RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANK A. WISWALL

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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BOONTON, NEW JERSEY
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TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Roger Zepeda: This begins an interview with Lieutenant Colonel Frank A. Wiswall. I am Roger Zepeda …

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: … Sandra Stewart Holyoak …

Frank Wiswall: … Frank Wiswall. [laughter]

RZ: The date is April 25, 2008.

SH: We are in Boonton, New Jersey. To begin, could you tell us where and when you were born?

FW: I was born in Brooklyn, Flatbush, Brooklyn, in 1919, on September the 12th, 1919.

SH: All right.

RZ: Could you tell us about your family, your parents, give us a little more background?

FW: Well, my dad came from New England, Massachusetts, Lawrence, Massachusetts, and my mother came from Brooklyn. Now, what else would [you like]? …

SH: What did your father, or his family, do in Massachusetts?

FW: Well, the first thing that I remember my dad telling me [was], he went and worked as a busboy in; oh, gosh, I can't think, remember the name of the place.

SH: That is okay. We can add that later. [Editor's Note: His father worked in the White Mountains.]

FW: But, it was there that he met the man that he later became affiliated [with] in his business in New York City. He was a very successful man and he worked with E. N. Campe Corporation, 350 Broadway, almost downtown, in today's language. …

SH: Was he a salesperson?

FW: He was [employed] as a salesman. He was a very sharp salesman, too, my dad. [laughter]

SH: What were they selling? What was the product?

FW: Well, he was selling knitted goods, and then, after he left the Campe Corporation, he went into business by himself. … He had one customer that really made him, and, believe it or not, it was F. W. Woolworth. … My dad had improvised and made these little swinging picture frames, and he called himself the B. A. Wiswall Corporation, and he had a factory down in, I think it was Pleasantville, or near Pleasantville, that manufactured all these things for him. … That went along fine until the '20s.

SH: Right, the Great Depression.

FW: The Depression, and, to me, that was an awful period of time. … We lived in Mountain Lakes, NJ. We moved to there about 1920 or 1921 and, in those days, we had a beautiful, good house, which still stands, although the third floor has been renovated, because it was burned out by some people. … Now, where was I here with that?

SH: You were talking about your beautiful home in Mountain Lakes and how good it was.

FW: Oh, yes. We had two maids and my dad was a terrific landscaper and he had a regular little show home, with small pools and gardens all over the place. … Then, with the Depression, we lost everything, including the house, and those were bleak days, … but I'm glad that I lived through them, because they made me a much better person, I think. I'm one of these jokers that I never get anything, and my wife is the same way; if I know I can't pay for it immediately, I don't buy it, [laughter] … but those days, as I said, and I think I'm repeating myself, made me a much better person, because … we learned how to live with, oh, practically nothing. … Well, where do we go from there?

RZ: Could you tell us how many brothers and sisters you had?

FW: I had two brothers. I had two brothers that passed away in infancy, and my brother, Bert, just died, well, just, oh, three or four years ago now, and my brother, Fred, … Fred's been gone about ten, I believe, and so, I'm the "Last of the Mohicans," I would say. [laughter]

SH: There were four boys, brothers.

FW: Three boys [growing up], but the two that died, I never saw. They died in infancy.

RZ: Are you the oldest?

FW: I'm the only one.

RZ: The oldest out of your brothers.

FW: Oh, no, … five years in-between each one of us. Bert, my younger brother, was five years younger and my brother, Fred, was five years older.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Can you talk a little bit about your mother's background, where she was from?

FW: Well, she's from Brooklyn, I mentioned that, and … she remained a housewife for right up until the war.

SH: What about her family background? Were they always from Brooklyn?

FW: No, they came from Alsace, Alsace-Lorraine.

SH: Her parents?

FW: Her parents, yes.

SH: Did you know them?

FW: Oh, yes, my grandmother and grandfather, I knew well and they visited us quite often, when we lived in Mountain Lakes, and stayed with us.

SH: What did your grandfather do in Brooklyn? What was his occupation?

FW: Well, he was retired when I knew him. [laughter] …

SH: Do you know what he did before?

FW: No, I don't. I don't really remember. I don't remember.

SH: Did he ever talk to you about his life in Alsace-Lorraine?

FW: As I remember my grandfather, he was always seated in a chair, reading a book, and I think he read every book in our house, and my dad had quite a few, but I should point out that I was gifted, because I had three grandfathers. I had, well, two grandfathers and a great-grandfather, and my Great-Grandfather Adams had a mission in Lawrence, where he was more or less like a pastor, and he would take these, what do you call them? I don't want to say, use the word, "bums," but he would take them off the street and bring them in his mission and nurture them. …

SH: Was this Great-Grandfather Adams on your mother's side of the family?

FW: No, that's on my father's side.

SH: On your father's side.

FW: Yes, on my father's side, yes, and I bear his name; my middle name is Adams. …

SH: Okay. I did see that in your diary, actually, before the interview started.

FW: Yes.

SH: Was he in New York? Is this where Pleasantville was?

FW: Pleasantville, New Jersey. … Now, this is where my dad's plant was.

SH: Was that where your grandfather's mission was?

FW: Oh, no, in Lawrence, in Lawrence, Massachusetts.

SH: Okay. I have got to get my geography right. [laughter]

RZ: What denomination was your grandfather a pastor in?

FW: I don't know whether he was a Protestant [Presbyterian?] or a Methodist. I know that he preached once in an old church in Boonton.

Mae Wiswall: Methodist.

FW: Methodist? It was Methodist.

SH: Okay, that is great. When he came to visit, did your great-grandfather come to visit you here in Mountain Lakes?

FW: Oh, yes. Well, he lived with us in Mountain Lakes, until he passed away, and I think I was either …

MW: I have a story.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Your grandfather's mission in Lawrence, what are some of the stories that you remember him telling you about?

FW: Well, that was the primary one, but I remember that. …

MW: They want to hear that.

SH: Please, could you tell us the story about your grandfather?

FW: Oh. Well, Grandpa used to take these drunks off the street and give them a bed and one thing and another. … When they would get in bed, they would usually put the bottle under the pillow, and, when my grandfather found that they were asleep, he would go and get the bottle and pour the booze down the sink and fill it with tea and put it back under the pillow. Now, that's as far as the story went, as far as I was concerned, because Gramp never told me anything further, [laughter] but I know that, one thing that I remember, he had, and I can't find it and I don't know where it is; it got lost in the family, the way things do. He had a little booklet of sayings and hymns, and I used to sit on his lap and he would sing me these songs, and I remember one was *They Rolled Away the Stone* and every song that Grandpa sang was in the same tune, the same tune, the same tune, [laughter] and I always remember that. The little store in Mountain Lakes, right on the borderline of Mountain Lakes and Boonton, we used to walk [to it]. It was only three or four blocks, and I was at that age where I had to hold a hand, but Grandpa had a never-empty little purse that he kept in his pocket that always had pennies in it.

… We'd go to the little candy store, oh, it's still there, only it's a real-estate place now, and buy me a licorice cigar or a licorice pipe. I remember that just as if it were yesterday, and then, we'd walk back home, [laughter] but I was very fortunate to have three grandpas at that time.

SH: That is a wonderful story.

FW: Yes.

RZ: Was religion an important part of your family life?

FW: Well, yes. Believe it or not, my mother was a very devout Christian Scientist and I was a Christian Scientist; went to Sunday school until the time I went in the service. Well, I think you could go until you were twenty, and that's all I ever knew in religion until Mae and I got married, in the Presbyterian church here in Boonton. The minister was Dr. (Cutler?), at that time. He suggested that, with the children, it would be best if we were both of the same religion. So, I joined the Presbyterian Church and I've been a Presbyterian ever since. … I do remember that when I first got in the service, and I'm jumping ahead now, I was in the horse cavalry, and we were stationed at Columbia, Fort Jackson in Columbia, [South Carolina], that there was this one other man in our troop that had been raised a Christian Scientist. … He and I used to get together in-between the tents on a Sunday, after; well, we had formations. Here, I'm jumping around, but we had formations. One, the formation would walk us to the chapel and we'd walk in the front door and go right straight through and go out the back door, but we had been to church, and I could never figure that out, but that's what we did. Anyway, he and I used to sit in-between two tents. There were tents that we lived in at that time, well, half tents, half wood on the bottom and a canvas top, and we would do what was called, "The Lesson," the Christian Science Lesson. We did that every, well, not every Sunday; we did it on occasion, because we were usually pretty busy when I first got in the service.

SH: We will get back to that. That is a great story. Were there any discussions between your mother, as a Christian Scientist, and your grandfather, as a Methodist minister?

FW: No, no. He was always interested in [Christian Science] and he went to church with my mother many times. No, no, never a problem; that's one thing.

SH: I was curious about that. Did you go to school in Mountain Lakes?

FW: Yes. I went to Mountain Lakes Public School. Oh, there was a big thing. The only time it ever happened to me, I started school in kindergarten. My birthday is September 12th and I think I started school a few days before the 12th, but, when the 12th came, I became six years old. So, I was too old for kindergarten and I was immediately promoted to first grade. [laughter] That's the first time anything like that ever happened to me, but I went through nine years of school in Mountain Lakes, through grade school, junior high school and one year of high school. When I was in ninth grade, we had to make our choice, whether we'd go to Morristown High School or Boonton High School. … I always figured, well, Boonton was closer to home. So, I chose Boonton and I went to Boonton High School, where I graduated, and that's one thing, I

never put in the year [on the pre-interview survey]. I don't know why, but I did graduate. [laughter] You must've thought I was pretty ignorant.

SH: You talked about when you lost the house; how old were you when you lost the house in Mountain Lakes?

FW: Well, I was still, I think, I just; it's strange that you should ask me a question and my memory … of those days is so vivid. I think that I was either eighth or ninth grade, or I might have been just starting in high school.

MW: I think that's right.

FW: … But, I can remember those years very well. Unfortunately, they weren't happy years, but we stayed together and we were a family. …

SH: Your brother was five years older. Was he already graduated from high school?

FW: No. Let's see, Fred graduated, because I was in high school; we were in high school together. He failed a couple of years. Well, he was like me. When I was in high school, or in school, even the ninth grade, my primary interests, in those days, was sports and girls. [laughter] … I always remember that and I tell everyone, which, once again, I'm digressing and I'm going ahead, but I so wish that I had done my homework and that I had studied harder when I was in my upper grade schools and in high school. When I was in high school, I did as little as I could get away with, let's put it that way, [laughter] and I'll tell you an interesting story [about that]. I took chemistry, it was either physics or chemistry, and I loved the teacher. He was a great man. … I became a Mason, later on in life, and found out that he was also a Mason. In fact, he was there when I got raised. When I got my, I think it was a midyear [exam], it was either a midyear exam or my final exam, in chemistry, and, when I, we all, came back to class and we got our papers, … I remember raising my hand. I said, "There must be some mistake. You have 'G+' on my exam," and everybody starts laughing. Well, I was a class clown anyway. [laughter] … He said, "Well, Frank, I sort of figured that that was about the best grade I could give you," but, fortunately, he put "F" on the report card. He didn't put "G," [laughter] but it doesn't go down any lower than that. I've never forgotten that, though, and we became great friends later on in life.

SH: [laughter] I know that is one of Roger's questions; what was your favorite subject?

FW: Well, I loved science, but, like, I started out with biology, and then, I went from biology to physics and physics to chemistry, but, you know, those are required subjects, because I wanted a scientific diploma and I wound up with a general one, which I guess is "general know-nothing." [laughter] I imagine that's about what I proved [to be] when I was in school. … I liked English, but my favorite, I thought, would be science, but I can't say, because I didn't work. I honestly didn't. I didn't work, and I've never been proud of that fact and, later on, I'll tell you why. [laughter]

SH: Okay, we will get to that. [laughter] One question I did want to ask was about your father and his military service. Before we began the interview, you talked about having some documents about your father's service.

FW: Well, my dad always told us, when we were small, he fought the "Battle of Ink," because he was in Washington, DC, during the war. [laughter] He never saw combat, he never [went overseas], but that's where he was based and where he worked out of, and I don't know what he did. He was a first lieutenant in the Quartermasters Corps.

SH: Okay.

FW: I honestly don't, other than he fought the "Battle of Ink." That's … all he ever told us.

SH: I suspect this class clown thing is kind of inherited. [laughter]

MW: Oh, yes.

SH: I think I asked you this question already, but what did your grandparents from Alsace-Lorraine do when they first came to this county? Did they immigrate together? Do you know?

FW: No, I don't really know. In fact, when I say that Grandpa came from Alsace-Lorraine, I'm not sure that that is where he came from, but I know that he was a furrier and that up until when he retired, as I say, I don't really know too much about what he did or how he did it or when he retired or what he was. I do remember he was "Grandpa."

SH: Okay, all right, fair enough. Grandma was a housewife.

FW: Yes, she was a housewife, always.

SH: Do you have any stories of your grandmother from Massachusetts, your Grandmother Wiswall?

FW: Grandmother, oh, well, I remember, Fred, … being older, I remember, he used to go up there and spend, oh, a couple or three weeks every summer, because he was older, and then, when I reached his age, of course, we were in the Depression stages, so, there wasn't any way that I could go up or be sent up there, but the house was always open to us. … My dad would always go up there at least once a year, drive us all up, but there, again, you see, it was "Grandma," [laughter] and she was always … a good, kind person and we loved her deeply, but I can't remember anything outstanding.

SH: Okay.

FW: She was the daughter of my Great-Grandpa Adams.

SH: Okay. That is where the Adams and Wiswall crossed. I got it.

FW: Yes. She was an Adams when she married a Wiswall.

SH: As a kid growing up with an older brother, five years older, and a younger brother, five years younger, did you play at all together, did you share friends, or was it just two separate worlds?

FW: Well, mostly, yes. … Fred and I, who was my older brother, we got along very well and we used to, I remember, pitch and catch, we did that for years and years, fished together, hunted together. No, we had a very good rapport, and my brother, Fred, later on, became a, what do you call it? What are those people that are a collector of shark's teeth, which I still have a bunch [of] upstairs? … He and his wife lived in Venice, Florida, and he was at the site of where an old canal had gone through and that place was loaded with shark's teeth. Because, I remember, I went down there with him to dig, and, while he was digging, he had a heart attack, right then and there. …

SH: Are you saying shark's teeth?

FW: Shark's teeth, yes.

SH: Okay, I wanted to make sure I understood.

FW: Go upstairs in my top drawer.

[TAPE PAUSED]

MW: She wants to put that back on.

SH: Okay.

FW: My brother, Fred, when I went in the service, he worked for Hercules Powder Company in Kenvil. … It's Kenvil or Roxbury, I think it was Kenvil, they called it then, and I think they call it Roxbury now, but he was, what was he termed? necessary for them, a powder company in Kenvil. … It always bothered him, … because, sometimes, on occasion, he would be looked down on. [Editor's Note: Hercules Powder Company, a major producer of explosives during the Second World War, had manufacturing facilities in Kenvil, an area within Roxbury Township, New Jersey.] He was a healthy, much bigger than I am, young man and there he was, living high on the hog, working for [Hercules] in Kenvil and not going in the service, but he couldn't have gone if he wanted to, because he was; what did they call that?

SH: War-related, war necessary?

FW: Yes, war effort or something, yes.

SH: He was deferred.

FW: I remember, yes, he was deferred, and that's what … he did during the entire war.

SH: To back up a little bit, you said Fred had a little trouble in school. Did anybody ever think about going to college? Had you had any thoughts of that?

FW: Well, in those days, I graduated from high school in 1937 and I got a job, through my Sunday school teacher, in New York [City] for the Bank of Montreal, 64 Wall Street, for twelve dollars a week. … Out of that twelve dollars a week, I had to buy my lunch, I had to buy my railroad ticket into New York and I had to give my dad, I forget how much it was, three or four dollars a week board, and, in those days, for the Wiswall Family to even think of college, negative is the end, no, and we just didn't. It wasn't thought of.

SH: Did your father find employment? You said he had lost his business.

FW: Well, … he worked with a man for awhile, I remember, what was it? lubricating oil, selling a lubricating oil, and then, finally, I don't know when it was that he decided to change, or it wasn't lucrative enough, but he went to work for E. F. Drew [and Co, Inc.], in Boonton, which is where Wal-Mart is now. That was a big factory in Boonton. First, it was called (WACO Line?), and then, it was called E. F. Drew.

RZ: This is all through the Depression.

FW: After the Depression.

RZ: After the Depression?

FW: After the Depression. … Well, that's about it, that's about it.

SH: How did they keep food on the table? How did you manage after that, when he lost his business?

FW: Well, I know there was always food to eat and, to tell you the truth, in those days, at my age, [laughter] I don't imagine I worried too much, as long there was something to eat.

SH: Yes, okay.

FW: I don't really remember how they all did it.

SH: Do you remember other families in your neighborhood being affected by the Depression?

FW: Oh, well, yes. I remember, Mountain Lakes … got a terminology; first, the people in Boonton called them "the ten-cent millionaires," and which was true. They were. Mostly, in those days, they were looking down on people and they had; what was I [saying]? Oh, they had "midnight movers," because there were many deeply in debt and they all had beautiful homes, and it would work out, somehow, but around when it was late at night, and one thing and another, all of a sudden, they had packed everything up and they were gone.

MW: That was the Depression.

FW: That's what we'd call "the midnight movers." Now, what happened to them or if anything happened, I don't have the slightest idea.

SH: When you lost your house, where did you and your family move to?

FW: Well, we rented a house, on 9 Cobb Road, in Mountain Lakes, for awhile. They wanted me to be able to finish high school in Boonton. … They moved then to Dover and I was fortunate enough to be able to stay with a family in Mountain Lakes until I finished high school.

SH: What about the politics in the family? Was your family involved in politics at all?

FW: No, but they always said they were Republican and that's what I say I am today. I'm a Republican, because my dad was. [laughter]

SH: What did they think of Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal?

FW: Well, I know that my dad, and when I say my dad, whatever my dad did, I know my mother did, that he listened a lot to FDR, and … what he thought, what his thoughts were, let's see, I was in the service, I guess, when FDR passed away, yes.

SH: Yes, you would have been.

FW: But, I don't think my father ever talked very much about politics at all. … In fact, I don't remember him talking about politics.

SH: As a young man, did you see any of the WPA or CCC projects? [Editor's Note: The Works Progress Administration (WPA) and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) were New Deal agencies involved in mobilizing the unemployed in public works projects.]

FW: I heard of them.

SH: Did you?

FW: I heard of them, and some of my [friends], people that I knew, went in and got involved in those, but, I was, what? … Well, it was in about October of 1940, just where that fits in with all these hard times, they came up with this conscription bit. You had to [register for the draft], and that's one thing that I will say, and I'm a preacher of it right now, you had to put in a year of service, everyone, every able-bodied person, had to put in a year in the military, and so, I volunteered for it. You had to get a number, and then, they were calling out numbers and one thing and another, but I had the opportunity to [get in a unit]. Well, a friend of mine had played in a little dance orchestra and this fellow who played the saxophone was a member of the Essex Troop in Newark, the horse cavalry outfit. It's still [there], but they're mechanized now, of course. … He talked me into coming down and getting a look at what this outfit looked like, and so, I figured, "Well, [if] I have to put in a year, I'd rather be a volunteer than wait to be drafted."

So, I volunteered and I was sworn in, I think, after being a cadet down at the Roseville Armory in Newark for about a month or so. I was sworn in, and it was either in November or December, as a member of the National Guard.

RZ: What year was this?

FW: '40.

RZ: 1940.

FW: [Yes].

RZ: Okay. After high school, since you graduated from high school in 1937, what did you do?

FW: I was working for the bank.

RZ: The bank.

SH: In New York City.

RZ: Okay. Your friend wanted you to enlist. Did you want to enlist?

FW: No, no, he suggested it. He said I should, well, because I always talked about the service and, well, everyone, all of us, were talking about it, because we knew we were going to be called.

RZ: Okay.

