to flunk, because we didn't know what he was talking about half the time; we didn't know what he was talking about. We tried multiple choice. Every answer sounded right, you know. He was a smart man, no question about that, but none of us in that class ... ever knew what he was talking about. [laughter]

SH: What about the make-up of your class? Were they mostly GIs?

AP: They were mostly GIs, yes, co-ed, too, of course.

SH: Where did you live? Were you commuting from home?

AP: I was commuting from home, yes. As a matter-of-fact, I used to have flash cards made up. This is a trick that somebody told me about and I used to take the bus, you know, from my house to the campus, and, all through, I'd be going through those. So, I did pretty well on tests, oh, oh, except there were two courses that scared the living daylights out of me. To be able to get the business degree, I had to take a course in algebra. I had been away from algebra for years. I forgot every bit of algebra I ever learned and I'm supposed to take this college course in algebra and I struggled. I really struggled. I didn't know what I was doing. Now, the final exam [was], as you know, three hours and the professor said, "I'm not necessarily interested in the exact right answer to this problem. As long as your approach is a good approach, that's all I'm looking for." Well, I'm looking at this and my mind is a complete blank and I thought, "Hey, wait a minute, I could probably," he said the approach is all he's interested in. So, I thought, "I can solve this whole thing by means of a graph." So, I made out a graph and I turned that in. I get [it back] with a D and he said, a little comment, "I'm giving you a D because, obviously, you know nothing about algebra," but he says, "I'm giving you a D because of your ingenuity." [laughter] So, I got through that. Statistics was another one. Everybody says, "Oh, we have statistics. By God, that does it. That's tough." So, I was afraid of it, but the professor, although he was a good teacher, I'm sure, but he wasn't getting through to me and I didn't know what I was doing. A friend of mine was a statistician for an oil company in New York, a good friend of mine. We used to play ball together and I called him, I said, "Whiz," nicknamed Whiz, "I'm taking this

statistics course. ... I don't know what the heck I'm doing." He said, "Well, come over." So, I went over. In three sessions with him, just like that, ... I ended up with a B in that doggone statistics [class]. It's only because this friend of mine helped me out. The professor, if it hadn't been for this friend, I would have flunked it, you know, but I was good at a lot of the subjects. [laughter]

SH: How was the job market for you in 1948 when you finished?

AP: I blame myself for this, that, by then, I should have had a goal [of] the type of job that I wanted. Of course, it was marketing and I can remember one [of the] other professors, he was a visiting businessperson giving us a lecture. He was the president of Brown Paper Company and he said to us, "As you fellows are going to be graduating pretty soon," he said "never take a job that doesn't pay you enough to get by. Never take a job that doesn't pay you enough. You figure out what you absolutely need to get by and that's the minimum that you will take," and I had never forgotten that, never forgotten that. So, now, I'm out looking for a job. I really don't know; my brother now has a business, [the] tire business in Red Bank, New Jersey, and I thought about [it]. He wanted me to come with him and, oh, I love my brother, [but] we're completely opposite and we didn't get along that well when we lived together, although we get along better now than we did then. That wasn't for me. So, I took a job with Goodyear Tire and Rubber on the road and that didn't turn out, because, well, I wasn't making enough money and I finally got a job with another tire company, Lee Tires, in Newark and I wasn't married yet, so, it didn't really matter. I was making enough money to get by, but the owner of that tire company said, "Bud, you are overqualified. You know, you're wasting your time here." He said, "You know, [if] something happened to me, maybe we could get together, you buy this business." It was a good business, but he said, "Right now, you're overqualified." That's where I met my wife and we had known each other more than three months. We got married, knowing each other for three months, and we've been married fifty-four years, so, I think it's going to last. I think it's going to last. [laughter] We've had our moments, but, anyway, so, now, we're married and I don't have a job. I left the Lee Company thinking, you know, I had an inflated opinion of myself, that I could get a job like that. Well, it didn't work out that way. I got a lot of interviews. One interview that I thought, sure, I aced it and would get the job was with Olin Industries in New York, was a munitions [outfit], guns and whatnot, and they liked me. As a matter-of-fact, it was a good experience. They sent me a telegram saying that, unfortunately, they had chosen somebody else, but you've got a great future. That, I don't think, is often done, [but] it was in this case. Now, my wife is pregnant and I don't have a job and, of course, she can work for a while and I'm getting desperate, desperate, desperate. I answered a blind ad in the paper for General Motors and I answered this ad and I go into this room on Raymond Boulevard in a building and there are four hundred people in there, all answering the same doggone ad, you know. I thought, "Ah, this is a cattle call," you know, and they gave us a quick test and they told me, later, they gave you the quick test because they want to make sure that everybody can read or write, you know, and that eliminated a bunch, and then, they gave you a battery of tests that took all day and they evaluate those, and so, then, they called me and said, "We would like you to come work for us." This was for Motors Insurance Corporation, which was a division of General Motors. It's their insurance division, and so, I knew what I needed. I had it figured out. This is nickels and dimes today, but I needed two hundred-and-fifty dollars a month, three thousand dollars a year, and, now, they supply you with a car, you know. This job, [I] got a car.