FW: … But, what I was going to say is, I think that even today, if the economy would substantiate it, that the best prep school that a young man could go to, when he was seventeen or eighteen, would be a year in the military, and learn, primarily, discipline. I think it would be the best thing in the world. I went from 128 pounds, when I first got in the cavalry, when I left the cavalry to go in the Aviation Cadets, which I'll get to, I was up to, … I think it was 152, 153 [pounds], or something like that. … I was solid muscle, and I was a little, 128-pound weakling when I was in the [service]. [laughter] … I still love sports, when I played on the football team in Boonton, and the basketball team, but I think that that's a very good stepping stone between [high school and] college and, if some still wanted to go to prep school, they could, but, between high school and college, learn to be away from home, learn to fend for yourself, take care of yourself, learn right from wrong, if you didn't learn it any other way, but discipline was the primary [lesson]. … It was great and it was a great life, I thought.

SH: I want to ask more questions about that, but let us continue talking about high school and the fact that you played football and baseball.

FW: Basketball.

SH: Basketball. Were there other sports that you were involved in? There was also this little drop about being involved in a band, a dance band.

FW: Oh, yes. Well, that was after, actually, … I was out of high school.

SH: Okay.

FW: Out of high school, because I graduated from there when I was seventeen. So, I know I wasn't in a dance band then; it was after. I played … a trumpet in the high school band, but that always interfered with my [studies]. In fact, I got a point for graduation for being in orchestra, but, … between basketball and football, I missed so many practices and so many musical affairs, my orchestra teacher, and her last name was Miss Fagan, and I always said, "Fagan, youze is a viper," because she only gave me a half a point. "Frank, you were never here, so, I can't give you a whole point," [she said]. [laughter] So, I still have, in my report card, … a half a point instead of one, thanks to Miss Fagan. … Then, I can tell you, when I was in the orchestra in Mountain Lakes Public School, [this] is a sad story, [playing] trumpet, you have a quick slide from "B flat" to "A," and we had one march that we played, was the *March of the Boys Scouts.* … The music instructor in that was Mr. Milky, and he's a great man. We visited him in Florida, both Mae and I, right up until the time he passed away. … The other trumpet player and myself, Carl Kinscherf; he's gone. All my friends are gone now, all of them, but Carl and I flipped from "B flat" to "A." … The song, *March of the Boys Scouts*, starts out, [Lieutenant Colonel Wiswall imitates the trumpet's part of the song], and we went from "B flat," which the music was written in, to "A," and so, if you know what the rest of the orchestra came into, [laughter] and I remember Mr. Milky walked over to me, with his baton, and broke it right over my head. [laughter] "I don't remember doing that, Frank," he said, "I'm sorry, I shouldn't have done that." [laughter] I said, "You did it," but I'll never forget that. I was always in trouble. I had a laugh. In fact, that was my legacy in high school, that I left it to somebody, "Frank Wiswall's laugh." I'd always get in …

MW: Trouble for it.

FW: My favorite physics teacher, and he was in physics, he was teaching us how to heat a test tube; no, it must have been chemistry. … He was walking up and down and we were learning how to heat a test tube. … I held it out when he came by and … he grabbed a hold of it, and he's looking at me with this look [of pain] on his face. [laughter] He was Mr. Caplinger, and I couldn't stop laughing. [laughter] He said, "Frank, you're entirely too boisterous for this class. Get out," oh, and I still couldn't stop laughing. [laughter] I don't know; I wasn't a good boy. [laughter]

SH: What kind of afterschool jobs did you have?

FW: Well, I delivered the *Morristown Daily Record.* That's about the only thing that I did, oh, and mowed lawns here, mowed lawns in Mountain Lakes.

MW: And you raised chickens. You raised chickens, for their eggs.

FW: Oh, yes, I raised chickens. I started out with a hen and a rooster and I got my flock up [to fifty]. You can't have chickens in Mountain Lakes now, but, in those days, you could. I had fifty hens and they were pretty good layers, Plymouth Rocks and Rhode Island Reds, and there was this family in Mountain Lakes, the O'Dell Family, I remember them well, and they had nine children. … Mrs. O'Dell would buy as many eggs from me as I could give her. Well, gee, I had to buy food for the chickens and everything. So, that was one thing, taking care of that, because my father made me take care of the chickens and the coop, and one thing and another, and that was a source of income, which I bought the mash and the corn to feed the chickens [with]. … I delivered newspapers and I cut lawns, and I cut some pretty big lawns, that I wouldn't even look at today, for a dollar, [laughter] boy, and I mean big lawns. …

MW: And the hay. You used to cut hay.

FW: … No, that was in the cavalry.

MW: Oh, that was in the cavalry.

FW: Cavalry, the hay, boy, lifting bales of hay, oh.

SH: That will build your muscles. [laughter]

FW: Yes. It'll make you tired, too.

SH: Did you ever join the Boy Scouts?

FW: Yes, I joined the Boy Scouts and I loved the Boy Scouts and I had one problem. I became a Tenderfoot and, in order to become a Second Class Scout, in those days, you had to be able to swim fifty yards, and, to this day, I don't go in deep water. I just …

MW: He has a fear of water.

FW: Yes. I was just scared of deep water, I admit it, and I'm fine as long as my feet are on the ground and my head's above the water; but, so, I never got any further in Scouts, but I became the troop bugler.

SH: You already had the song down. [laughter]

FW: … Yes, and they used to get me on that all the time. I remember, the Scoutmaster, … he'd get me up in front of the troop, off to the side, to blow *Taps*, to end the evening session, and he would say, "Bugler, sound off." … I'd go to sound off and [Lieutenant Colonel Wiswall imitates a stifled blast of air]. They'd stuffed handkerchiefs up my bugle, [laughter] and this one time, they stuffed two of them up and I pulled one out and I started all over again and, I remember, the Scoutmaster was ready to kill me. … Then, there was a time that; you want a funny one? With my laughter, I got in trouble again. The committeemen, they're all big shots in Mountain Lakes at that time, and we're standing at attention and, I don't know, this gentleman, I won't mention his name, I know he's gone, but I still won't mention his name, he sneezed. … When he sneezed, his

teeth popped right in his hand. [laughter] Another time I couldn't stop laughing; I just couldn't. Memorial Day in Mountain Lakes, where we're standing [Boy Scouts] --you brought it up; it's your fault-- in a line and, well, I forget, they were reading a prayer or a sermon, or something like that. … This little dog came up and as he was walking along about every fourth boy there, he lifted his leg. … Then, it was a solemn moment, but what are you going to do? [laughter] … We all laughed. I couldn't help it. I was embarrassed that I laughed. …

SH: In trouble again. [laughter]

FW: Why? You people are laughing at me. [laughter] Oh, boy, but I've been invited back to Mountain Lakes every Memorial Day to stand as one of the "old-timers" in their parades, but I can't do it anymore. I just can't make them.

SH: Are they as serious?

FW: [laughter] Well, I'll tell you, this, I call him a nephew, I guess he isn't; my wife's niece, has a boy, well, has four boys, but the oldest boy went out for his …

MW: Eagle.

FW: His Eagle Scout and we, Mae and I, had gone along with the children from the time they were born. I've told all of them that, "Well, I've changed your diapers." … Even their mother, I changed the diapers on her, so did Mae, … but, now, what was I going to say? … They live in Randolph. He found a project that he could do for his Eagle Scout from the town and we helped him in that, and then, I was honored, when he became his Eagle Scout.

MW: He asked him to sponsor him.

FW: They asked me to come up and sponsor him, which I did.

MW: It was lovely.

FW: And I had to give a little talk about him, but he's turned out to be …

MW: A fine young man.

FW: Well, in fact, all four, they brought up four boys that are … perfect boys, above and beyond, and they're all [doing well]. One is in Villanova now, on a lacrosse scholarship, and the other one, T.J., he graduated from high school … before he got his Eagle Scout, but he didn't want to go to college. … He wanted to become an auto mechanic, and that's what he schooled for. How long was he in it, two years?

MW: Two years.

FW: Two years, and, now, he has a very good job with a Ford agency in, just outside of Philadelphia, PA.

MW: Pennsylvania.

FW: When we went to England, to go back to see my old airbase, and we took him with us.

MW: At thirteen.

FW: … Yes. I was just looking at some of the pictures that we took and he's a little, boy that grew up to be such a fine-looking, young man.

SH: Let us talk about some of the experiences that you had in the three years before 1940, when you went into the horse cavalry. What do you remember about your travels into New York? For a young man, was this an adventure?

FW: Well, it was.

MW: And the money he earned?

FW: I already mentioned that. I already mentioned the money. … Well, it was really an experience for me, because I think I'd been in to New York, as a little one, when my dad would take me in on a Saturday, when I wasn't going to school, but I'd never really had been around in New York, and that was an adventure. I enjoyed my work, a twenty-five-cent lunch in Horn and Hardart. You could eat like a king for twenty-five cents in those days, you really could, fortunately, [laughter] and I learned to mix with people and to get along. … I had responsibilities, which weren't great, but, … to me, they were important responsibilities. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Before we talk about some of the work that you did, how did somebody go from Mountain Lakes to New York in those days? Did you take the train?

FW: DL&W, "Delay, Linger and Wait;" you would say, "Delaware-Lackawanna Railroad," yes.

SH: "Delay, linger, and wait," I just caught it. [laughter]

MW: He's still a comedian.

FW: … Well, in those days, Mountain Lakes had a railroad station but I later on took a train from Dover, where we lived.

SH: Would you go into Hoboken, like we do now?

FW: Into Hoboken, and then, the ferry across to Barclay Street, cut across the Washington Market, some of these places are long gone, and it was a ten-minute walk to Wall Street. …

SH: What were your duties there at the bank?

FW: Well, I started out as a runner and that's the way I learned Downtown New York. I got pretty sharp at knowing where all the buildings [were] and what floors, all the banks and the different companies that the bank dealt with, to make deliveries to them.

SH: What does a runner carry or deliver?

FW: … Oh, I carried a little bag. You could always tell a runner because of this, little, not a briefcase, but more like a woman's purse, that you carry under your arm. You could always tell another runner, because that's what we looked like, that's what we were, and that's the way they usually started anyone out in the bank. And then, … I went into the wire room and all you did was run around with cables and wires that came in for the various departments. … You had to carry the mailbag around and deliver, pick up and then deliver. One job that I hated, there were two men, the general manager and another fellow, … running the tax department. They liked a glass of milk at lunchtime and I had to go and pour that milk in a glass and put a piece of paper over the top, with a rubber band, and bring it to each one and put it on their desk, and I always would think, "Why did I do that? If you want a glass of milk, can't you get up and get it yourself? Why do you have to [Lieutenant Colonel Wiswall snaps his fingers] have a boy do it?"

SH: Snap your fingers.

FW: And then, from the cable department, I went up front where there were two boys that sat where all the executives were and, there, you listened for the "cricket," [a noisemaking device], and whenever the cricket [clicked], you had to jump up and go to them and do whatever they told you to do. … Finally, after I don't know how long it was, seemed like a lifetime, I was promoted to the bookkeeping department and, from there on, I became great friends with the manager of the bookkeeping. His name was Fred Mara. In fact, we visited with him … until he passed away, yes, and we became great friends, and I made many friends at the bank. Of course, I just lost the last one, oh, what? about three … or four months ago. He was a Scotsman and he was my age. He was following behind me. There was another place where I made friends with people, and, to me, one of the most valuable things in life is a friend. … Once I get one, I don't want to lose him, and I'll go out of my way to maintain the friendship.

MW: Did he tell you what he earned when he worked in New York City?

FW: Yes.

SH: Did your salary keep going up with these different changes in jobs, when you went from being a runner to the cable room to doing the bookkeeping?

FW: Fifty dollars per annum. You asked, and I still, in one of those diaries, I have a couple of those little slips. You had to go in front of the general manager and stand there, and he would hand you this slip and you had to make believe it was manna from heaven. [laughter] Fifty dollars per annum, that's a dollar; that isn't even a dollar a week.

MW: I know.

FW: But, those were the days.

SH: Did they give you any kind of a bonus at Christmas?

FW: Negative, not in those days. … Maybe other people higher up, but I never got a bonus.

SH: As a young man traveling into New York, so cosmopolitan and sophisticated, were you paying attention to what was going on in Europe in 1939?

FW: To a certain extent, because the Bank of Montreal had to handle all of the British [assets], they were supposed to handle bonds, or something, of all the British subjects, … and Canadian subjects, that were in the United States, … very secret, and you couldn't even go in that section of the building. So, what they did and what they didn't do, [I do not know], but that was my only real thought of what was going on … overseas, where the "maniac" was building things up.

SH: When did you first hear about Hitler and what he was doing?

FW: I most likely heard about it, … or I read something about it, either through conversation or reading, when I was in the cavalry, in that first year.

SH: It really was not until after 1939, when he went into Poland, that you found out about it.

FW: Yes, I would imagine. I mean, well, that was the average [response]; I mean, if you're … a youth, I like to think I was a kid, but I should have been more interested than I was.

SH: You were just a kid.

FW: But, I wasn't.

SH: From the time that you were a kid until 1940, when you went into the military, what were some of the major events that you remember, whether they were celebrations or, say, when Charles Lindbergh crossed the Atlantic? Of course, you were very young then, but what were the major events that you remember, World's Fairs or anything of the sort?

FW: Oh, World's Fair, I remember the World's Fair that was in Long Island, … yes, in Long Island. I think the Perisphere, or whatever they call it, still stands from that. [Editor's Note: Lieutenant Colonel Wiswall is referring to the Perisphere from the 1939/1940 World's Fair held in Flushing Meadows, Queens, which was later torn down during the war for scrap metal. He may be thinking of the Unisphere from the 1964/1965 World's Fair held in the same location, which still stands.] I remember going to that, … and even younger, I can remember when the *Hindenburg* went down, at Lakehurst. [Editor's Note: The German zeppelin *Hindenburg* was destroyed in an accident at Lakehurst Naval Air Station in New Jersey on May 6, 1937.]

SH: Had you seen a dirigible before that? No, you had just read about it.

FW: No, read about it, yes. I was pretty ignorant in many ways, when I stop and think about it now. That was because my limited vision was that way; it wasn't that way.

SH: Were there other things going on in Mountain Lakes that were of tantamount interest for a young boy, other than sports?

FW: As a kid, most of the time, my biggest deal was fishing. I remember, I used to fish, fish, fish. That's what I did then, and then, after I got into my teens, I was pretty busy with all these little jobs that I was involved in.

SH: You talked a little bit about how your friend suggested that you come and check out the Essex County Armory. Is that what it is?

FW: Essex Troop Cavalry.

SH: It was called the Essex Cavalry.

FW: Cavalry, it was the 102nd Troop Cavalry, yes.

SH: Where was that, physically?

FW: Well, at that time, it was Roseville Armory in Newark and the Westfield Armory in Westfield, and I think it was the West Orange Armory in West Orange.

SH: Talk about that initial inspection, and then, your induction, if you would, please.

FW: Well, I remember, the only thing that I didn't have to be taught was how to march just a little bit, because I got that in Boy Scouts, but I joined as a cadet and, there, you had to learn how to salute and how to make a left turn and right turn, do this with your feet, and one thing and another. … At that time, when I joined the horse cavalry, I must say that, when we were growing up in Mountain Lakes, we had a pony, a little Shetland pony, but that's nothing like riding a horse, but I'd never been on a horse.

SH: Really? You had had the pony, but never ridden it.

FW: Oh, yes, but that pony, Brownie was about like that. You get on a horse and the horse is up like that. [laughter]

SH: All right, that is true.

FW: So, I would watch, they used to have equitation and practice drilling on horseback, in the Roseville Armory, where I watched and I wondered how I would do. … The first time I got on a horse, after we got down to Fort Jackson, I got thrown. [laughter]

SH: How long were you in the armories here in New Jersey before you were sent to Fort Jackson in South Carolina?

FW: We were inducted, or federalized, as they called it, on January the 3rd of 1941. So, I was only a couple of days [in New Jersey], and after that just a couple of visits, I mean, once or twice in the intervening period.

SH: For someone just entering the cavalry, what are your responsibilities? Are you feeding the horses, caring for them?

FW: What do you mean? When you get in the; am I federalized, am I in Fort Jackson now or am I in …

SH: You are still in Newark.

FW: You don't do anything, other than you're just a follower-on. That's all I was, really, up to then.

SH: Did you keep working during that time? When did you quit the bank to go into the service? Was it when you became federalized?

FW: Oh, no, they knew. Oh, they were so proud, the Canadians. It was a Canadian bank, and they were so proud of the fact that I was getting in the service. … In fact, I had more [attention]; some of the management, as you might call them, all of a sudden, they noticed me, because they knew that I was volunteering to go in the service, and the Canadians were pretty much involved, too.

SH: Was that because they wanted the United States to get involved in protecting England from the war?

FW: No, I think that that was because, well, everyone had a feeling, I guess, of what was around the corner, but I didn't know anything about that. …

SH: That is interesting, that they would be so proud of you for joining the military.

FW: Yes. Oh, they treated me like a new, different person, once I got in. When I … used to go in there on leaves, when, during 1941, of course, I didn't have any clothes other than the uniform to wear, because I was starting to grow out of everything, maturing and one thing and another, so, oh, boy, … somebody was always there to take me out to lunch, or do this or do that, and I was treated like royalty. I really was. I remember those days well. [laughter]

RZ: How did your parents feel about you enlisting?

FW: Oh, no. [laughter] I remember, my dad was … so proud of me that it was almost sickening.

SH: Really?

FW: Oh, yes, it was. He sent me; well, that was after I had finished my combat tour and I had been given a Distinguished Flying Cross. My father sent me, I think it was a couple of dozen Christmas cards, and in the bottom of it was, "Captain Frank A. Wiswall," and then, under it, he had "DFC," because that's what all the people [do in Europe]. We don't do that in this country, but, oh, in England, if you had DFC or ARP or QRQ after your name, oh, you were important, [laughter] oh, and (Fitzgerald?) [became] the guy that used to call me every year and say, "Oh, how are you doing, DFC?" [laughter] He and I bunked together at Langley Field. When I got these cards, he never let me forget them, [laughter] and he just died, I'd say, six or seven years ago. I never knew what happened [to him], but I got a card from his son that his mother and father had both died the previous year, and that's all I ever heard from him again, but he never let me live that down. He used to call me every year, without fail. So, you asked me, I'm telling you, and I didn't like that at all.

SH: How were you transported from Newark to Fort Jackson, South Carolina?

FW: Well, we had to lead the horses from Newark to the railroad station. … It wasn't too far, because, even today, the major railroads go through Newark, and load the horses on the railroad cars, and then, we took the train to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, and that was on January the 3rd.

SH: Did you have to care for the horses as you traveled or was there someone else to do that?

FW: No, they had someone; no, we didn't. I wouldn't have known what to do anyway, to tell you the truth, [laughter] and then, when we got to Fort Jackson, we had to lead the horses from … where the railroad [station was], wasn't too far from where we were going to be staying. In fact, they tell me that they still have some sort of a monument, or a bronze something, there, saying that the 102nd Cavalry was [there], brought the [horses?], and then, that's where my life started.

SH: Talk about what a traditional day would be like and what you did.

FW: Oh, boy, I wish I had … [my diary]. I know I have it tucked away somewhere. For awhile, and then, they cut down on it, our day would start at four o'clock, when we would "rise and shine." …

SH: Were you the bugler?

FW: Not at that time. Later on, I was.

SH: [laughter] Okay.

FW: Later on, I was. [You] watered the horses, and, after you watered the horses; we had about, all told, I think there were three horse troops, A Troop, B Troop and C Troop. I was in B Troop, and between the three troops, we had about five hundred horses, but we only had to worry about whatever the actual number was in B Troop, to water them, and then, after we watered them, we

had to feed them, and then, … after all that was done, we would walk, get back to the living quarters, which were half-tents; not half-tracks. …

SH: Half tents?

FW: Half tents, wooden floors, canvas tops, coke stove in the middle to [provide] heat. You know, in South Carolina, it gets pretty cold in the morning, too, in the wintertime, and that was wintertime then. We had to police the streets, finish dressing, and then, we would eat, and then, our day would start. I know they had regular schedules for us. … Remember, a lot of them, I'd never [been in the service, and] while if they'd been in the Essex Troop before, they didn't really know what military life was. I mean, you'd meet once a week and that was it. So, then, we had to start learning what it was all about.

SH: What would you be doing, learning to march?

FW: Marching, care of rifles, triangulation, later on, would come, going to … ranges, where you'd fire the rifle, pistol, listen to lectures on gas warfare.

SH: What about taking care of your equipment and your horses?

FW: Well, oh, yes, well, the horse always came first. Well, we would usually have equitation in the morning, ride most of the morning, up until the time it was for the horses to be watered again and fed again before we had lunch. The horse was always the primary deal.

SH: You talked about getting bucked off.

FW: Well, yes. I still remember the mare. I don't know whether she was a mare or whether it was a mare or a stallion or not, but the name was Gossip, … the first horse I ever got up on. … We were riding in our little squadron, and in the troop, and I would say, oh, … all we were doing is going around in a circle, trying to hang on. My horse, Gossip, got too close to the horse in front of him and the horse in front of him broke wind, [laughter] I'm telling you, and my horse went up like that and I went off like that. [laughter] … I wasn't hurt, but I can remember it so [vividly], and I got up and I went back to that horse. … [laughter] Captain McGowry, I'll never forget that man, he's one of the best officers I think I ever served under, Captain Mcgowry reamed me out. Oh, well, I won't use the vernacular of what he did to me, standing there in front me, "Don't let that horse ride you; you ride it!" … I'll never forget that. … I wasn't hurt.

RZ: [laughter] Were you laughing?

FW: My feelings were hurt, [laughter] I'll tell you that, because I got reamed out in front of the rest of the troop, but I learned that you've got to make the horse obedient, the same as you have to learn to be obedient, and you'd be surprised; you can do it. [laughter] I learned that after awhile. I got so that I was assigned a mare, Enigma was her name, 7K211 was branded on the side of her neck. … We'd be out on [the trail], during maneuvers, and this was later on in the year, after both the mare and I got to know one another. I could lie down right alongside of that

mare, as she was standing, and we'd take a break on the road as we were, during maneuvers. I never had to worry. That horse wouldn't step on you, wouldn't run away or anything else.

MW: You would lay underneath that horse, right?

FW: What?

MW: You laid underneath the horse, you said?

FW: No, no.

MW: Or sat.

FW: Alongside of it. I wouldn't intentionally [lay underneath], but I wouldn't have been afraid to.

MW: That's what I mean.

FW: No.

RZ: Were you very attached to your horses?

FW: Are you? Oh, gosh, yes; well, it's equipment. You treat that horse the same as you would your rifle, the clothes you wear, everything else. That was your means of warfare, in those days.

RZ: Did you have great affection for the horses?

FW: Oh, I did, yes, and I think most of the men did. I remember, … this is one of the funnies. During maneuvers, we were pulling a charge. We were spread out, and you've seen the charge in the movies, I'm sure. I still watch cowboy movies, Indians, [laughter] but, anyway, we were spread out and this little, I think it was an L1 or an L2, it was one of these little planes, like you see flying around here, with the single-engine, … came low over us and our horses went all over the place. Oh, gee, [laughter] that is, what I say now, … later on, when they wrote that song, "Please, Mr. Custer, I don't want to go," [Verne Larry's *Mr. Custer*], if I was the one that was going to write a song, that was the song that I was going to write, [laughter] but, anyway, my mare got [hurt]. There was a little crevice in the terrain, when we're on this charge. She went down in this, not like a hole, but like an indentation, and there was some barbed wire down there and I remember that 'Nig [nickname for Enigma] cut her teat, scraped by this barbed wire. … The veterinarian gave me some, well, it was purple ointment and salve. … That's about the only thing you ever used for saddle burns, or one thing and another, but, anyway, I had to take her and stand her in water, and there was plenty of water. She was just standing in the water, but I had to sit alongside of her, with this salve, and massage that teat, and, as I would do that, the mare would turn around like that and look at me. … I used to be the laughing stock of the troop, because everybody said, "Wiswall's playing with his mare now." [laughter] … Oh, always happened to me, these things, [laughter] and this look that I would get from the [mare], [laughter] but, anyway, … those are the things that you had to do, and you had to watch for

saddle sores, the way you put your saddle [on] and the saddle blanket under it and you had to put it just so, you know.

SH: How long were you down in South Carolina, in Fort Jackson?

FW: Well, everything was honky-dory. We were getting ready to think that we were going to come home come early December of 1940.

SH: 1941.

FW: … '41, yes, you're right and I'm wrong. Don't mark me up, [laughter] "G+," anyway. [laughter] So, we were really thinking about coming home, and then, of course, Pearl Harbor came along and, boy, oh.

SH: When were you scheduled to come back?

FW: It would have been January the 3rd.

SH: You would have just been in for one year and back.

FW: The one year, that it was supposed to be, would have been finished, and, in those days, if you were twenty-eight years old, which there were some, you were too old to be in the service. So, men, some men, got out, say, in October, because they were twenty-eight.

SH: Okay, men that had gone down with you.

FW: Yes, and that was, twenty-eight, now, you stop and think back, "Twenty-eight years, gee, you're still a [young] chicken." [laughter]

MW: When you reach eighty-eight, that's what happens. [laughter]

SH: If you would, can you talk about what you can remember about December 7th? How were you informed and what was your reaction?

FW: Well, I don't know whether we were in Columbia. I ought to get my [diary]. See, on things that I [cannot recall], I look in the diary, [laugher] but it seems to me that … the base wasn't; base, let's see, I'm not in the Air Force, yet, the fort was actually put on the alert because of Pearl Harbor. … Of course, FDR [President Franklin D. Roosevelt] had declared; no, he hadn't declared war, yet, I guess. Yes, he had declared war by December …

SH: December 7th was a Sunday.

FW: It's a Sunday.

SH: Were you on leave?

FW: Oh, that's it. Well, that, we were frozen there. … Oh, I was in town, I think, with a whole bunch of fellows, and we had to be searched before we could get back into Fort Jackson. The MPs were; I'm trying to remember. It's funny that …

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: We were just talking about what you remember.

FW: Yes. Do you want me to read that off again?

SH: For the record, Mr. Wiswall has his diary, which he has kept faithfully for years, if you would just read that entry.

FW: All right, "December 7th, went to church in AM. Columbia in PM. Saw *Swamp Water*, [a 1941 film]. Japan declared war on United States. Battleships reported sunk and many people killed." On December 8th, I write, "Dismounted drill. Horse exercise and equitation riding in AM. Cleaned the rifle in PM. Went to Doghouse at night for a few beers." That was the canteen up the street.

SH: Did they bring you together at any point and talk to you about what had happened? Some people tell us that when they heard that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor, they thought, "Where is Pearl Harbor?"

RZ: Did you have an idea where Pearl Harbor was?

FW: I don't think I did. I didn't know where anything was outside of New Jersey and New York in those days, and a couple of times that I'd been to Massachusetts. It's interesting. I'm seeing if I put anything down here. Now, on the 9th, that's a couple of days later, of December, "Dismounted drill. Horse exercise and equitation riding in AM. On stable detail on PM. Men over twenty-eight going to be held." Remember, I told you that they were going to be held, "The war situation is getting very serious. Beer party at night." [laughter] Well, you've got to remember, when you're twenty-one and twenty-two, those are the [priorities]. "Drill equitation in AM. PM off. Only twenty-five percent of men allowed to leave the post for furlough at one time. I was supposed to leave on the 12th, but, no, I won't leave until late in January or February."

SH: Leave for where?

FW: Furlough, home, come back to Boonton, yes. … Things changed, but, I mean, you're still …

SH: It was more gradual.

FW: Gradual, and I don't think the impact was really there, but it was about that time in my life, when I knew I wasn't going to get home and I knew that we were going to be at war, that they were starting to go into mechanized. We were going to lose the horses.

SH: They told you that.

FW: They were going to lose the horses and they were going to mechanize, and, boy, that was awful, especially to some of the older fellows that had been in the 102nd Cavalry for years, as the National Guard, and they're going to lose the horses. … I mean, I remember seeing one major, that he was actually crying, … but, anyway, that's another story, too. I started thinking about, "Do I want to stay in the mechanized group, in half-tracks, riding around in jeeps or motorcycles, or this or that?" and I started to think about, "What are my alternatives?" and I thought of the Air Force. … My best friend from Mountain Lakes was in the Aviation Cadets, but he had gone to Ohio University for [college]. He graduated [in] four years. I'd never been to college and a prerequisite for the Aviation Cadets, in those days, you had to have at least two years of college, which I didn't have. … Then, later on, and early on in '42, they came up with this method, that if you could pass what they called a (six/four?) physical examination, which was supposed to be about [as] rigid a physical exam that you could take, and then, take a four-hour exam that would throw questions at you [based on] what they would expect a two-year college student to be able to answer, and, if you could pass both of them, you could join Aviation Cadets. So, I don't know when it was. … It's immaterial, really. I took the physical and passed it, and I took the mental, don't ask me how, but I passed that. [laughter]

SH: Was this in South Carolina?

FW: South Carolina.

SH: Still in South Carolina.

FW: South Carolina, right on the base, and so, it was a short time after I'd passed both of them that I left, that I was transferred, paper-wise, from B Troop, 102nd Cavalry, to the Aviation Cadet program that was going on at Fort Jackson, but assigned to B Troop for duty until I was called, because there was no place to send me. Everything was really a rat race in those days, if you can use that term. No one was really certain of anything, but, anyway, I went back to B Troop to stay until the Air Force called me, and, of course, what was I there? I was dead wood. There was no sense in them trying to train me further. So, what did they do with [us]? There were two or three other fellows. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

FW: Well, they made me a bugler because …

SH: Wait, wait; how did you become the bugler?

FW: Well, because, you recall, I told you I had played the trumpet, and so, as a consequence, the bugle was no [challenge].

SH: You told them that you did. I mean, you volunteered.

FW: Oh, yes, they knew I did, because I had brought my trumpet down there. … It was the cornet, … in that time. So, we would have little jam sessions down there, and so, they made me a bugler, but, then, [Mr. Wiswall indicates that the time to move on arrived]. … I do remember that while I was there, there were details that you would get put on, sporadically, I mean, [like] supply; you'd have to deliver rations and food to the troop, or within the regiment, all the troops. You had guard; you're on guard duty for twenty-four hours, and, the following day, you were off. What else was there? You had to deliver [rations]. Then, they had the garbage truck detail. You had to go around [and collect garbage]. These things all had to be taken care of. So, what actually [happened was], to make a long story short, they took us who were no longer [cavalrymen], the word "deadwood," and used us to do all these details, so that they could concentrate on those that were still in the 102nd Cavalry (Mechanized). So, I had that.

SH: Did you also train people on the bugle?

FW: Yes, I did that there, and then, I did that at Kelly Field. When I … first went down for Aviation Cadets, my first place, they sent me out on a field with, oh, I forget how many guys there were, and in those fields were rattlesnakes. Oh, … I'm deathly afraid of snakes. [laughter] Show me a snake and I'm gone. [laughter] I [could] tell you a good story about that, too.

MW: Not now.

FW: Not now, all right. Well, at Kelly Field, which has now been closed, in fact, we were at San Antonio for our reunion last year, and … this Kelly Field just isn't [there], but, anyway, they were building up this area in Kelly Field at that time. They called it "The Hill," where Aviation Cadets, brand-new Aviation Cadets, like myself, would come for their training and the psycho-(medo?), what'd they call that? psycho, some sort of kind of psycho test, [psycho-motor] where they would determine whether we were fit to be a pilot, a navigator or a bombardier, and determine what sort of training you were going [to enter]. That's what that spot was for, and so, while we were there, … everything was slowed down because [of] the jam-up, and they loved to march. [laughter] Oh, all they could think about was marching, and then, when they wanted to march, you have to have music. So, then, … I was gifted with the job of teaching these other fellows, like myself, how to play a bugle and, also, the different marches. There's a lot of marches you can play on a bugle, and, … if you learn, you have to learn how. So, I don't know how often we'd do that. They would send us over [to] the far, remote section in the field, [laughter] and then, after we're out there, I remember, they said, "Fellows, the one thing you've got to watch out for are the rattlesnakes." [laughter] … I used to die being out there, but the story [on] that was, they were building up on it there, putting up regular barracks, and, also, latrines and one thing [or another]. Everything was being built, but it was all in stages, and this one fellow went to the latrine and he was in there, sitting down, and he heard a noise and he looked down and there it [a snake] was, sitting there. [laughter] I would have died right in the spot.

SH: I would have, too. [laughter]

FW: That was another time when I started laughing, and [they] wondered, "What's funny about it?" It's funny now, but imagine that poor guy.

MW: Yes, at the time.

FW: But, I don't know how they ever removed the problem, but they did. … Then, everybody was afraid to go in the latrine, [laughter] because they were wide open, you know. … The things were built, but they were building the outside around the inside. I remember that, oh, gee. …

SH: Did you get bitten?

FW: No, no. I could outrun a snake, [laughter] at least I think I could, but, I remember, it was a short time after that that, when I took the tests, believe it or not, I qualified for any one. I could have gone as a pilot and I could have gone as a navigator, I could have gone as a bombardier, but I wanted to be a bombardier. So, that's why.

SH: Why?

FW: Don't ask me; because I seemed so adept at what they put me through …

SH: What attracted you?

FW: … With the tests. Yes, well, … you know, I don't think I can remember these psycho-motive tests. … All kinds of mechanical things that they were, I'll be darned if I can remember.

[TAPE PAUSED]

FW: I see here that, on February 26th, I have a notation here, "Spent the day at Army Air Corps Center. Passed the physical and mental examinations. I'm now in the Air Corps. Stayed in at night. Herb left for hospital, nasopharyngitis." That was, no matter what happened to you, what you were ill from, when I first got in the cavalry, [it] was always nasopharyngitis. I never did find out what it was, [laughter] but that's what I [wrote]. "Bugle school." Then, this one that started here, with this, "Bugle school. Stables in the PM." Oh, that was another thing, stables, horses still. We still had the horses and the horses had to be taken care of. …

SH: Do you know what they did with the horses?

FW: I don't [know]. You know, I think they sent a lot of them; I understand that my mare, Enigma, became a bell mare. Now, a bell mare is a horse that'll lead jackasses, or donkeys or whatever they [were], whatever they call them, and I understand that that's what she became. When I left, that was the end. … I went one way and the horse went the other. …

SH: Some of them were sent to the China-Burma-India Theater, were they not?

FW: Well, it could have been; I really don't know what happened to the horses. … When we got horses in, they were remounts from Fort Royal in Virginia and they'd been just grazing around for years and they were pretty rough when we got them. They were tough to tame them again, you know, but … I really don't know what happened to them. I don't know whether that's

a fact with my mare, whether she went [overseas]. "Bugle school. Bugle school. Inspection. Bugle school."

SH: During this time, it is March.

FW: I'm in March.

SH: You are in San Antonio, Texas, right?

FW: No, no. … Now, I'm waiting to get called up by the Air Corps now. "Bugle School. Worked in supply tent all day. (Showdown?) inspection, took all day. Orderlied for Lieutenant (Fitzpatrick?)." In other words, I had to be what they call a "dog robber" for a day.

SH: Where does the term "dog robber" come from? [laughter]

FW: I don't know where it came from, but it … [was something] I never wanted to be. In other words, you had to be, like, an orderly for a second lieutenant, or, well, an officer, and you had to clean his gear, you had to [do other chores]; wouldn't have been my cup of tea, I'll tell you that. "Bugle school. (Showdown?) inspection. Herb and I (worked on the injection?) of horses in PM. Went to radio school at night." Oh, that was another thing. Later on in life, I'd always wanted to, I had an interest in radio, … become an amateur radio [operator] and, Lord, when I was in Boy Scouts, I couldn't even learn the code. … When I got in the Aviation Cadets and I started in the program, you had to learn to send and receive five words a minute, and, within, oh, a couple or three weeks, … I was up to five words a minute and didn't have any problem at all. So, then, when I came home, now, this is later on, when I came home, … riding back and forth in the train to New York, I read and I memorized how to become a ham, and I couldn't do any of the operations now if I tried, and I got my license and I became a ham radio operator.

MW: This was after the war.

FW: So, that was after the war. So, there must have been a brain down here somewhere.

MW: It was still there.

FW: I don't know. [laughter]

MW: It was always there. You just never used it. [laughter]

FW: "Bugle school." It's all the same. It seems to me, all they did is use me for bugle school, bugle school. "Our squadron was mechanized." This is April 6th. "As of the date, we are still B Troop. Tanks will replace the horses." So, that was when I was so glad. … Now, here, April the 7th, "Testing the Springfields," that's a rifle, "Bugle school in PM. Got ready for a ten-day furlough at night," prior to my transfer to the Army Air Corps, and I worked in stables. "Left for home. Harry (Drayton?) and I left via thumb. [laughter] Hitchhiked to (Raleigh?), Virginia. Greyhound at eleven PM to Washington. We left the fort at one-thirty. Arrived in Washington

seven AM. Hitchhiked to Baltimore. Rain. Greyhound bus at one o'clock to Newark," and I got home at nine-fifteen that night." Well, then, I'm home for …

SH: This is the early Spring of 1942.

FW: 1942, yes, and they started me in again when I got back. "Lectures on," something, "movies and lectures on," oh, [laughter] "movies and lectures on sex hygiene in PM. Walt and I;" [laughter] oh, that's stuff that they were always trying.

SH: Did they work?

FW: Yes, they did, they did.

SH: Were they graphic?

FW: Oh, they did. They'd scare you half to death. No, right in here, I still hadn't been called by the Air Corps. I'm in May now. "Worked in regimental guard. Worked in regimental all day. Worked on regimental in AM." See, I wasn't doing anything. "Worked on supply. On KP," that was another thing, "all day. Worked on S-4," that's supply. … Some of my old buddies that are long gone, "(Hart?), (Coon?) and I went on regiment S-4 all day. Stable guard at night. On stable detail. Bugle school," no, "Bugle guard all day. On garbage truck." … Well, that's what they had me doing until I got called. "On guard as bugler until six-thirty PM. Ken Horner and I went to PX for a couple of beers." Ken Horner, he was [one of] a couple of brothers that were in there. … Ken became a good friend of mine, and he was; what's that mountain that they went up in Italy?

SH: Cassino?

FW: Yes. He was killed going up there and bled to death, Ken Horner. I heard that way after the fact. He was a great, great guy.

SH: Is that H-O-R-N-E-R?

FW: … Yes.

SH: Was he from this area?

FW: … More like the Oranges and that area, than in here. Most all of them were from New Jersey, I'll say that.

RZ: At this time, were you aching to go into the Air Corps?

FW: Oh, yes, oh, wouldn't you? Oh, boy, I'm [telling you], I hated this. This was no life. I wasn't learning anything, I wasn't doing anything, really. Yes, I was, "On garbage truck in AM. Ken Horner and I went into Columbia, got a quart of rum. Went out with Dick and Don (Stewart?) and their fiancées at night." They were down from New Jersey. That's where I

learned to drink rum and Coke. That was a cavalry drink in those days and I can't stand the sight of rum, looking at it today. [laughter] Oh, I can't. I don't know how I did it. "May 23rd, played ball in the AM. … Ken Horner and I went to Columbia, went to the (Stewarts'?). Back at camp. On provost all day. Up at seven o'clock. Worked in garbage truck all day." Well, [if] you think that that was fun, that was hard work, hoisting those [cans]. That's for a troop. That's for a lot of men, and hoisting those garbage things aren't [easy]. "On latrine during daytime. Over obstacle course four times at night." We had an obstacle course right near our troop street and I remember, I used to …

SH: What is the entry below that?

FW: This? "Went to classes all day. Intelligence tests. Both of my ears are clogged up. Went to flight surgeon's at night."

SH: What clogged your ears up? Had you been up in a plane? I would assume not.

FW: Day before, "Classes all day. Took a three-hour hop in a B-17E at night." This is when I [flew]. I'd never flown before when I got in Aviation Cadets, I mean, in a military plane. "My ears clogged at two thousand feet, hurt like hell, enjoyed the hop, nevertheless."

SH: That was May 25th.

FW: May 25th, yes, and that's the next day, … "Went to the flight surgeon." No, "Went back next day. Classes all day. Flight surgeon, three times, better." [laughter]

SH: Did they actually start training you at the very end of May?

FW: No, no. I'll tell you, no. "On provost. On S-4." … It was a long time, really. Now, I'm going, I'm in June, … "Sergeant (McCormick?) and I left for home." Now, here was a guy that I think he was discharged for dependency. Well, he was lucky, because he got out. If he'd waited, in a month, he wouldn't have been able to get out. Now, I'm home. I'm home.