I can get rid of the car that I was paying monthly, but I figured it out, “Hey, that’s not enough.” They offered me two hundred-and-twenty-five dollars a month and I said, “No, I need two hundred-and-fifty.” “Well, we can’t pay you.” I said, “Okay, good-bye.” So, I walked out. Now, a couple of months go by and I’m really [desperate]. [laughter] My wife’s getting ready to quit. We’ve got no income, you know. The phone rang and it’s Mr. Reer, he said, from Motors Insurance Corporation. By that time, I didn’t even remember what Motors Insurance Corporation was. I didn’t remember Mr. Reer and I said, “I’m embarrassed. I don’t remember you.” He said, “General Motors.” Well, then, it struck a bell. I said, “Oh, fine, yes, yes.” He said, “You still looking for a job?” I said, “Yes, I am.” He said, “Well, we’d like you to come in, talk to us.” So, I felt, “Well, I’ve gone this far.” I’m sitting across [from] Mr. Reer, just like you, and I said, “Well, nothing has changed. ... I still need two hundred-and-fifty dollars.” He said, “You’ve got it,” and I could have kissed [him]. [laughter] They saved my life, I’ll tell you. I’ve had a great career, great career, stayed with them the whole time.

SH: Did you?

AP: Oh, yes, thirty-five years.

SH: You saw that industry change a lot.

AP: Oh, oh, oh, let me tell you the story. I’m brand-new. This is in 1950 and the president of General Motors at that time was Harlow Curtis and he was giving a speech over at the Waldorf and this was required attendance. We had to go over and listen to Harlow and I’ll never forget his arrogant attitude, about how, you know, General Motors, he said, “General Motors, if they wanted to drive Ford out of business, they could drive Ford out of business tomorrow. They could drive Chrysler out of business tomorrow. We’ve got sixty percent,” I think it was sixty-two percent of the automobile market. He said, “We can drive anybody out of business, but we can’t afford to do that, because the government will be after us,” and he said, and I’ll never forget this one, I’ll never forget this, “Toyota, it’s like a little mosquito, a little mosquito,” he said. “They’ll never [beat us],” that’s how much he knew, president of General Motors. Now, General Motors was great to me. They took great care of me, but I can’t emphasize it enough, they had an arrogant attitude, from the day I started with them to the day I quit.

SH: Really?

AP: The day I retired. They finally got over that. That whole attitude has changed now. All those people are gone. We had a retiree volunteer club here on the island. I used to be president of that, only because nobody else wanted the job. That’s the only reason I was president ... and I thought they told me, “Will you take the job?” I said, “Yes,” because, “It will only be for a year, Bud.” I was in that job for seven years and we used to have these meetings and all these guys were much higher in the corporation than I was. I used to look out in the audience and think, “You guys are the ones that put General Motors in the bad position they’re in today. You’re not worth a damn, none of you.” [laughter]

SH: Different perspective.

AP: But, they were very good to me, really.

SH: Did you move around the country a lot?

AP: No, no. I stayed right in [New Jersey]. My job, as I said, was marketing and I started as an adjuster, which is pricing automobile damage. I went out to their institute at Flint, which is really a college. It's the General Motors Institute and [was] out there in a training session for this particular job and I stayed as claims business. Again, this was the insurance division of GM. So, we sold retail insurance. We sold insurance protecting dealers and their inventory and all. ... A lot of the job was appraising automobile damage and settling claims for GM. ... I did that for twenty-five years, and [then], they took me into sales for GMAC [General Motors Acceptance Corporation] for ten years; my last ten years was training dealerships and their personnel on how to sell financing and insurance. So, that's what I did.

SH: Where did you live?

AP: I lived in Brick Township. You know Brick Township in New Jersey? Do you, do you? Well, first, [after we] married, we lived in Montclair for six months, and then, in Plainfield for another two years and they transferred me down to the Shore area and that's [where] I spent the rest of my career, down there, and I stayed in the State of New Jersey for [that time].

SH: How many children did you have?

AP: Two daughters, both out in California. One lives on a sailboat in Alameda. You know where Alameda is? It's off of Oakland, in the bay, and the other one is down in Orange County, in Southern California.

SH: Do you have any reflections on how World War II impacted the man that you became?

AP: I think, probably, outside of my parents, it had the biggest influence on me, the biggest influence on me, yes. ... I don't want to start waving the flag, but [I am] realizing what a great, great country [this is] and how lucky we are to have been born here. We take so many things for granted, for granted, and I can understand ... people resenting us because of all we have and how little so many millions and millions of people have, but I'm not going to take blame for the fact that I was born in the United States. I'm lucky, I'm lucky and I'm lucky to have survived the war. I get choked up when I think about all; you know, there are no live heroes. There's not one live hero anywhere. All the heroes are under those white crosses. When you think about them, from eighteen years old to maybe thirty, the majority of them are in that category, all that wasted, wasted brainpower. Now, I do realize, too, that it's necessary for us to go to war, now and then. We were attacked in Pearl Harbor. What choice did we have? We had no choice, we had no choice and we never did anything, or do anything, to gain territory, for crying out loud. Any time we'd ever gotten involved in anything, we're trying to help people. I don't mean to get on a soapbox, but, by God, you're looking at a pretty patriotic guy who realizes how lucky he is. That experience is something I wouldn't want to go through again, naturally, but it, I think, really made me, not that I wouldn't have ended up pretty well. Anyway, I don't know. I'm not too sure about that.

SH: Thank you so much for your time and thanks for all the work you do to preserve the history of the Eighth Air Force.

AP: Oh, yes, that's something that, you know, being retired, I can do anything I want. Anything I'm doing, I do it because I like to do it. Other than that, I don't think I've beaten all the tables. I shouldn't be still collecting a pension from General Motors. [laughter]

SH: Thank you so much.

AP: Well, thank you.

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

Reviewed by Dan Achatz 2/05

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 3/4/05

Reviewed by Dan Achatz 4/10/05

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 4/25/05

Reviewed by Albert Porter, Jr. 5/5/05