SH: Is this in July?

FW: This is in July.

SH: How had things changed?

FW: … "At the beach with Carl Kinscherf." … I buried him a couple of years ago, too. "When I was called back to the fort," and they came, … I forget who it was, came down, "Telegram had been delivered to the home for me to report back to Fort Jackson." It's the Air Corps, Air Force, had called me.

SH: Is this July 5th?

FW: July 5th.

SH: Can we look at the entry for July 4th?

FW: Sure. "Around home," I was on furlough at that time, "around home at night." My writing isn't so good, is it? … "Party at Tom (Coles?) at night. I took Pat." [laughter] I won't read this, dear.

MW: Okay. [laughter]

FW: "I took Pat." Well, I'll read it, "I took Pat," and this is the gal that I was really involved with when I was a kid. "Pat told me that she loved me," [laughter] and I never put things like that in my diary. I honestly didn't, but I don't know why I did then.

SH: How had things changed since you left eighteen months ago for Fort Jackson, before World War II broke out? How had things changed in this area? How had the war impacted you, with the gearing up and, obviously, your brother was working at Hercules?

FW: Yes. Well, Bert was still in school and Fred, of course, was still at Hercules, but, well, everyone was war minded. I mean, you had, in fact I found some not too long ago, the little tickets for gas rationing, [which] was on, and a lot of people were [using] oleo margarine, instead of butter, and … the atmosphere, as I remember it, was all war.

SH: Okay.

FW: … Everyone was restricted in what you could do and what you couldn't do.

SH: Did your father have a war-related job at this point?

FW: Let's see, Dad, I think that he would have been at E. F. Drew then, wouldn't he or would he?

SH: Did he have a war-related job?

FW: Well, I don't know. I don't know whether they did or not. … They made oils. I don't really know. I don't know the answer to that question. …

SH: Did your mother have a victory garden?

FW: Oh, my mother got herself [a job]. She went to work for; where did Bob (Rechy?) work?

MW: Radio Frequency [Company]?

FW: No, no, down here in Boonton.

MW: Molding?

FW: Molding, Boonton Molding, and they were making some military parts. My mother went to work down there.

SH: Did she?

FW: All of them, … what did they call them? the Rosie the Riveters and all that. … You'd be surprised; I never thought of my mother working in a wartime job, but she did.

MW: She did, though.

FW: … Most mothers did. A lot of mothers did; I don't know what most did.

SH: Did your mother have the banner in the window?

FW: With the stars? yes.

MW: I think she did. I think we have them upstairs somewhere. We still have them.

FW: I think she did, I think she did. Like I say, I'm sure if my father had anything to do about it, they had a flag with sixteen stars on it in the window. [laughter] Oh, yes, but that's when I was recalled back to Fort Jackson. "I had a four-hour delay in Washington and I had to wire Lieutenant Brown to that effect, and then, I arrived at Columbia at eleven-forty PM. In the Fort at twelve o'clock. No orders, so, slept there. [laughter] Reported to the Air Corps at eight AM, and then, moved in." So, from there on, then, oh, that was a change, when I got [in the Army Air Forces]. The biggest change was, I went from twenty-one dollars; no, I think I was up to thirty, as a private. I went from twenty-one dollars a month, "twenty-one dollars a day, once a month," that's from the song, to seventy-five dollars as an Aviation Cadet, and brand-spanking-new uniforms, and the chow, the difference between Fort Jackson and the cavalry, oh, they fed you like a king.

SH: Really?

FW: Yes. Well, they wanted to make sure that … [if] they were going to spend the money, the government was going to spend the money, on you for your training in the Air Corps, that you had to get the correct nourishment and, boy, I hadn't had nourishment like that for the whole year that I was in Fort Jackson, boy, yes, yes. [laughter]

SH: Was the training very intense? Was it all day long? What was a day like now? You were at Fort Jackson, but you were in the Air Corps.

FW: Yes, all right, yes, no, but, now, "I left [with] the Air Corps, July 9th. Left for Kelly Field, Texas, at five-thirty AM. Five-hour stopover in Spartanburg. We're riding in Pullman cars, Southern Railroad. Five-hour stopover in New Orleans. Had a shower and shave and, about five PM, arrived July 11th, at Houston, Texas, early in the morning. Arrived San Antonio three-thirty. Assigned to tents. I am in Squadron 126, White Crew, Group C, Replacement Center. Loafed all day, most of the day. Read awhile at night. Looked over a new B-17F." No, no,

wait, I'm a year ahead of myself. "Took out a ten-thousand-dollar insurance policy in AM." That was the government [insurance]. It was pretty cheap, too. "Drew new uniforms in AM. Took physical exam in PM. Had to have recheck on my eyes, 20/30, 20/40, and passed, normal. Sex, Articles of War, and first aid lectures at night. On the 15th, took mental aptitude tests, (solid "A"?). Wrote letters at night. Worked around street. Didn't take coordination test in PM, but went … to PX instead. Saw a religious film at night." They threw everything at you. … "Took coordination tests in AM. Worked around the street in PM. Wrote letters at night. Went to San Antonio. On tent moving detail all day. … Joined a drum and bugle corps, made an instructor. Classified as a bombardier. [laughter] Gave instructions in bugling in AM. Went to PX. Bugle instruction on the 23rd. Bugle and drum corps practice." That's when they go into the march. "Corps practice in AM-PM. Had a form review. … Bugle drum corps practice. Drum and bugle corps all day." That's out in the field now. "Drum and bugle. Drum and bugle. No open post." I don't know. "Drum and bugle all day." Now, I think I'm in Houston, [Texas]. "Left Kelly Field on August the 5th at noon and went to Ellington Field, Texas," that's right near Houston, "by train. Had to turn camera in at gate," all things like that, that it became very strict; everyone was war minded. "We were moved to a new site. We call it 'Bataan.' It's located in a field surrounded by swamps. Got processed at night. Worked around new area. Raining. … Turned laundry in AM. Cleaned up around the barracks. Couldn't leave post at night. Stayed in the barracks all day. CQ," made me in charge of quarters, "all day. Drilled in AM. Assigned to squadron." … You had to really do a lot of marching when you're in the Aviation Cadets. "School all day. Started school. All we have is code, PT and math. School all day. School all day," it was a long day. "School until two PM," must have been Saturday. "Open post. Went to Houston." …

SH: How did they treat people who were in the military in Texas at that time?

FW: Very well, very well. In fact, it was a new life for me, because, not to degrade the Army, but, when you're only a private in the Army, you're not very much and you're … not getting much money, but once you got in the Air Corps, the Aviation Cadet program, it was like being in the elite, after being a private. Oh, I know I really enjoyed that. Here's my registration certificate. We lived on (Alcock?) Avenue in Boonton. "This is to certify that, in accordance with the Selective Service Proclamation of the President of the United States, that I have been duly registered, the 16th of October. Keep this card with you at all times." [laughter]

SH: This was in 1940.

FW: Is there a date on this? … I don't see a date on it, though.

SH: 1940.

FW: Is it? Oh, [if] it had teeth, that would bite, wouldn't it? [laughter]

RZ: It was a snake. [laughter]

MW: Do you want to see that?

RZ: No, it is fine.

FW: … "School all day. Got two gigs on a rifle inspection." Oh, they were so strict then, and I think that, sometimes, they would give out gigs, or demerits, just so that you didn't think you were too sharp, keep you on the ball, in other words. I swear, they do. "School all day. Studied at night." See, now, there, I studied, "School all day. Studied for exams," and I never studied for an exam in my [life], and that's the thing that, … if I had my life to live over, I've always said it, haven't I? that I would study in school. Otherwise, I don't think I'd change; I've had ups and downs, but, if I changed my life, I wouldn't be right here now. So, I wouldn't give up my life today, even with my arthritis. [laughter] I'm here. Where would I be if I hadn't done all the things that I had done?

MW: Interesting life he had.

SH: Within the school, was everyone around the same age or were there older people and younger people?

FW: … Well, let's say, what would the average age be for either a college graduate or a two-year college [graduate]?

SH: Between twenty and twenty-two.

FW: Well, you know, I (opt out exactly on the?) book inside, I'm right at that age, … when Tom Brokaw wrote those stories [in his 1998 book *The Greatest Generation*], the ages he talks about; that was me. So, I would say … there were a few older and there were a few younger. There were a lot of guys that, somehow or another, got in the service way before they should have. One way or another, they got in, and I know that in some of the military magazines that I get now that they're still trying to corral some of those older men now that got in before they should have been in and want to hear their story. "School all day. Studied at night. School all day. Got two gigs on my rifle inspection." I've been on that. "Studied for exam. Took exams all day. I think I flunked math, and maps. Passed 2-3 in code. Got twelve letters. … School all day. Passed 2-4 in code." Apparently, I didn't fail the (map?) [math?]. "School all day." … No, once you failed, you failed too much, you're on your way out, and, I mean, they didn't waste time on us. You work, you work, you work, or you're out, that's all, and I guess, if they'd done that to me when I was in high school and said, "All right, either do your work and get passing grades or get out, we won't waste time on you," I most likely would have done it.

MW: He probably would have done it.

FW: But, there again, discipline, I didn't have that kind of discipline. Now, here, I knew what would happen. "School all day. Passed 2-5 in code. Go to eight words a minute now. School all day. First class graduated. I'm a red tag now," whatever [that is]. I don't even … remember what that means, or second classman. "School in AM. Big hurricane on the way. August 29th, field ready for evacuation. Bud Sacco and I stayed in Houston. … Hurricane missed us." Scare you to death, and then, "No school. We moved to 'Bataan' in Ellington. Moved to the same old barracks. September the (8th?), school all day. Missed on ten-word check in code. School all

day. Studied at night. School all day. Dismissed from code. Passed ten words … per minute in code. Studied at night. School all day. Test in math. Studied at night." So, I must have passed. "School in AM. Went to Houston in PM. … School all day. Studied at night. School all day. Studied [at night]." Not a very interesting life, "School all day. Studied at night." [laughter]

RZ: It certainly prepared you for later on.

FW: Yes. "School in AM. Squadron C and squadron just missed winning again." Oh, that's the marching. … "School all day. One hundred in enabled forces test." Oh, a one hundred, how did I ever do that? [laughter] "School all day. School all day. School all day. School all day. Secretary Patterson [Undersecretary of War Robert Porter Patterson, Sr.], reviewed us in PM. We took our final physics exam at night. I think I flunked." Well, I didn't think much of myself, I tell you that. … "First week as first classman." I must have, "Made a corporal," so, I must have passed.

MW: I think so.

FW: "School all day. School all day. School all day. School all day. School all day. School all day. School all day. Graduation dance." I must have graduated, too. [laughter]

SH: This would be in October then.

FW: I'm in October 3rd, yes. Gee, I got that, this VCR [VHS cassette], many years later, *Orchestra Wives* [a 1942 film]. That's the one that I think Glenn Miller was in.

SH: What is this that you are saying?

FW: The movie, I think Glenn Miller was in it, *Orchestra Wives*, and that's what I saw. … "School all day. Math," what did I say? "Math final at night. Took a final in meteorology." Oh, meteorology, that was a [tough subject]; I studied and studied. … That was so technical, and that's why anyone that criticizes a meteorologist, when they try to forecast weather today, I mean, I know it's much advanced from what it was in '42, but you can have pressure changes and you can have changes, so many changes, within a matter of an hour or fifteen minutes, this forecasting the weather, it's not easy. … "More to be pitied than scorned, too many factors against. Up early. … School all day. Physics exam at night. I think I made out all right," gee. [laughter] "Classes all day. … Open post. On guard, twelve o'clock, second relief. On guard. Drill in PM. We got paid. Drew," now, can you imagine? "drew 205 dollars." I can't imagine drawing that much money, … back in those days.

SH: Was it cash?

FW: Oh, yes, it's cash. "Paid. Wound up with 135 dollars," because I most likely, "PX, books," and I think that they charged [us], … you started getting charged, because I think … you get fifty dollars a month, plus, twenty-five dollars of flight pay, or some darned thing, that I can't remember exactly how it worked as an Aviation Cadet, but I know that you got a wee bit more.

"Worked all day. Drill in morning. Got ready for a furlough. Reached St. Louis, Missouri. … Arrived Newark, seven o'clock. Home, eight-thirty."

SH: This was the end of October. Did you finish class?

FW: On October 23rd.

SH: Had you finished this training segment?

FW: I guess I must have. I wanted to see now where we are. … "Moved to cadet area. Barracks, eleven. Supposed to pull out shortly."

SH: This was the beginning of November and you are back, correct?

FW: November 3rd.

SH: Are you back in Houston?

FW: Yes, I guess I am. "Around barracks all day." … No, yes, "Back in Houston. Left Houston for unknown." That's right, we didn't even know where we were going then, "Rode all night."

SH: That was November 5th.

FW: November, and, "November 6th, arrived at advanced training," I said, "Brook;" I didn't even know the name of it, but it was Big Spring, Texas. [Editor's Note: Big Spring Army Air Force Bombardier School existed from 1942 to 1945.] "Passed my physical in PM. Wrote letters at night." These are the kind of things sent to me. There's a girl that I used to take out. [laughter] … She's a very nice gal, too. She was from Boonton, engaged. "Passed (Snyder?)." What the heck would that be? "Passed (Snyder?) in PM." I don't know, some sort of test that, I guess, they gave us.

SH: A (Snyder?) exam?

FW: Here, I was just trying to get a ride now in a B-[17]. "Started school. Saw Norden sight on trainer and studied it." That bombsight, in those days, when you went to draw it, you had to have a .45 out of your holster and cocked, to bring it to the plane. That's how secret it was and how they made [you take it]. …

SH: Really?

FW: Oh, yes, yes.

SH: This is the Norden bombsight.

FW: Norden bombsight, yes. …

MW: That's interesting, for you to tell. That would be an interesting thing for you to talk about.

FW: Yes.

MW: We'll be here for two days, with his life.

FW: … "Classes in PM. Training in (trainers?). Studied at night. Training schools in PM. On flight line in AM."

SH: You were now in advanced training, correct?

FW: "November 15th, up early. Bruce, Bill and I saw *Tales of Manhattan* [a 1942 film]. … Classes in AM. Had a wisdom tooth pulled out and two fillings, hurt like the devil. Trained in PM, felt pretty shaky. Studied at night and wrote letters." … Now, this is when we started the training as a bombardier. You had these big trainers, the big elevated thing, like that. You sat up in the front and your fellow behind you was the steerer, and you had the bombsight and they had a mock target set up in front of you, a little mouse-like deal that would move along, and you had to try to manipulate the bombsight the way you were trained and hit the target. Boy, you got tired of that after awhile. … "Classes in AM. Trainer in PM. Trainer test, got eighty percent."

SH: Was the person training you regular Army?

FW: No, regular Air Force. His name was Lieutenant (Whittington?). … After I left Big Spring, for gunnery school, I never heard of him [again]. … I met one guy, … that fellow that sent me that one thing from, he's down in Cherry Hill now, (Dalsey?). He was an instructor and he never left where (Whittington?) was. … I asked him to check his 201 file, to see if he could find his serial number for [me], if he could get me his serial number, I know how to track him down, but I never have been able to find out what happened to him. He was a great guy. He was a second lieutenant and he trained me and three other guys, or it was four of us in each [group], assigned to each instructor, and I really thought a lot of him.

SH: Where was he from? Do you remember?

FW: I don't. I don't even think it's in that bombardier book that's inside, when we graduated. He was a heck of a nice guy, though, I'll tell you that.

SH: Were you still pleased with the fact that you had picked being a bombardier over the other two options?

FW: Oh, yes, definitely, definitely.

SH: How long were you there at Big Spring? How long was that training? Do you remember?

FW: I graduated January the 3rd.

SH: 1943?

FW: '43. … That was another time where we …

SH: Is the bombardier one of the officers?

FW: Yes.

SH: When were you commissioned as an officer?

FW: Second lieutenant. Well, later on, a lot of them were commissioned as flight officers. They didn't quite make [them officers]. I could never understand the … difference; I could understand the difference, but I don't know why they had it.

SH: As for yourself, when was your commissioning? Was it at Big Spring?

FW: Big Spring, January the 3rd; what the heck, or was it January the 28th? Me and my smart mouth, maybe I was wrong; [it was] the 28th.

SH: The 28th of January.

FW: "Graduated as second lieutenant at nine-thirty," and I remember the first, I think he was a private, first guy that saluted me, and it's the old adage that you gave him a dollar.

SH: Really?

FW: Yes, the first salute you got as an officer, you always gave the guy that saluted you a dollar.

SH: Really? [laughter]

FW: Yes.

SH: Had you known him before?

FW: No, I never saw him before, and never saw him since. [laughter] I don't know, he must have been walking around in a circle, collecting bucks. Well, that's what I would have been doing. [laughter]

SH: I have never heard of that custom before.

FW: Now, you see, … after we graduated, this January the 3rd …

SH: January 28th.

FW: 28th, they didn't know what to do with us. Well, we're bombardiers and, normally, when you finished, graduated, then, you were sent to Salt Lake City and you were crewed up, was en route to where you were going, but there wasn't any place to send us. …

SH: You were still part of that bottleneck.

FW: Yes. Well, they've got to hit them. …

SH: Did they keep you there at Big Spring?

FW: For a little bit, yes. "Meeting (in AM?);" let's see, when did they send us to Harlingen? [Editor's Note: Harlingen Army Air Field in Texas was an aerial gunnery school.] Oh, yes, here it is, "February the 3rd. Up at eight o'clock. (Realbruce?) and I had breakfast, then, bed again. Caught train for Harlingen." Yes, … once you're an officer, you had to make all your own arrangements. So, "Arrived at ten-thirty," and so, they took our entire class, of bombardier class, and sent us to Harlingen, Texas, which was a training school, normally, for enlisted men in gunnery, but I'm glad I went there. It was very enlightening and I always liked shooting anyway, and I earned my second set of wings, as an aerial gunner. So, I was qualified for both the bombsight and aerial gunnery, and they shot just about every type of gun, when you're at gunnery school, and in every turret that the Air Force had. …

SH: How long were you at Harlingen?

FW: Well, I'm just going to let you know. "First day of classes was February the 8th. The work is very interesting and all our equipment is up-to-date. Had a class from ten o'clock [in the morning] to eleven at night. Classes in AM, turret manipulation. Took our first exercise in aim classes." I had an interesting thing [happen] while I was at Harlingen, I'll have to tell you about.

SH: Please do.

FW: [Editor's Note: Lieutenant Colonel Wiswall flips through his diary.] How did all these darn pictures get in here? "Got some flying time in;" well, Harlingen, if Texas comes down like so and Harlingen is here, … Matamoros, Mexico, is right below Harlingen, and I'd never been in Mexico, and I don't think any of the fellows that I palled around with in that class [had, either]. So, we went to Matamoros, but that's not the [story].

SH: What happened there?

FW: Oh, yes, I went to Mexico to see the bullfights. … Oh, I couldn't stand it. That was the most brutal thing that I ever saw. That's slaughter. I wouldn't be a good Mexican or a good Spanish individual that loved being *el toreador*, or whatever they call him, because it was murder, absolute murder. The poor beasts, they didn't stand a chance. You know, … before the guy stands up in front of him, like the Almighty, with a sword and rams it through the vital point, the bull is weakened by all these, I don't know what they [are], stilettos or whatever they are.

RZ: Picadors, [horsemen who stab the bull with lances].

FW: Put them in. Yes, well, then, you know what it's like. They drive them in the hump, where the bull has all its strength. So, by the time the guy stands up there, with his cape; I'm not trying to belittle whatever the profession is, but it's murder. … We watched them kill two and walked out. I couldn't stand it, couldn't stand it. Oh, here it is, "February 22nd, classes all day. (Al?) Williams and Paul (Caselatti?)," Paul was killed, "and myself went to Mercedes, [Texas]. Missed the last bus." Now, you know how we got back to Harlingen? [laughter] and I don't know where I got the nerve, because I've always been afraid of heights, but there weren't any busses. There was no way that we could get back. There was no means of transportation. So, we went in the rail yard and we saw a train sitting there and the engineer was in the engine and we asked him where he was going. He was going to Harlingen, and we asked, "How about giving us a ride back? We're stuck and there's no other way." He says, "Well, I don't see you, … but, if you want to climb on the back of one of these freight cars," he says, "when you get off at Harlingen," he said, "be careful, because there are guards all around in there and they'll shoot at you if they see you." [laughter] … Anyway, we went back and climbed up on a freight car, and you know the little; what would you call it, the little, on the roof?

SH: The catwalk?

FW: Had to get on that and pull the strap and … it's all I could do to get up on the damn freight car, to be honest with you, because I don't like climbing things, and we rode that freight car all the way back to Harlingen. Oh, but where did I get the nerve to do things like that? "So, we hopped a freight back. What a night," I have down here. "Next day, classes all day." [laughter] I wanted to find out when we [left]. "Shooting operations in AM. Spent three hours at thirty-eight thousand feet in oxygen tank."

SH: Was this actually in a plane?

FW: No, on the ground, yes. Oh, I hadn't even been off the ground yet, as far as Harlingen was concerned. I'll tell you another interesting thing there.

RZ: At this point, you had never been in a plane.

FW: Oh, yes, oh, yes. I'd been through my bombardier training. I was in a little AT-11. There, I mean, the highest we flew was twelve thousand feet, which was nothing. All right, I left; "I finished up. Flew my last AT-6 mission in PM. Went out at night." We finished up March 12th, because, on March 13th, "Trained all afternoon. … Graduated from Harlingen Aerial Gunnery School in AM. We killed two women about an hour after we left." They pulled their; our train hit this woman, hit this train, crossed right in front of our train …

SH: A car.

FW: Yes, and killed them both. Oh, I'll never forget seeing that. It was an awful sight, but there, March 12th, is when we were finished with Harlingen. Now, what I was going to tell you, we had airplane-to-airplane shooting at Harlingen. In other words, … they had these AT-6s, were the same type plane you see in the movies flying over Pearl Harbor, with a front seat and a

back seat in the center, a two-seater plane, and in the rear of the AT-6, as it comes around, you have a mount and your machine-gun was there. No, it was in the locked position, it was down and it didn't swivel, and, when you get in it, you have a parachute on and a parachute harness, of course. Now, the instructors, of course, were all pilots and they were mainly second lieutenants. They'd just gotten their commission the way we did, but they were under strict orders that when enlisted personnel [were] flying their plane, they don't pull any shenanigans on them. You'd scare the devil out of a guy. … You were a hot pilot, you know, and you want to have fun, but they didn't have any such rules on brother second lieutenants, only on the enlisted personnel, and, when we were finished shooting at this plane, and I got very good, high marks on the shooting; … well, another plane would fly either at your own level, up from your level and lower, faster or slower, faster or slower, and you had to learn how to lead, this and that. … You had bullets in your machine-gun that were dipped in ink and that, when they went through, they were good and hot, but, when they went through the sleeve that this other plane was towing behind them, they would leave the color. Oh, I got pretty good marks on that, but, anyway, I did my shooting and I told the pilot that I was finished firing, [through the] interphone you have on, and the interphone, the pilot said to me, "Okay, stow your gun." So, I stowed the gun and locked it and the minute he heard that click, "Ugh." … There was a ring on the floor of the backseat of that AT-6 and I had a strap going through the leg part of the harness that I have on, holding me in the plane, and that's all. [laughter] I almost had a movement, and, now, that's putting it mildly, but it just … scared me to death, and all he did was laugh. [laughter] I just said to him, "Thanks a lot, buddy, thanks a lot." [laughter] I'll never forget that, oh, and that way, no one's going to laugh at Wiswall. … [laughter] He said, "Oh, gee." Now, if they'd done that with an airman and he would have died. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

FW: So, we killed two women, and then, "On the train all day."

SH: Do you know where they are sending you at this point?

FW: "Arrived at Army airbase, 18th Replacement Wing, Second Air Force, Salt Lake City."

SH: You finally got to Salt Lake.

FW: "We are awaiting orders." Now, see, what they did [was], that was the meeting place for airmen, gunners, pilots, pilot and copilot, navigators and bombardiers, and there is what they call "crewing you up." In other words, there are ten men in a B-17, four officers and six enlisted men, and that's where you meet your crew. … Let's see, "Had breakfast;" it's best that I look through here, [diary].

SH: What time of year are you getting to Salt Lake?

FW: March 16th, of '43.

SH: Okay, all right.

FW: Wait a minute, … "No orders. Went to town. Orders came." Oh, what they did [was], … well, most likely, I didn't [write about it], because it was all top secret at that time, the orders, when they did come out, the *Luftwaffe*, which is the German Air Force, was making head-on attacks of the bombers as they came into Europe, and, unfortunately, they were either seriously wounding or killing bombardiers and navigators. So, they took about twenty-eight bombardiers. I don't know how many [navigators]; I only know the bombardiering end of it. They took about twenty-eight bombardiers that came up from this Harlingen group and put us on top secret orders to move immediately to Fort; what's the one in New York, by the Verrazano Bridge? Hamilton, Fort Hamilton, for immediate flight over to the Continent, [the United Kingdom?], for replacement, [assignment to a] replacement center, and so, the end of the alphabet, Wiswall, I was always [out of luck]. Wiswall's not only the shorty, but he was at the end of the alphabet anyway. So, I was one of the fortunate ones. Anyway, when we took off …

SH: You did not get matched up with a crew. They just took you separately.

FW: Yes. I should have said that, because that's important, that crewing up thing, but there again, you don't trust fate and it worked out fine for me.

SH: When they sent you to New York, did you get a chance to come home at all before you took off?

FW: … Yes, but the trouble was, "Traveling all day." You see, "Orders came through. On March the 20th, orders came. Left for Fort Hamilton, New York, at eight PM. [March] 21st, traveling all day;" traveling all day, because that was all by train in those days. "Grand Central at eight AM and over to;" we spent the weekend. I brought one of my buddies home, "Reported to Fort Hamilton at five PM. Dad was with us. Morning, (Jan?) and I took the (tour?) equipment…"

SH: Your dad took you back to the base.

FW: To Fort Hamilton. … It was fairly easy [to get] there, but the trouble was, we missed our shipment. The means, the setup, to carry us on was already gone; don't ask me why, because I don't know. So, we're in "la-la-land" again. I mean, where are we? We're no place. …

SH: Was this just you and your buddy, or were there other ones?

FW: Twenty-eight of us. …

SH: All of you missed the shipment.

FW: We all missed the shipment. We were all traveling together. I brought (Williamson?) home. I can tell you the story on him. He's a real, real nice guy and we got along well. We really hit it off and I had him back and forth from …

SH: Fort Hamilton?

FW: From Fort Hamilton, and, also, from the place right near Rutgers. …

SH: Okay, from Kilmer.

FW: I'll tell you about when we got there, and, anyway, he stayed. He went on for navigation and I didn't. … I don't know how many years ago it was, because he became a regular then, he had to bail out of a plane, somewhere in the far West, back in the States, and his chute caught in a tree and hung him. Can you imagine? Oh, well, that's just the way things happen, I guess. So, anyway, and most of us, believe it or not, most of the twenty-eight men were killed in combat, that I could keep [track of]. We were spread all over after we got over there. We were all in different groups, and I was assigned to the 96th Bomb Group in May of [1943]. …

SH: From Fort Hamilton, they sent you down to Kilmer just to wait.

FW: Well, school, yes, that's where we were sent. … I just want to find myself here [in the diary], because Bill and I are still coming back and forth here, and going back and forth here. I don't know where I got the money to do that, [laughter] although the people were pretty good to servicemen in those days. Oh, "April the 2nd, moved to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, in afternoon. Willie and I went to park;" just to sit.

SH: Where did you and Willie go?

FW: To Camp Kilmer.

SH: I meant, you said, "Just to sit;" you were sitting there.

FW: … Yes, to await, find out what they were going to do with us next, because we had missed our shipment. …

SH: Were you able to leave Kilmer or did you just stay there?

FW: Oh, yes, we could do it. They didn't know what to do with us, but that's frustrating to you. Well, it was to me, anyway. I can't judge the others by me, but it was fun coming out here, home, and having my friend with me, too. "Back at camp. Around camp. Billy the Kid. Around camp." One night, while we were at Kilmer, … out of sheer desperation, I guess it was, they made us take all of our equipment, and we had all heavy flying equipment, the sheepskin stuff and all, and they put us out in, it looked like a parking lot, and we had to sleep out there overnight, and this is April. [laughter] …

SH: Why would they take you out of the barracks and put you out on the parking lot just for one night?

FW: Yes, just for one night, yes, [laughter] to show who's boss, I guess, and then, "We're restricted. Restricted lifted. Went to New York, and then, walked through Central Park." …

SH: Did you go to any USO shows?

FW: Oh, that thing in the middle of 42nd Street there, in Times Square, … for the soldiers, you know, [the Times Square USO Center]. We could go there every time. We could get tickets to just about every [event]. I think I saw every play. I got sick and tired of seeing plays, [laughter] good seats, and didn't cost us a thing. They gave them to us, yes, to servicemen. I never had any complaints. Some people complain about the treatment they had when they were in the service, but I never [did]. … "Saw *Human Comedy* [a 1943 film] at night, and then, some plane," or play, rather. … Believe it or not, it was [that] we were there until May 4th.

SH: Wow.

FW: Doing absolutely nothing, absolutely nothing, just due to some human error … of the upper, upper [officers].

SH: All the bombardiers were just there.

FW: Yes, and we left New Brunswick, I guess it was, at four-thirty for New York, "Went aboard the *Queen Elizabeth*, bound for combat zone, assigned main deck, M-81, twenty-four men to a stateroom," and, you know, I had to lie on the floor. Mine was on the very bottom. I had to lie on the floor, alongside of my cot, and sidle myself over to get in the bed. There were fifteen thousand men on the *Queen Elizabeth*.

SH: Really?

FW: Yes, and I think we were supposed to have been [sunk]; the Germans reported sinking us at least three times on the way over. That always was a joke. It was a standard joke, but, boy, the guns that were on that *Queen Elizabeth* sure were [impressive].

SH: What kind of freedom did you have? Could you move all over the ship?

FW: Well, I just want to tell you what they did to me. "On May the 6th, spent AM on deck. Met Augie Martone." His dad was a tailor in Boonton, downtown, and he had graduated with me from high school, and, with fifteen thousand men aboard, in the middle of it all, I'm walking around and all of a sudden, "Hey, Wiz!" [laughter]

SH: Was he in the infantry?

FW: Yes, he was in the infantry. He was an enlisted man. … "Met Augie Martone and talked all afternoon with him. Played cards at night."

RZ: Did he make it through the war?

FW: Yes, he did, but he died an early death. I know, in fact, … just before last Memorial Day, he passed away. Jimmy Dunn, he just lived down the street, he graduated with me also, and he and I were staunch buddies. He was the only one left around here. I don't know of anyone around here anymore that graduated with me. Why the Good Lord let me survive, it's good, but,

you know, when you see all your friends go ahead of you, it isn't good, but I don't know, that's life, I guess. Oh, here, "On May 7th, sea calmed down." They put me, even on orders, on what they called "the blackout watch," and I used to have to roam the decks of the *Queen Elizabeth* at night, to look for any potential light from any porthole or window, or this or that, and it's spooky. It's scary, when you're up on those decks and you don't know what is out there and it's pitch-black at night, and May wasn't the warmest weather. … Sometimes, we'd be down this way, and then, [back], because we did [zigzagging]. This is the way they go to Europe.

RZ: Zigzagging.

FW: Yes, trying to avoid the …

RZ: The submarines?

FW: The subs, yes. "Rained all day. Sea a bit rough, calmed down in PM. Played cards in the afternoon. Stood a four-hour blackout watch at night, seven [to] eleven. Went all over the ship." The only thing that I ever saw was a little glimmer of light from one of the side windows, and it was one of the crew, the English crewmembers, that had it, believe it or not. [laughter]

RZ: Did you go and yell at him?

FW: Oh, well, yes. Going up and down stairs, people were sleeping on the stairs, literally sleeping. They'd rather sleep there than try and get in and out of the bunk, the way that I did. … There were so many people that were seasick, had the *mal de mer*, [laughter] oh, gosh, and that's awful, too, when you're in such confining quarters, but what are you going to do?

SH: Did you have to check on the enlisted men or were they further down than you?

FW: Did I have to?

SH: Check on them?

FW: No, I just checked the upper decks. … Oh, you could never go everywhere. It's too big.

SH: I am going to put this on pause right now.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: We are back on. Thank you to Mrs. Wiswall for the wonderful lunch. While you were zigzagging on the …

FW: Voyage, yes.

SH: On the *Queen Elizabeth* over there, were there any other incidents that you remember? You talked about, one time, finding someone who had accidentally left their curtains open.

FW: No, that was the only time. I was surprised I found that. No, there weren't. It was the usual story, as I said before, that we'd been sunk a couple of times, and that happened on every voyage, they said, but, no, it was uneventful. I couldn't believe there were fifteen thousand men onboard. Yes, I could believe it, [laughter] even more.

RZ: How long did the voyage take?

FW: I'll tell you exactly. … When did I say we took off?

SH: I think it was in May.

FW: … Oh, yes, I met my friend, Augie Martone, May 6th.

SH: Right. You talked about meeting this friend.

FW: "Left at four-thirty-five."

SH: On the 4th.

FW: On the 4th. "Went to New York;" yes, we got on. No, "We pulled out at six-forty-five on May the 5th. May 11th, landed somewhere in Scotland," I think it was the Firth of Forth, "Boarded a train and left for new station." That's where I became; … what was it? The Salvation Army; everywhere that we went, to me, Salvation Army was number one.

SH: Was it the Red Cross or the Salvation Army?

FW: Salvation Army, and the Red Cross, we even had Red Cross. We had two or three of them that were right at our base. They lived right at our base that I flew from.

SH: In England.

FW: Yes, they were good, too. … I can still remember, as a kid, walking … holding on my mother's hand and she would never pass a Salvation Army pot without putting a dollar in it, never. So, maybe I even was brought up to be impartial to Salvation Army, [laughter] but they were always there, more so than any of the other [organizations], and I'm not demeaning any charity, charitable place, but Salvation Army always gets my ticket.

SH: Was the Salvation Army there in Scotland when you landed?

FW: [Yes], the Firth of Forth. I'm pretty sure that's where they came in. "Landed in Scotland. Boarded a train right away." I remember, we had coffee and doughnuts before we got on the train, and then, they, "Left train at Stone in England," and that's in the Midlands, and the countryside between Scotland and the Midlands is beautiful. Oh, if you ever have the opportunity to see it, you should. I know, when we went to visit our friends in England, the last time, we took a trip up through Scotland and, oh, it's beautiful country, beautiful country. Oh, yes, where is that? … I met this little girl in Stone. She was so nice, right, and that's where I

learned to ride a bicycle again, too. When you get in England, that's where you ride a bicycle (back in those days, you're on your bicycle). So, that's what we did.

SH: Where you landed, on the Firth of Forth, was there any damage at that point, that you saw?

FW: No, no. I didn't see any either going down through the Midlands, and, … actually, Stone was a small, little, country town and there wasn't any damage there.

SH: What did they tell you that you needed to be prepared to do to live in England? Was there any, say, instruction on how to treat the British?

FW: Well, there were certain words that you should watch out to use, that were common over here that are, I don't know whether they're degrading or they're not nice words, and any word, that they have a dual meaning, a meaning … in this country and a meaning in England. Like, you never would call a person a "bum" [a vagrant] over there, because a "bum" is not a "bum." It's a "bum," [rear-end]. [laughter] That was one of the words. I can't think of any others now, but I know there are others, and, no, I don't recall any preparation.

SH: Was there anything about money?

FW: Well, the pounds, of course, you had to get used to that. … You know what the pound was worth, at that time? $4.035, for one pound sterling, $4.035. [Editor's Note: This exchange rate was adopted by the British Government in 1940 and held for the duration of the war.]

SH: Back then?

FW: For one pound. I know we used to have a gaming table in the officers' club and, every payday, they'd always set the darn thing up, and I'm not a gambler by heart, but you go in there and you start talking with your friends. So, they're saying, "Oh, let's go over now." So, I'd go over and they had this, a dice table, and I never played the dice. All I'd do is stand in the corner and bet one pound at a time against the dice, and I'd wait and I always won. [Editor's Note: Lieutenant Colonel Wiswall knocks on wood.] [laughter] I'd wait until I had, what was it? fifty pounds and, after I'd won fifty pounds, the next morning, I would go down to the financial department and send two hundred dollars home to my brother to put in the bank, [laughter] boy, and they didn't like me at all at the game, and my pilot happened to be one of the partners of the fellows that ran the [table].

RZ: What did you think of the British?

FW: I loved the British people. … Mae and I went, what was it, in '82 or '83? We took a trip over to England. No, we went right to, where did we start that out? to England, and then, from England, we went on, and we went on to Pointe du Hoc.

MW: Paris?

FW: Paris, yes.

MW: And then, back home

FW: Yes. No, no, what was the original question now? …

MW: The English people, honey. …

FW: Oh, yes, and, when we went to England, … the first place we went to was back at my old base, where we flew from. …

SH: What was the town where the base was located, or the nearest town?

FW: Well, it was Snetterton Heath, [a Royal Air Force base that hosted the US Army Air Forces' 96th Bomb Group, parent group of the 413th Bomb Squadron, from June 1943 to December 1945], was the name. I don't know if there was a town, the railroad station was Eccles Road. … What's the name of the town where the Quidenham Church is?

MW: I can't remember.

FW: I can't remember the little hamlet's name, either, to tell you the truth. … Attleborough, is right there, Attleborough.

MW: … A town named Diss, where our friends lived. …

FW: Diss, yes, that's a few minutes, yes, but, anyway, when we went there, we were met by some English people that, more or less, oversee our base.

MW: They're historians, actually, like you are.

FW: And they also were there to greet us, and this one gentleman, Bert Patrick was his name, he and his wife were there, and they more or less showed us around the base. Too bad I don't have their …

MW: Well, that was their job, honey. They were historians.

FW: Yes, I know, I know that. Back to where our old quarters were; I found the old bomb disposal place, no, bomb shelter. It was still there, too, exactly the same. It was right practically on top of a Nissen hut where I lived, and we got some pictures of that, … but most of the area around there had been taken over by farmers. There are a little bit of the old runways left. … There's one hangar that's left, but most of it's gone, and a big racetrack has been built in that same area where our field was, for automobile racing.

SH: Is this in East Anglia?

FW: East Anglia, yes. If you know East Anglia, or if you know Norwich, we're … about eighteen miles south of Norwich, due south. …

MW: The English people are wonderful, to answer your question.

FW: Yes, but, anyway, we made staunch friends with the Patricks and their daughter. We invited them over to the United States and she took a fancy to Jeff, oh, boy. [laughter] …

MW: But, he's a bachelor, [laughter] and wasn't going to get caught.

FW: … Well, no, he has some very nice girlfriends, … but he just doesn't get serious with them. So, she went back home and …

MW: Got married.

FW: She married and, believe it or not, Jeff went over to her wedding. We all did. We all went over to Jill's wedding.

MW: And he's godfather to her first child.

FW: Yes.

SH: How nice. Let us go way back and start with Stone. You said there was someone that you met.

FW: Oh, Stone, yes. … (Dixie Sutton?) was her name. That's what I came across before [in the diary], but I don't see it now. No, that's not it, but, anyway, she showed me around Stone, which is just a very little town, and there wasn't any damage there at all. "Up early. Lecture on security in AM. Changed my US money to pounds in the PM. Had a date with Doris," and then, I have, in quotes, "'Dixie Sutton' at night. She comes from Kent, darn nice girl." She was a very nice, lovely person.

SH: Was she in the military up there?

FW: No, no.

SH: Kent is quite a bit south of East Anglia.

FW: No; yes, they're all in uniform down below. "Took a hike in the AM. Lecture in PM. Had a date with Dixie at night. We took a walk. Went to the Crown Hotel." I remember, that's where I had my introduction to the bitters, [laughter] bitters, "arf and arf," [slang for "half and half," a mixture of mild and bitter ales], yes, and then, I drew a bicycle. … Then, my buddy, the fellow that was the steerer, or the pilot let's say, on the bomb trainer for him and he was the one for me. We were cadet partners. He was in the group that went over with me. He and I took a long ride.

SH: It was just the two of you that wound up together then.

FW: No, we were all, the twenty-eight of us, we were all still together.

SH: Were you really?

FW: Yes. You know, well, we hadn't been a place where you'd be assigned or separated.

SH: You basically went over there as a replacement for whatever crew would need you.

FW: Right, and that was, "We left Stone on May 19th. Visited London in PM. … Had an air raid at night, my first one. Met Colonel Black, A-1, in AM. Slept in PM. Filled out pay papers. Good food. We live in Quonset huts;" oh, I didn't even know how to spell it. I didn't know what a Quonset hut was. I had here, "C-O-N-E." I'm trying to figure out what I'd meant. Now, I know. [laughter]

SH: Who is Colonel Black?

FW: That was his name. I don't know who A-1 [was]; I don't even remember what A-1 is, and I don't remember Colonel Black. [laughter] I just put it down here because that's what it was. "Quonset huts covered with metal, far better than I expected. Bruce and I wandered around (Mark's Hall?) in AM. It's an old castle. Slept in PM. Got packed at night. We leave again tomorrow. Got our orders and left and went by truck to;" it's Bovington, and I have Bobbington, … "B-O-B-B," but I know it's "B-O-V-I," and I didn't even know the … name of the place. "Our new post. It's a combat crew replacement center, not a bad place at all. Looked over the English Halifax in the morning. Wrote letters in PM. Went to bed early. Start training tomorrow," and then, we started combat training classes. "Eight hours of lectures." I don't know how I stood that. "Very interesting and helpful material. Classes all day. Took a three-hour hop in a B-17E at night." Now, that was the first time I'd been in a bomber.

SH: This was just to train.

FW: Just to get flying in one, really. "My ears clogged at two thousand feet, hurt like," you know what, "enjoyed the hop nevertheless. Went to classes, intelligence test. Both of my ears are clogged up. Went to flight surgeon." We went over this part, didn't we? "Classes all day. Flight surgeon three times."

MW: Yes, we did.

FW: … "Classes in the AM, PM. Left ear clogged up. Went to medical. Played cards at night."

MW: I think he read some of this. …

SH: We had thought this was down in Texas.

FW: Classes? Well, … all these classes were, they were learning all about the B-17, what it was and what it could do and what it couldn't do, and that's what that actually meant, "Classes all day," when I say that, a little bit of everything. "School in PM. Had final test. Turning in

early." Oh, "Went to bed early, deaf as a post." I'm talking about myself. [laughter] I wondered what it was all about. Now, I have it correct, yes, "Left Bovington in AM. Went to London. Room at Mount Royal Hotel. Bruce Quinten;" well, we met up with some of our other twenty-eight there.

SH: What kind of damage did you see when you were in London? You talked about being involved in an air raid. Did you go down in the subway or was it a regular air raid shelter?

FW: Let me see. …

SH: Prior to this, you talked a little bit about it. I just wondered what you remembered.

FW: Oh, I can remember a lot about the damages around, in England and London and all of them.

MW: Well, tell her about them.

FW: Well, bombed out skeletons of buildings, fire burned buildings, streets dug up. … We never got on the ground, but you take a place like Hamburg, Hamburg was "hamburger-ized." It was [the case that] if any other target was open in that vicinity, or closed, rather, excuse me, Hamburg was always open, because there's always smoke coming up from it, always. The English would hit it at night and parts of the American forces would hit it in the daytime. So, it was just … like a skeleton.

SH: How had the German bombing of London been? Was it the same kind of devastation in London?

FW: In parts, in parts. I mean, like, they never really got close to the Tower of London area, or, if they got close to it, they didn't hit anything. I know, one time, one of my buddies and I, it wasn't Harry, but who was that? oh, my navigator, Bob Hockins; we were walking down near Piccadilly Circus, going over toward the officers' club. The Circus was here and we were going over here, and a "buzz bomb" [a V-1 rocket] hit over here and blew us both into the bomb shelter, right down the stairs. I ripped my pants and everything. I can remember that, but they were scattered, but it wasn't real [concentrated devastation], like, I never saw a real concentrated part of London, and I know there were. I never got to the outskirts, but I know there were [badly bombed areas], and Cambridge, oh, Cambridge was hit very heavily. We'd pass that on the way down, from a distance, which was right near our airbase. Well, if you can just imagine, you've most likely seen pictures of the devastation that the *Luftwaffe* did.

SH: How were the air raids received when you got there? Were they taken in stride? Was there panic or was it more like, "Okay, this is part of the night's routine?"

FW: Well, with those, with the buzz bombs and with the V-2 rockets, the V-2 rockets, well, you never stood a chance, because those went up and they came down and you never heard them until they blasted, but, with the buzz bombs, they would roar as they were coming in, and then, all of a sudden, the engine would cut off, and you knew that it was going to go like that, but you

didn't know where it was going to go. Those are the things that scared the devil out of you, and from what the English told us when we got over there, that in the earlier days, when the British Air Force was practically depleted by the *Luftwaffe*, the *Luftwaffe*, more or less, had its free range. … They could run up and down any hamlet street and just go with their machine-guns wide open, "Boom, boom, boom," I mean, no one there to stop them. So, it was pretty rough on a lot of the British people, I'll tell you. I always used to say, and maybe I should retract it now, but I often wondered what our country would have [done], how we would have held up under those circumstances that those people lived through. I mean, people back here were complaining about oleo margarine and no gas for the cars, and those people were pleading for their lives every day, you know. … The Americans always seemed to bear out anyway and, most likely, we would've, but …

MW: Well, when they knew a raid was coming, did they go quietly to wherever they were supposed to go or did they all get excited?

FW: You want me to tell you what they did?

MW: Seriously, yes.

FW: They ran like hell for the bomb shelters, and a lot of people, the Underground [subway] was used as a shelter, and a lot of, especially the elder people, you'd go down in the subways and people … had their cots and beds and everything. They were sleeping down there. They didn't even leave them. They were frightened, scared to death, and I think I would have been, too, if I had to live under the conditions that they did. …

MW: Well, you did while you were there.

FW: Well, I wasn't living in London.

MW: Well, that's true. …

FW: No. Well, we even had a [raid]; the *Luftwaffe* came over our field one night and dropped flares, and we knew it was a photo section of the *Luftwaffe*. They'd come over to take pictures of our airfield, but they didn't drop any bombs, but I know I saw, or could hear, bombs being dropped in Norfolk. … I also saw, one time, where the guns in Norfolk shot down a *Luftwaffe* plane, … but they never hit our base while I was there.

SH: Were you getting newspapers or radio reports about how the war was going?

FW: Well, we would get the *Stars and Stripes.*

SH: Did you know what was going on in the Pacific, too?

FW: Yes. I think that we most likely did, but, to be perfectly honest, I think, … at that time, I was paying more attention to where I was and what I was doing, … because I knew it was absolute rough living no matter where you were, no matter where you were.

SH: In the beginning of June, you still had not been assigned to a crew.

FW: Well, that's my next thing to come to here. "Mark's Hall, reported in and out. Orders, Bruce and I will … be together," my co-partner, yes. "Willie Q and Jimmy (Wilmont?) will leave us." "June the 11th, reported to 337th Squadron Group in AM. Sent to the hospital for my cold and ears," [laughter] and that was the 96th Bomb Group.

MW: You should get your mission book out now, maybe.

FW: '43, oh, yes. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

FW: Oh, yes. So, on June 11th, we moved to Snetterton Heath, where the 96th Bomb Group … was installed. They moved, too. "Nothing much doing, Bruce and I. Twenty-four ships out, four ships missing." That's forty men. "Went to the movies at night." Now, in these days, we weren't assigned to a crew and we were just sitting around, doing nothing, absolutely nothing.

SH: How demoralizing was that? You do not have your own crew yet, but you know that many planes have been shot down.

FW: Yes. [laughter] Well, you still wanted to go, but they wouldn't let us go on a flight, because we weren't on a crew, … and no one wanted the responsibility of … saying, "Yes, all right, go." "Wrote more letters at night. Ground school in AM, ditching. Practice mission called off. Got my first mail from home." "June 16th, target identification, Brest. Full practice mission in PM. Darn near got sick, air plenty rough," but I never actually did get airsick, to tell you the truth, no. "Went to ground school in AM. Took a sunbath." When is it? Oh, well, it'd be after; we sat, I know without even looking through all of this, because … all I know was, I flew, so, it would be way on. Bruce got assigned to a crew before I did. There, again, you're in the right place at the right time.

MW: That's right

FW: Because, … I'll come across that later, he was shot down right on our left wing, and I was sure that he was killed, but he wasn't killed. He was a prisoner of war for the balance of the war.

SH: Really?

FW: We got together. When I was recalled for Korea, I drove down to Hamilton, or not Hamilton; what is it, in Virginia, right near where … Langley Field is? … I had to report in at Langley Field, and what's it? Hampton Rhodes. There's a little cafeteria, a luncheonette-like deal down there, in Hampton Rhodes. … Driving down, I got down there early in the morning, very early in the morning. I knew the place, because I had been assigned to Langley Field during World War II. I went in there to get something to eat for breakfast, and, as I walk in, "Hey, Wiz," and there's Yarwood sitting there, … my partner from Aviation Cadet days. He got

recalled at the same time as I did, and he was a prisoner of war, and I hadn't seen him since I saw him shot down.

SH: My. His name was Yarwood?

FW: Yarwood, yes.

SH: Where was he from?

FW: Cleveland, Cleveland, yes. No, he passed away. He's gone. … Everybody I read about, darn it, is deceased. All right, now, here we are. "Bruce was transferred to 338th as Lieutenant Pelosi's bombardier. Lucky break," I have down here. So, there you are. Then, in the 14th; no, no, that's not the 14th. That's the year before. "Transferred to 413th Bomb Squadron in PM. Alerted on Lieutenant Shelton's crew. Shelton's bombardier back. So, that's no crew for me as yet," but he wasn't back. I don't know why I [wrote that]. It turned out that he wasn't, because he was shot down. Shelton, they were on a mission and they got hit by flak, and, no, it wasn't. That wasn't the time they were [hit]. The life raft, there's a life raft on a B-17 that's on the right-hand side of the aircraft fuselage, and it came out, must have been hit by flak. … It came out and wrapped around the stabilizer and they went into a dive and, between the pilot and the copilot, they could pull it out of the dive, but, in the meantime, Shelton had given the order to bail out and four men bailed out. … They had bailed out into the North Sea and they were all killed, including the bombardier. So, that's how I got my crew. I was assigned to his crew, and Shelton was a real great guy, pilot. "On July 19th, moved into new Quonset hut. Assigned to Lieutenant Shelton's crew. Read at night. Nothing doing during the day. Read at night. Nothing doing much at all." I was most likely stomping [chomping] at the bit by then. [laughter] "Went flying in PM, did some buzzing around. Slept in AM. Checked AFC [automatic flight control], automatic pilot. Checked equipment at night. Our crew test hopped a plane in PM. Wrote letters at night. … Went to July 26th briefing," 28th, no, this is my day, on the 28th. What did I [do], 26th? no. Every now and then, I'd skip a page. [laughter] I'd write in the wrong spot. "On the 28th, off for Germany at six, 0600, six in the morning. Ran into about sixty German fighters, forced down over North Sea. Got home on three engines at a hundred feet. Radio operator wounded, and I had to take care of him." You know, it was that he'd been hit in the leg several missions before, by shrapnel, and he was in the hospital and had it taken care of. … On my first mission, he got hit in exactly the same leg, in the same place, and the bombardier was the medical officer, also, onboard. So, I had to go back and sort of tend to him, put in the sulfa drugs and whatever. … [Editor's Note: Sulfonamides are a group of drugs used to kill bacteria. Powdered sulfa drugs were included in US Armed Forces first aid kits during World War II for use in preventing the infection of wounds.]

SH: Did you have medical training?

MW: No.

FW: No. I knew what medical equipment was there, what was onboard. So, that was it. … I couldn't call myself doctor, now, could I? [laughter] That'd be the day. … Oh, let's see, "On the 29th," 28th, I flew my first mission, I just told you about it, "in the morning, alerted, tomorrow,

mission. Took off for Kassel, Germany," and Kassel was in the middle of, if I'm not mistaken, the Ruhr Valley, and that was the most heavily-defended spot, in that Ruhr Valley, because that's where all the metal and all the [coal] that Hitler used came from. "Back at twelve o'clock. … Only three of our planes, 413th Squadron, went over the target. Bruce is missing-in-action, (near you?)." He had just gotten in on this other crew, Pelosi's crew. "I fired twelve hundred rounds. Really a rough mission."

SH: Were you able to bomb your target?

FW: Well, in those days, I was a togglier, [a bombardier who toggled the bomb release switch on cue from the lead bombardier]. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

FW: Sure, sure, oh, yes. You can quote me anytime, as far as that's concerned.

SH: We are looking at the navigator's log.

FW: Well, I just used this book.

SH: You used the navigator's log as the bombardier, in question.

FW: Yes, yes, right. Now, see, in here, where we were leaving from, that was Eccles Road, which is the same as our base, Snetterton Heath, the date, what type of plane we're in, what its number was, who the pilot was and who the navigator was and the length of the mission, and here are all the crew members. … There's only two that are left, and I'm one of them, and the other is a fellow by the name of Staples wasn't on here then. …

SH: Were they all from all over the country?

FW: All over.

SH: Really?

FW: Well, they're all up in heaven now, I'm sure.

SH: Good, good.

MW: Well, I hope that's where they are.

FW: And then, I wrote, just what you have on that piece of paper that I gave you is written in here, and I did that for even missions that we aborted on, same thing.

SH: What was the most memorable mission that you were on?

FW: Regensburg, [a city in southeastern Germany].

SH: Why is that memorable?

FW: Because, well, as a rule, when we went out on a mission, we turned around after we dropped our bombs and went back home. This one, we were after ball-bearings, and that was in …

SH: Is this the log we are looking at right now?

FW: No, I'm not looking at that one.

MW: Well, find that one, honey, and maybe you can read it

RZ: It is right here.

FW: Regensburg. Yes, well, they want to see the book, I guess. I don't know. What date was that, anyway?

RZ: August 17, 1943.

FW: All right, I've already passed it. That's (Wessling?), France, August 12th; come on, Wiswall.

SH: What date, Roger?

RZ: August 17th.

SH: We are on the 15th here.

FW: Abbeville-Poix, [France]. Oh, I thought you said; here's Regensburg. … I think it was the First Air Division, we were in the Third Air Division, went to Schweinfurt, which is also ball-bearings, and we went to Regensburg, which was also that. The fellows that went to Schweinfurt turned around and went back home [after bombing Schweinfurt]. We didn't. [Editor's Note: The August 17, 1943, mission to bomb ball-bearing factories in Schweinfurt and aircraft factories in Regensburg was an early Eighth Air Force experiment in shuttle-bombing and diversion tactics. The plan was for the Third Air Division to strike Regensburg, then, proceed to bases in North Africa, drawing out the *Luftwaffe* and confusing the German defenders by heading south. The First Air Division would then follow on their heels to strike Schweinfurt, taking advantage of the fact that the German fighters would still be on the ground refueling after attacking the Third Air Division. However, weather delayed the First Air Division's takeoff and they were also heavily intercepted by the German defenders.] On their return trip to the United Kingdom, I don't have a map here to show you, but what we did is, from Regensburg, we went over the Brenner Pass in Switzerland, and down into the Mediterranean, Italy to our left, and went on into Africa and landed in the desert, and that's why it was a little bit different. Well, we lost one engine. … Part of the engine was shot out and one other engine was acting up. So, these other fellows in the First Air Division; … no, the fellows in our division, the Third Division, that still had flyable

planes, when they left Africa a couple of days later, they bombed Bordeaux in France, on the way back home. We couldn't, because we had two engines. One was shot out and the other one was bad. So, we went with our plane over to Marrakech, on the western side of Africa, and we had to wait, when we were there, once again, for engines to be flown down from Casablanca. So, while we were waiting, what they did is, they … let our crew go to Agadir, [Morocco], which is right on the coast. It's a rest home and we stayed there for a couple or three days and there wasn't anything there, because anything worthwhile, the only thing was some wine, I think, the Germans had taken everything the people had there, and, if they didn't take it, they despoiled it. …

SH: When you went over the ball-bearing factory, that was where you lost your engine, and so, you just went ahead and came on south.

FW: Right on, yes, that's right, and let's see, what was I going to say now? I digressed. …

SH: Did some of the other planes come with you to North Africa?

FW: Oh, yes, well, anyone that could fly. Well, you see, some of them had to ditch, in the First [Third?] Air Division, had to ditch into the Mediterranean, the ocean, because they ran out of gas. See, that was our concern. Everyone was really sweating. That was quite a feat that we pulled. It was the first shuttle mission of its type, and it was while we were there that the navigator and I came upon the wreck of a German fighter, and you know that in a German fighter plane, they have a piece of three-quarter-inch armor behind them, in there, and it's, you know, where the head comes down, and then, like so, and that was loose in that German fighter. So, the navigator and I took it and we got some other fellows to help us carry it, because it was heavy, and we got it up in our B-17 and put it on the floor of the nose, see. … Then, when we got back to England, we had that bolted, so that no matter what happened, it couldn't move from the floor, and, at that time, there wasn't a bombsight, because we were a brand-new crew. There was no bombsight for us yet, and then, you just have to bear with me. You're asking me questions and I'm telling you the truth. What we would do was, like, a target in Bremen, [a city in northern Germany], the flak that was shot up at you from in Bremen, you could get out and walk on it; literally, you could. It was so thick, and, of course, that was bursting at all altitudes, under you, alongside of you, above you. … So, Hockin and I figured out, when we hit a target like that, I'd get up in front and hunch over on this armor plate and he'll crawl up my back and put his arms around me and we'll ride it out, in other words. [laughter] … My first thought was, and as I always said it, "Now, what if the Chaplain or what if the Colonel ever were to stick his nose in here and see you and I in this position? Where would we be? Ho, ho, Lord." [laughter]

MW: They always could laugh about something, right.

FW: But, we didn't laugh about it.

MW: Not then, no.

FW: We were very serious, … and the one time that I got hit by a piece of flak it didn't even break the skin, so, I was never wounded; it was a flake about like that. It was a flake of flak. …

The A-2 jacket that I had on, it just went halfway through it, but it had gone through the side of the plane and it lost most of its strength in there. I thought I lost an arm there, and I didn't lose anything, but, I mean, it's the way flak can hit you. Now, when we became a lead plane, when we were capable of leading the group, we had to take this thing out of the front of the nose.

SH: Why?

FW: Because you got a bombsight in there. The Norden Bombsight was put in there, so [that] I could drop bombs; no more free rides, no more free rides. [laughter] …

SH: You kept the same plane. After all the damage, they still let you keep the same plane.

FW: Oh, yes. Oh, boy, those ground crews, you can never say enough for the ground crews, you really can't, because, what did they call them? the unsung heroes. They work all night, every time, … all night, all day, if necessary, because we always had a goal "twenty-one aircraft available and up," and you'd be surprised how many planes had come back shot up. So, those ground crews were fantastic.

SH: Did your plane have a name?

FW: *Short Stride*. That, my pilot named that. Apparently, it wasn't his wife-to-be, but I think it was Collett's girl. I forget, now, how that came about; one of them had a girl that always took short steps. This is back in the States, before I ever joined them. I got the story later on in life, and so, they named it *Short Stride*, the plane, and I think that, before we finished, we went through about six *Short Strides*.

SH: Okay. That was what I wanted to know.

FW: Yes, yes.

SH: Surely, you could not have kept that same plane flying all that time.

FW: No. Well, we went to two airfields in France. You'll see in the log there that I gave you, Abbeville and Poix, and I think they were in the western coast of France, and we had over a hundred flak holes or bullet holes on the side of it, all over it, and nobody got hurt. No one got hurt, not hit or anything, but, no, you get shot up. … The plane that I got to be a member of the crew of, I should have dug out one of those pictures, when they brought that plane back in and landed at Snetterton Heath, … the number two engine, this is the plane, and the number two engine, they couldn't stop it from "wind milling." What they usually do is turn the prop [propeller], and, usually, a prop will be like this, so that it bites the air as it goes around. When they say they "feather" it, they turn the blade so [that] it cuts through the air. Well, they couldn't do that. So, it was "wind milling" all the way back from the North Sea, when the other fellows bailed out, and they hit the ground and after, when they hit the ground, the prop flew off and went halfway through the nose of the plane, just missed the navigator, Hockins, who was still alive, and I … have a picture of that plane, and that's what I joined. That's the fellow that I

replaced in that plane, but God was with me, that's all. So, that covers that. Now, where do we [go]?

SH: We are talking about August of 1943. How long did it take you to finish?

FW: March the 3rd, I finished.

SH: March the 3rd. You actually finished your twenty-five missions before D-Day.

FW: Yes, twenty-five missions, yes.

SH: What do they do with you after twenty-five missions?

FW: Oh, well, that was interesting. Well, they told me I could go home. You, … but I was single and I was young and I said, "Well, it's up to you," and then, they asked me if I would be interested in staying on and training other lead bombardiers and new crews coming over, the bombardier and the crew. I said, "Sure." So, I stayed on as [a trainer], and I had already been made squadron bombardier and gotten my captaincy. So, I stayed on and trained new crews that came in, and I came up with this idea of; we carried Pathfinder equipment. [Editor's Note: Pathfinder aircraft were aircraft outfitted with the H2X radar system; in a B-24, the ball-turret was removed and replaced with a radar dish.] Pathfinder equipment was H2X equipment, it was radar, and the radar, so many times, when we flew over the Continent, we had ten-tenths coverage [a hundred percent cloud coverage] underneath. You couldn't see, and, sometimes, you'd have breaks in the cloud formation and you could see, and, in more than one instance, you couldn't. It was all radar, and radar was a hit-and-miss proposition. All you see is just your PPI scope, plan position indicator, [the radar display screen], and it'd go around. … If it hit anything, it gave a return that would bounce back and show up in this scope. I assume that all radar is like that, even today, I guess, but more refined, of course, and so, there was a lot of interpolation. I mean, do you reply? You look at your chart and there's a city here and that gives a return and this one gives a return, but it was interpolation, and then, you had to navigate yourself by these reflections that you saw come back in the radar scope, but the radar was trying to solve the same problem as you were with the Norden Bombsight. … The main thing that you have to do is keep on track, the pilot keeps the airspeed constant, too, altitude constant and the course constant, until the bombardier takes over, and then, he just regulates the airspeed and the bombardier will fly the plane, [the Norden Bombsight controls the plane in accordance with the bombardier's adjustments]. … When radar is doing it, I guess they did the same thing, but I never; radar was very difficult, but I imagine they would still be trying to do the same thing. … What both of them were solving, or trying to solve, was that there's a point in the sky at the altitude you're flying, at the airspeed and in the course you're on, there's a point which is called the dropping point, with the type of bomb that you're carrying and the airspeed you're flying. See, when you drop the bomb, the bomb'll follow the plane, like so, and then, go in what they call a parabolic curve down to the target, or to the ground, or wherever it's going, and, if he's trying to solve that problem and … I have got the bombsight all set up, ready to take over, in case there's any opening in the clouds, … why can't I clutch in the bombsight and keep following and look for an opening in the sky? … If I look for an opening in the sky and he's anywhere near the course that we need to go to get to the target, I can take over, because I can see that break in the sky. He

can't. He's still looking at the radarscope, but I can see the target; I can take over with the bombsight and bomb visually, instead of going by the poor H2X guy in the back, because that was very unreliable, that bombing. I think we dropped …

SH: Were you able to convince them to let you do that?

FW: Oh, yes.

MW: He got a citation for it. I'll show you.

FW: Yes. I got the Legion of Merit for that. That's about one of the proudest things I have, [laughter] … but I presented it to the Eighth Air Force Headquarters and they bought it and it was used on D-Day. …

RZ: Did you or your crew ever shoot down any German fighters?

FW: Oh, yes, yes. I thought I got one. I don't know whether I have that in here or not. Yes, I do.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Can I put this back on?

FW: Oh, yes, sure.

SH: My question is, what was a Pathfinder group?

FW: Well, you see, if there was strictly all cloud cover underneath, all the way, when the Pathfinder decided that his equipment had picked up that point that I told you about, they would drop a flare. … That flare was, more or less, like, it was hanging in the clouds, was most likely. I forget how they got it to stand still, but they did. Maybe that was a chute and, when the rest of the planes, passed over that flare, they would drop their bombs.

SH: That was the way you first started out as a bombardier. You would bomb by visualizing or seeing that flare.

FW: No, no, if I was; as a bombardier before I got the bombsight, you mean?

SH: Yes.

FW: Oh, yes, before I had the bombsight, I was no different than anyone else. I couldn't pick up that point.

SH: No, but, before, you were the bombardier, with the rest of the other bombardiers, dropping at that site. Does the bombardier not take over the plane when the bombs are being dropped?

FW: Oh, no, actually, the bombardier takes over; this is a map, this is the target, and we're coming in like this. We turn [on] this initial [point], the turning point, right, that point; from here on, if you're bombing with the bombsight, you go on automatic pilot and the automatic pilot is attached to the bombsight. So, the pilot, … all he has to worry about is maintaining the altitude and the airspeed. The bombardier, or the bombsight, is flying the plane. Does that answer your question?

SH: What if you are the plane without the bombsight?

FW: You're just watching the plane that is either going to drop by bombsight or H2X. … If it's even on a mission where the ground is visible, the target's wide open, you're just watching the lead plane, and, when his bombs dropped, you drop. You have an intervalometer, [a timing device used to count intervals in time], over here that'll tell you how many bombs to drop, or give you a spacing in-between each bomb that you drop and they'll click right out of the plane, but you let those bombs go when you see the lead plane … drop his bombs. Did I answer that okay?

SH: Yes.

[TAPE PAUSED]

RZ: Were there any special formations?

FW: Oh, yes. See, there's usually twenty-one aircraft in a group and they fly in this, this, this, here, here and here and here, "tail-end Charlie," [the last and most-vulnerable aircraft in the formation].

SH: It is kind of like a spread.

FW: I wish I …

SH: It is hard. We are trying to define this for the audio recording.

FW: … I don't know whether I have a picture here or not. I know I have a picture of a formation and, if you saw the formation; I don't know whether I have it here or not. It sure isn't there. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: After you finished your twenty-five missions, before you go with the Pathfinder group, did you get an R&R, or were you required to take an R&R?

FW: Usually, it was about the halfway mark, rest and recuperation, and it was their idea, I guess to give us a break and get us away from everything. … There was a big, it was almost like a castle, but instead of going up, it was spread out. I have a picture of it. I don't know where it is now, and I don't want to take your time to look for it, but it was a big, big, typical British place,

and all you do is just go there and rest and recuperate. I mean, there wasn't anything to do, really. There's nothing to do around and you're way out in the boonies, really, … but it was a chance just to get away and relax and do whatever you wanted to do.

SH: It was like a regular rotation.

FW: Yes.

SH: Was there ever a time when you saw crew members, not necessarily yours, but others on the base, who just had had it and just could not go up again, mental fatigue?

FW: I'm trying to think. … I don't ever recall seeing one, and it would be real, really, a last resort for anyone to do that. I don't know, … I heard that one of our group, one of the twenty-eight that went over with us, flew, I think it was two or three missions, and he refused to fly again. Now, I wasn't there, I didn't see it and I don't know, but I heard it and I heard it several times. So, I believe it, but I couldn't prove it and I would never state it, because I don't know that it's a fact, but, yes, I've heard of it. No, you can go bananas.

SH: How long was a flight, usually, a bombing run? I know the targets varied. Obviously, the one to North Africa was the longest. [laughter]

FW: Yes. Are you talking about the average length of … a combat flight or just the bombing run?

SH: Just a bombing run. [Editor's Note: A bombing run is the distance from the initial point to the target.]

FW: Oh, well, there, again, there's various factors. It'd depend on your altitude, most likely, depend on weather conditions and how big the target was, whether you're bombing a city or you're bombing a small building, which, sometimes, we did. There was one, Watten, [France]. … It was right over the English Channel and it was a big; we didn't know what it was, [a V-1 rocket launch site], but it was just a big block out there, and we went in and bombed that, bombed it at twelve thousand feet, but I don't know what it was, but that wouldn't be too long a run.

SH: What was your position when you would come under enemy fighter attack?

FW: Well, my position would never change. It would always be the nose gunner, and the navigator, who sat right to my rear, he had a gun out this way. Before I had a bombsight, I had a gun out the nose and I had a gun out this way. Right behind me, right behind the pilot and copilot, was the engineer and he was standing in a turret which had twin machine-guns and he could go around. The only thing he couldn't do is shoot through the tail, of course, and then, there were two waist gunners, the one that shot from either side of the aircraft. … They each had the single fifty-caliber machine-gun and the tail gunner, in the back, he had twin fifties.

RZ: What about the ball-turret?

FW: The ball, oh, yes, can't forget him, no. He had twin fifties, too, and he was underneath and they would … swing that around, but I don't know, my position, we didn't have that, really, in a plane.

SH: When you would go out like this and come back, what was the procedure for a bombardier? What were you required to do?

FW: … After you landed, coming back from a mission, there was a truck there to pick you up and carry you back to the briefing room. … We would all sit around the table and there would be a briefing officer there that would query us on the entire mission, anything we had to report. … "Did we think we got a fighter?" or this and that, and one thing and another, and, "Did we see any planes go down?" If you saw a plane go down, "Did you see how many chutes got out?" I mean, … to me, these would be natural questions that they would ask. … No, I was going to say, if you saw a plane go down in our group, "Did you notify [the navigator], or did the navigator know of it, so [that] he could make a position report right away? Did you see chutes?" because, then, if you saw chutes, "Was he over a place where anything could be done about it?" Those are the questions that we would be [asked], really, a very good interrogation.

SH: Then, you were free to just go back and sleep.

FW: Well, after you were finished with that; no, we got it, at first, the first thing you get when you get in there is, they come around with a little tray and in each tray is a shot, and, sometimes, … you really felt good, and I'm not much, … I wasn't in those days, of a straight drinker. … Beer was my drink, not booze, but, sometimes, it was good to have. That was the first thing … you were greeted with, and then, they would question you, and, sometimes, … you'd see, over in somebody else's crew, that somebody would be a little shaken up. You know, have you ever watched *Twelve O'Clock High,* [a 1949 film]? Well, if you have it, I've got it loaned out to a friend of mine who has two or three boys that are interested, … that's the best movie, as far as I'm concerned, that was ever put out about … what a crew goes through during the war. I've seen a lot of them, and some of them are glamorized to the point where, to me, they're sickening, just to sell [tickets], to make money. They don't tell a true story at all, but *Twelve O'Clock High* is factual, as far as I'm concerned, and then, the terrific actors in it, too. So, if anyone wants to know what it's like … or wants to get a good idea of what it's like, tell them to go out and rent *Twelve O'Clock High*.

RZ: Were you superstitious? Prior to a mission, did you do anything, like keeping charms or saying a prayer?

FW: Oh, I'll tell you one thing, … and I still say my prayers before I go to bed, … when I went on a mission, I said my prayers when we were taking off on the runway, on the way up. I'm not ashamed of that at all.

RZ: Did you keep any good luck charms?

SH: Were there standard little rituals that you would go through, like touching a door?

FW: No, no. [laughter]

SH: We hear all these things from people.

MW: Only his prayers.

FW: No, no. … I was a little superstitious about, not superstitious, but I always wanted to say my prayers and that, which I did.

SH: You have shown us some wonderful photographs. Sometimes, the crew would include someone who was taking photographs.

FW: … Well, we had a group photographer. … Whether there were other planes that had a whole array of … ways and means to take pictures, I don't know, but we never [did that]. No, you were too busy to really take pictures, and you weren't concerned, in the pictures, if you're going to take any pictures, it was the plane you were shooting at going down, and you didn't even have time to take a picture of him.

SH: I just wondered if, sometimes, they sent somebody from what we would now call the press corps?

FW: Well, they might have. …

MW: Well, how did you get your pictures then? They must have.

FW: Oh, from back in the group, I just said.

MW: I know, but these actual pictures, you must have had a photographer take them from the plane, right?

FW: Oh, no, not from our plane, no, didn't have to be from our plane. They could be from any plane. … A lot of the pictures that I've shown you, like this one picture of the planes going over the Brenner Pass in the Alps, on the way to Regensburg, and we swear that that one plane is us, but it's just that far away that you can't discern the [tail number]. … One B-17 looks a lot like the other. [laughter] …

SH: Were there USO shows and things like that for you in England?

FW: I know that I saw a couple of shows. … I remember [British Foreign Secretary] Anthony Eden coming to our place.

SH: What did you have to do for entertainment?

FW: And I think … a boxer came one time, but I never saw anybody like Bob Hope, but they might have come and I didn't catch them.

SH: What about the Big Bands?

FW: Well, Big Bands, none ever came to our base, that I know, because, if there was, believe me, I'd have been there, but, no, I can't ever remember a Big Band. I think I was over there at the time that Glenn Miller was there, but I don't know of any other Big Bands that came while I was there, to tell you the truth.

RZ: Did you play in any bands? Did you bring your trumpet?

FW: No, not over to Europe, no, no. I might have been playing a harp, maybe practicing up, you know, [laughter] but, no, I didn't.

RZ: The bugling days were past you. [laughter]

SH: You really did give up the bugle then, at that point, when you got to England.

FW: The bugle. [laughter]

MW: The bugle and the trumpet, right?

FW: No, I didn't bring that with me. No, I was past that point. …

SH: You have to forgive us for asking. We had to ask, after reading pages and pages of your diary, "Going to bugle practice." [laughter]

FW: … Well, I'm glad they gave me something to do. It's better than sitting around doing nothing, because time gets heavy on your hands after awhile, you know; at least it did on mine.

RZ: Was there any competition between the fighter pilots and the bomber crews? Was there any animosity? I know, up on a mission, everybody is on the same page, but maybe on the base.

SH: At the officers' club?

FW: Oh, no, no. I never saw any personal animosity, if that's what you mean, no, never. In fact, we always welcomed the "Little Friends." We had P-47 cover. When I first started flying …

RZ: "Little friends" is what you referred to the fighters as.

FW: When I first went over there, the only thing we had were the British Spitfires. They could go across the Channel and just bring us to the enemy coast and they'd have to turn around. They didn't have the range to go, and then, for awhile, we had P-51s and P-47s that would take us a portion of the way, and then, how far they could go would depend upon whether they were hit by enemy fighters or not, whether they had to protect us, in which case they would use more gas. No, they didn't have the fuel to go all the way, but, then, later on, the '51s and the '47s got extra tanks, … what did they call them? "Tokyo tanks," and we would get cover all the way around, all

the way around, but I didn't. I wasn't able to be so fortunate, because I finished up … in March and I don't think they had the range to go all the way in those days. … To be honest, I don't really remember, but I don't think I got roundabout cover from the fighters, but, no, … we loved to see the fighters come in, whew. [laughter] …

SH: When your twenty-five missions were over, in March of 1944, were you aware that the invasion was going to take place in just a few short months?

FW: Well, yes, I think we all were. I think we all were, because it couldn't all be done the way we were doing it. We could soften things up and make it awful rough on Adolf, but it had to be.

SH: Did you see a buildup of personnel, Navy, Army and Air Corps?

FW: … One time, I was riding in a taxicab in London and I was just looking around, because you … couldn't go very fast, even though they were crazy drivers, on the wrong side of the road, you know. … I look over and I saw this fellow, in fact, it's the fellow; no, no, it wasn't. It was Lou Drable. It was our stable sergeant from the 102nd Cavalry, who was over in Great Britain, and they were based down in Exeter, the southwestern portion of England, if I recall it correctly, where all the buildup for the invasion took place. That's how we knew. Common sense'd tell you that … it was the only way and you knew they were there and what was going to happen, but I remember, I told the taxicab driver, "Stop." … He pulled over to the side and I ran out and it was … Lou Drable was his name, and he was a sergeant. … The last time he'd seen me, I was a private, "to be a private in the horse cavalry," and I ran up to him to shake his hand, as a captain, and he's looking at me, "What's wrong here?" [laughter] but I remember, yes.

SH: That was your real clue that the buildup was starting.

FW: Oh, you know, the buildup was there and what were they doing there? … They were sitting there, because a lot of my old buddies, I never knew it at the time, but a lot of them had … come over on the same *Elizabeth* that I did, [RMS *Queen Elizabeth*].

SH: Really?

FW: Yes. … With fifteen thousand people, you could never pick them out, no way. I was fortunate that I found the one fellow from Boonton.

SH: When you finished your twenty-five missions, you had an R&R for just a few days, and then, you started with the Pathfinder.

FW: No, I think our R&R, I won't try to look it up now, but our R&R was before I finished.

SH: Okay. There was no break between finishing your twenty-five missions and starting …

MW: Training.

SH: Your training of the other crews.

FW: Oh, no, that was right away.

SH: When did you become the lead bombardier? This was when you were still doing your twenty-five missions; approximately when?

FW: Well, I would only want to guess it to tell you. Let me see this. …

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Would you tell us again? I saw that you were just reviewing that, but I am not sure the recording picked it up. This was a flight over Munster.

FW: Yes, mission fourteen, on October 10, 1943. According to my log, "The mission lasted four hours and thirty minutes. We led the group for the first time. We were carrying twelve five-hundred-pound demo," demolition, "bombs. We led the group. Tom Hiens, the group bombardier, did the bombing." I make no mention of what he hit.

RZ: You were not the lead bombardier.

FW: … I didn't do the bombing. I often wondered about those things, and I queried our group bombardier about them, why so many of the same men did the bombing. Now, Tom Hiens was one of the first over and he was part of what they called, "The Old 96th." In other words, there was the elite, which were the original crews, and then, all crews afterwards, and I only came over there a week or so after they did, but, then, there were ones that weren't trained in Walla Walla [in Washington State] and out West, one thing or another, and then, flew overseas. They were here and anyone that came after were down here. …

MW: Were you ever lead bombardier?

FW: Oh, yes, after that. … You've heard me talk about the "Old 96th" and the "New 96th," and it just burned me up. [laughter]

SH: I can see why that might be. Here, you wrote, "On November 3rd, we lead the 96th on a Pathfinder."

FW: … "On a Pathfinder;" well, we already knew, from the intelligence given [to] us at the time of briefing, that the Continent was closed. In other words, yes, we were all right at twenty-five thousand feet, but don't look for the ground, because you won't see it, and the cloud thickness was that much where, in those days, you weren't going to drop down to twelve thousand feet and bomb, or I would have bailed out. [laughter]

SH: You are talking about good fighter cover here, in November of 1943 and December of 1943. That was good.

MW: You had fighter cover.

FW: All the way, yes.

SH: You said you had good fighter cover at this point.

[TAPE PAUSED]

FW: [You] always have a secondary [target], just in case the first … target was obscured from vision, no chance, and if you didn't have the Pathfinder with you, then, there'd always be a secondary target and you'd hope and pray that there was going to be an opening to that target.

SH: You had to drop your bombs before you could land; is that not true?

FW: Well, some planes did. … There, again, it would be depending upon what type of bomb that you were carrying, whether you wanted to take a chance or not, but some crews did come back with their bombs, but most of the time, they got rid of them.

SH: Here, you wrote, "The biggest thrill of this mission was the buzz job Jack Ford gave the base."

FW: He's still alive. … Jack Ford was one of the original crews and my pilot, Shelton, finished up before me, in fact, I mentioned it, when he finished, before I was. So, I had to finish up with another crew, [to] get my twenty-five [missions] in, and they assigned me to Jack Ford's crew, because his bombardier, who I replaced as is squadron bombardier, "Polecat" (Miller?) was his name, he'd gone home, but we led the group on that particular mission. … We had Colonel Old flying in the right-hand seat, and he and Jack were good, old friends from the good old, days in Texas and out West. … Jack asked Colonel Old if he could buzz the field, meaning that you come down and you fly right off the ground; [laughter] don't get in the way of the prop wash, and I was riding in the nose. … Jack asked the Colonel if he could do that and the Colonel gave him his permission, and I was riding in the front and, all of a sudden, I saw us coming down at the ground. … As I said, I swear, if he had his wheels down, we would have landed on the ground, … and then, you pull the plane up and you go, "Oh, boy." [laughter] I had a little tickle, but I always remember that, and I still kid Jack every time. I haven't seen him [in awhile]. …

SH: How often did you have a colonel flying with you?

FW: Depending upon the type of mission, usually when the group was leading a division.

SH: Why would that be? What would be the difference?

FW: Well, if it was to be whether … you're leading a division or leading three or four groups, or if it was not a mission that's going to be hair-raising if we were a success or a failure, … and if the "old man" wanted to ride along, he would ride along. Otherwise, you'd have an operations officer, or some other ranking officer, would always be in the right-hand seat.

SH: Really, always?

FW: Yes, always, oh, yes, … when you're a lead, yes. When you're a lead, they do that. They always did it. … I always figured it a compliment, more or less, if you had a colonel, a full colonel, riding along there. He retired, finally, as a lieutenant general, and so, he got his wish. [laughter] … I remember, when I first reported over there, I came over with a seat pack type of parachute, which … was issued to me at Salt Lake City, and most of the parachutes that were handed out, once you got in the combat zone, were the ones that went on in the front [chest pack]. … The minute that he heard that I had come over with a seat pack, because he used to love to fly the P-47; … here, again, the Colonel can fly anything he wants, … he asked me to come over to his cabin and, when I came, to please bring the seat pack. Oh, boy, so, that was taken away from me, which I didn't really care [about], because you couldn't have used it much anyway, and then, when I had to clear the base to come home, I had to be cleared of that. So, I went over to his quarters to knock on the door and handed my clearance sheet to him, and I said, "Colonel, when I first reported in here…" [He said], "I know, Wiswall," [Lieutenant Colonel Wiswall imitates him scribbling], didn't even get up out of the chair he was sitting in, just signed it off. [laughter] "Have a good trip home." Oh, gee, I can remember that. "Rank has its privileges," the old story. [laughter]

SH: RHIP. What about in 1943, when you started working with these training crews?

FW: '44.

SH: In 1944. How long did you think you would be there working with these crews for, the duration?

FW: I had no idea. I would have stayed the duration, but I guess, after awhile, they finally figured, "Well, you've had enough," or it was Joe Turner, the one that decided that I would go home, you know.

MW: … Good, old Joe.

RZ: When did that happen?

FW: July of '44. It was some time in July that I was told to go, and then, I came home on the [USS] *West Point,* which was the former [SS] *America,* and the story there [was], I always have a story for everything, there was a fellow from Mountain Lakes, Jack Morris, that was one of the officers onboard, and he never knew I was onboard and I never knew he was onboard. … He said, "Wiswall, why didn't you get in touch with me? You could have had your mess with us, you could have done everything. I would have shown you this [or that on the ship]." I said, "Now, you tell me." I didn't know he was on there. I met him in Mountain Lakes and, when I heard that he was on the *West Point,* [I said], "Gee, I came home with you." [laughter]

SH: You came back in July 1944. What were you assigned to do?

FW: … Well, the first thing that I'd do is, … I forget how long it was, I had a nice leave at home, and then, I was supposed to report in for redistribution at Atlantic City, and, about a week

or two before I was set to report to Atlantic City, I got advice that Atlantic City was full and that I'd have to go to Miami Beach. So, I went to Miami Beach for redistribution, and I went through health tests there, and this and that, and the next thing [I know], … I find out that I'm assigned to a rest camp in Lake Lure, North Carolina. … To me, that was a "flak shack," and there's nothing wrong with me. [laughter] I didn't want to go there. … I made friends with a major that got the same assignment and neither one of us wanted to go to a flak shack, nothing wrong with my nerves, but they figured I should have a rest … and he should have a rest. … I know, when we got up there, … beautiful place, Lake Lure, North Carolina, way up in the Blue Ridge Mountains, first thing we did is report in and say, "Send us back." "Oh, no, you're here. You're going to stay here." So, we were, more or less, independent individuals. So, we drew a couple of bicycles and we went for a ride down the highway from the resort and we found a little beer shed, stopped in there and parked our bicycles out in front, went in and we sat drinking beer. … Oh, it must have been a couple of hours later, a couple of Red Cross girls came in, looking for us. The CO [commanding officer] had sent them out looking for us, finally, to get back to the base. Well, the Red Cross girls came in and joined us drinking beer. [laughter] … We had a good, old time, until we went back to base. … Oh, I tell you, the friends that I made in the service, you never … make friends like that again, and you make a friend there and it's a firm friend. I don't know, seems to be something about that camaraderie that just sticks.

RZ: How long were you there on R&R?

FW: At the R&R [Lake Lure]? I think it was three weeks. … There, again, I could tell you exactly. If you have any questions that you want to know … let me know and I'll look it up. I mean, if it's of any importance to you, I'll be glad to look it up. I don't mind.

SH: I think Roger is talking about when you said you were assigned to the "flak shack." How long were you at the flak shack?

FW: Oh, at the flak shack. I think it was twenty-one days, [laughter] and then, another thing, one of my buddies at Miami Beach, Joe Cronin was his name, he was from Brooklyn, and I told Joe where I was going. He said, "Oh, boy," he said, "I wish I could be going there with you. We could have so much fun, you know," and I said, "Well, why don't you just go back up into the medical department and start a show?" [laughter] … When I came back, he was still there and he had just gotten out of the hospital. … He did exactly what I told him, "Oh, I need a rest," … and they put him in the hospital.

SH: To describe it for the recording, Mr. Wiswall is doing a bit of a contortion with his body.

FW: You know, shaking and blinking my eyes, making believe that I am "flak happy," but, anyway, he was ready to kill me. He'd been in the hospital the whole time I'd been up there and he couldn't get out. They couldn't find anything wrong with him at the hospital. I just told him he was a good actor, "Don't blame me." [laughter]

RZ: Too good.

FW: Yes, oh, boy.

SH: Then, where did they send you, back to Miami?

FW: Well, I'll tell you, no; yes, from the flak shack, I went back to Miami and, at Miami, my orders were already waiting for me. In fact, I've got a copy of the telegram [that] was waiting for me down there, that my old CO [commanding officer] from the 96th, Colonel Hand, and the group bombardier, had put in for me to be sent to Langley Field, because there, … at that time, once again, Uncle Sam had sort of misled himself, I guess, they had so many pilots, brand-new pilots, they didn't know what to do with them, second lieutenants. … They had no place they could send them or anything else. Now, we're talking about, what? the latter part of '44 and things were really softening up. In fact, they changed the number of [required missions]. … I don't know whether it was doubled then or not, but they almost did, doubled everything of what you had to do and you could go home. … I digress; every time I digress, I lose my train of thought.

MW: Too many pilots, sweetie.

FW: Oh, too many pilots. … Thank you, dear; what they wanted to do with all these pilots is, they wanted to put them through, I forget the length of the term, [it] was bombardier training, navigation training, and then, send them out someplace as "triple-headed monsters." They could be a pilot, a bombardier or a navigator, and so, they started this school at Langley Field, and they put me in charge of the bombardier-ing section. … It wasn't too exciting, but, then, … my group bombardier from [the] 96th Bomb Group had been transferred to MacDill Field, and, at MacDill Field, they had B-29s, which was the "grandmother and grandfather" of the B-17. … They had an opening there for, what did they call it? something bombardier; in other words, in charge of the bombardier-ing section, and they called me down, had me transferred and [to] report down there for duty, which I did. Oh, instructor-bombardier; that's what they called it. No, that isn't it either, but, anyway, that navigator that I knew, his desk was here and mine were here. We got along fine, and you know who he was? … He was Captain Colin Kelly's navigator, Joe Bean, Joe M. Bean, … if you look up in the Congressional [inquiry]. Remember Colin Kelly? Maybe you wouldn't.

RZ: No.

FW: Colin Kelly, … he was a thrust in the hearts of people right after Pearl Harbor. He was supposed to have been flying a B-17 and dove down and right into the stack of a Japanese aircraft carrier over in the Pacific.

SH: Carrier.

FW: … I wish I could find … the Congressional inquiry. They had a Congressional inquiry afterward, because that wasn't true, because Joe Bean gave me the whole story. He bailed out of that B-17, and, while he was in the air, the Japanese riddled him and caught him in his legs, …, but we became fast friends, too, and, when I reported for duty at Yokota Air Force Base in Japan, who's the first person I bumped into? It was Joe Bean. [laughter] I had such good fortune in that. …

SH: We need to back up and talk about Langley.

MW: Langely Field.

SH: Where you were training the "triple-headed monsters."

FW: Yes.

SH: How long were you there? Were you there until the end of the war in Europe?

FW: Oh, no, no. I got called out, don't forget. They called me down to Tampa to … get on this instructor's training board for the B-29 bombardiers.

SH: You were down in Florida for the B-29 training.

FW: In Tampa, right, right. I got shot all around there.

SH: Then, what happened at Langley; not Langley. In Florida, how long were you there?

FW: In Florida? Well, until the war ended.

SH: Were you? What kind of a celebration did you witness when the news came that the war had ended in Europe?

FW: I don't remember any. When did that one end, in Europe?

RZ: May of 1945.

SH: 1945.

FW: May '45. Was that the Japanese surrender, or just the war in Europe?

RZ: No, Germany surrendered.

FW: Germany surrendered. Well, there must have been some whoopee. I don't know. … To be honest, May of '45, you don't remember the date? Do you remember the date? [Editor's Note: V-E Day was May 8, 1945.]

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Where were you when the war ended in August of 1945?

FW: Tampa, MacDill Field, yes.

SH: You were still in Tampa.

FW: Yes. Oh, big parties and everything then, I remember that, that the war was over, and then, Uncle Sam started pushing … to get people out of the service and home. … I was part of the regular Reserve and I wanted to stay in, which I did, … in the Reserve, and then, the minute I got out, I tried to reenlist in the regulars, but, at that time, they had no place for me, because I don't know how many people tried to [reenlist]. Well, I loved the service, I really did. … Even from when I was recalled, I wanted to stay in then, but I had to make a choice, because I was in Strategic Air Command, and, in those days, you had long periods of flight every year. You were going to be away from family and one thing and another, and the wife couldn't come with you. … I had to make my choice, it's going to be my family or the Air Force. So, I stayed in the Reserve, but I got out of the regular Air Force.

SH: When you were turned down for reenlisting in the Air Force after the war and you stayed in the Reserves, you came back to Boonton.

FW: Came back to Boonton. …

SH: Is that when you bought this house? Did you think about using the GI Bill?

FW: Well, I'd already bought this house, in '45.

RZ: Did you use the GI Bill to buy this?

FW: I used the GI Bill as a backup for my [mortgage]; oh, I got really stuck on this. I think I paid something around six thousand dollars for it. [laughter] I'm not kidding, and I could have had it for at least two thousand dollars less, only a very good friend of mine in Mountain Lakes was … in the real estate business for the woman, I can still remember her name, who was his boss. So, he talked to the next-door people there, because they're the ones that told me that I could have had it for about two thousand dollars less, but the real estate people told them they could ask, should ask, for more, which they did and they got it, because, even at that, it was a buy, because everybody was looking for a house in '45, if you recall, boy.

SH: What job did you come back to?

FW: Bank.

SH: Back to the bank?

FW: And then, I found that, I still have a copy of my letter of resignation to the bank, too, upstairs, that I was using more of the money that I had put away for the future than I counted on, and I just couldn't make a go [of it]. … You know, banks just don't pay, and, at that time, everything had gone up, your railroad fares had, your maintenance fares, you know, while you're in the city, had gone up. So, I was riding the ferry boat every morning and … this one fellow, Paul H. Doodey, he was … in the Navy and he had a Navy officer's coat on, and so, we got to talking every morning, every morning, every morning. He worked for a Dutch steamship company, Royal Netherlands Steamship Company, and he asked me if I would be interested in

trying to get a job with the steamship company, because they were looking for someone in their accounting department. … I said, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained, because I'm not going anywhere with the bank," and so, I wrote that letter up; no, first, I went over there. I was nervous as the devil, I'll never forget it, and the man that hired me later became the *numero uno* of the Royal Netherlands Steamship Company, in Holland, and he put me right at ease. … Well, he knew I was an ex-serviceman, anyway. He offered me a good [salary], way far ahead of what the bank was paying me, and so, I started work the following Monday morning with them and the bank, well, I'm not bragging or anything else, but they were almost pleading with me, "You have a good future here. Don't leave us, don't." "I can't, I can't. I can't afford to stay here." So, I left the bank and I went into the steamship business, but I maintained my affiliation with the Air Force. I got in a Reserve outfit. I became a ready Reservist, with a wartime or an emergency assignment out of Washington. I used to go, what? one night a week and two weeks a year, and I did that until, well, I had over thirty years of service in. …

SH: Was it a shock to get called back for Korea?

FW: Well, I certainly didn't expect it, to tell you the truth, but I said, "There they are," and they never said a word. … The steamship company accepted it right away, wished me well and one thing or another, "And your job will be here when you come back."

SH: Where were you sent when you were called back during the Korean War?

FW: Oh, no, Langley Field. I mentioned that before, when I walked in the luncheonette in Hampton Rhodes and there was Bruce Yarwood. Oh, boy, that was a great day.

RZ: They had called you back as an instructor.

FW: As a bombardier. I was assigned to Fifth Air Force, and that was a whole thing … there were a whole bunch of bombardiers called back and … we went through the first day of class work, and then, the program, it was deleted, because they had found that there were better means of bombing in the Pacific, and that type of warfare at that time, via radar. In other words, they would have a radar station here and a radar station here, and I don't know whether there was a third one up here, but those beams would tell you where to drop the bombs, and it was more accurate than the bombsight. So, they discontinued the school and we sat around, and I forget … what our *per diem* was a day. … They were paying me, I don't know, more money than I was worth, I know that, for sitting around, doing nothing, and then, … finally, they had a lot of pilots down there that were training in the [A-20] Havoc, which was a sister ship of the B-26 Marauder from World War II, that they were going to use to do this type of bombing. … What they were using us for was just sitting in the right-hand seat, the copilot's seat, to raise and lower the wheels and do this and do whatever the pilots want us to do, [laughter] and I wasn't any pilot, but we did that for awhile. … Then, finally, we were all transferred to Strategic Air Command at the field in Louisiana, Barksdale Field, Louisiana, in B-29s, and, at first, [I] was going to be … a bombardier in B-29s and they took the whole bunch of us and sent us over to air refueling, where they cross-trained me into radar. So, I was a radar operator there. … Well, every now and then, I'd get officer of the day on the base and one thing and another, and I'd made some good friends there, and then, finally, they needed [me]. There was one pilot that had a bombardier by the

name of Boswell. He was an artist and the commanding general at Barksdale wanted a mural painted in the headquarters. So, they commissioned this navigator to do it. In the meantime, that crew had been assigned for a secret or confidential mission to Guam and they needed a navigator, a radar navigator.

SH: You are it. [laughter]

FW: So, but, I made out well with that crew and we went to [Guam]. The funny, the crazy thing about it was, in-between all of this, … a B-29 had to be flown over to Okinawa as a replacement plane for them and they needed a crew to do it, and then, they were coming right back to the States. So, I went on that crew as their radar navigator, went from San Francisco to, no, what? Travis Air Force Base, wasn't that [it]? That's near San Francisco, maybe; to Honolulu, Honolulu [to] Kwajalein, Kwajalein to Okinawa, Okinawa [to] Yokota Air Force Base, dropped off the plane at Okinawa, and then, we were flown on another flight to …

MW: Okinawa?

FW: Yokota, Yokota. … That's where we dropped the plane off, was at Okinawa. You can't rush me. [laughter] So, then, I came back to the States and I no sooner got back to the States, then, they told me that I was going to be on this crew that was going back to Yokota. [laughter] … So, then, I had to drive the car home and I had very little time to do it, and I tried to do it all in one day. … I remember, I got to some place in North Carolina, I think it was near Fayetteville, and I stopped in for a cup of coffee, it was early in the morning, had a cup of coffee, got back in the car and it was the last leg home. The next thing [I recall], I woke up and my head was right down on the wheel. If I'd ever taken off in that car, I never would have made it home, never would have made it. …

MW: His prayers were always answered.

FW: [laughter] So, then, anyway, back to Yokota, and then, from Yokota, we had to go on this mission to Guam. So, I got to see Guam and … the Japs were still in the boondocks down there. … You've read about them, I'm sure, that they didn't even know the war was over.

RZ: They were snipers.

FW: Yes, and, boy, … "Stay away from the boonies," they say. I got to see the "lover's leap," the big, what's it, a high mountain or hill? overlooking the ocean there. I forget what ocean that is off Guam, on the, I guess it was the west side. The Japs were always after the Guamese ladies, women, and so many of them would … take the "lover's leap." That's why they called it lover's leap; they'd commit suicide before they would commit themselves to the Japs. Oh, I never had any respect for the Japs anyway. They're brutal people, brutal. Of course, that's yesterday's [attitude]; it's all over now, but, sometimes, it's hard [to forget].

SH: What was the secret mission? Did you ever find out what that secret mission was?

FW: Yes, but I don't ever know that the secrecy about it, most likely, has been reduced, but, if it has been, I don't know.

SH: Okay.

FW: So, I don't know, but I know it had something to do with something going to … I mean, I know what it was, but I don't really know that [it is still kept secret]. I'm sure that it must be no longer secret, but I don't know it.

SH: I would not ask you to overstep any bounds.

FW: No, no. [laughter]

SH: That is for sure, for either one of us. [laughter]

FW: But, what else do you want to know from me now?

SH: When you finished delivering everything to Guam, were you then released to come back?

FW: No, we went back to Yokota, to finish off the tour there. I was in air refueling and we had to refuel other B-29s and other aircraft, but that's like flying in a flying bomb, really. You're loaded … with gasoline, … but I didn't mind the duty. It was all right, and then, I went back to Barksdale and, well, I had no other alternative but to opt out, which I did, and I have no regrets, no regrets.

SH: Did you stay in the Reserves then?

FW: Oh, I stayed in, yes. I stayed in until [retiring]. …

SH: Were you assigned to the same kind of duty?

FW: No, no. I wasn't happy with the duty, but I wanted to stay in. I loved the affiliation and the people. I was in transportation.

SH: Out of McGuire Air Force Base? Is that where you would report?

FW: Well, no. In fact, I would go [to] a different place. I went to Dover, Delaware, many, many times, for two weeks of duty every year, [or] MacDill, and with my friend, Colonel Dennis, … we were studying transportation of paratroopers, and he happened to have a transportation squadron, some place down South, I forget which [base]. So, he had a training mission set up for him to go to MacDill Field to pick me up and brought me back down there, and then, took me on this mission down in around in Georgia someplace, where they were going to drop paratroopers and that was very interesting and very helpful to the study I was in at that time. Otherwise, it would have been a little; well, it was better than transportation.

SH: When did you retire?

FW: … '97, '87? … Take a quick look.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Okay. I want to thank you for talking with us and for being such a wonderful host. I hope you preserve all these wonderful diaries and logs that you have kept in a good fashion and I hope that you will stay in touch.

FW: Well, I'm sort of, what is it? honored to be interviewed by you.

SH: Thank you.

FW: And it'll help me remember a little bit more when I greet the eighth graders next week. [laughter]

MW: September 12, '79.

FW: September 12, '79, yes. …

SH: That was when you retired.

FW: Yes, that's when I would have been, I guess, sixty. I think they kicked you out when you were sixty.

MW: Sixty-two? I don't know, I forget, yes.

FW: No, I know I was sixty, … sixty, I think, yes, but I enjoyed the service. …

SH: It sounds like they had a jewel.

MW: Yes, I think so. [laughter]

FW: Well, they had a clown anyway, if they didn't have anything else. [laughter]

SH: Thank you, thank you.

[Editor's Note: Lieutenant Colonel Wiswall received the French Legion of Honor, the highest decoration bestowed by France, at a ceremony at the French Consulate in New York City on Veterans Day 2009.]

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

Reviewed by Stephanie Student 10/14/09
Reviewed by Steve Park 10/14/09
Reviewed by Catherine Dzendzera 10/14/09

Reviewed by Mitch Gilson 10/14/09
Reviewed by Kristie Thomas 10/14/09
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 10/27/09
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 11/14/09
Reviewed by Frank A. Wiswall 4/8/10