

U.S. AIR FORCE ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

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COLONEL PHILIP G. COCHRAN

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United States Air Force
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FOREWORD

The following is the transcript of an oral history interview recorded on magnetic tape. Since only minor emendations have been made, the reader should consistently bear in mind that he is reading a transcript of the spoken rather than the written word. Additionally, no attempt to confirm the historical accuracy of the statements has been made. As a result, the transcript reflects the interviewee's personal recollections of a situation as he remembered it at the time of the interview.

Editorial notes and additions made by USAF historians are enclosed in brackets. If feasible, first names, ranks, or titles are also provided. Any additions, deletions and changes subsequently made to the transcript by the interviewee are not indicated. Researchers may wish to listen to the actual interview tape prior to citing the transcript.

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS:

That I, PHILIP G. COCHRAN, have this day participated in an oral-magnetic-taped interview with JAMES C. HASDORFF, covering my best recollection of events and experiences which may be of historical significance to the United States Air Force.

Understanding that the tape(s) and the transcribed manuscript resulting therefrom will be accessioned into the Archives of the Air Force to be used, as the security classification permits, by qualified historical researchers whose access has been determined to be in the best interest of the United States Air Force, I do hereby voluntarily give, transfer, convey and assign all right, title and interest in the memoirs and remembrances contained in the aforementioned magnetic tapes and manuscript to the Office of Air Force History, acting on behalf of the United States of America, to have and to hold the same forever, hereby relinquishing for myself, my executors, administrators, heirs and assigns all ownership, right, title and interest therein to the donee subject only to the following restrictions: _____

Philip G. Cochran DONOR

Dated 21 Oct. 1975

Accepted on behalf of the

Office of Air Force History by:

James C. Hasdorff
Dated 21 Oct. 1975

SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

Col Philip G. Cochran spent an eventful decade in uniform after joining the Army Air Corps as an aviation cadet in 1936. An Ohio State University graduate, Cochran relished his role as a fighter pilot and enthusiastically entered into assignments at Langley Field, Virginia, Mitchel Field, New York, and Groton, Connecticut. After some intense wrangling, Cochran accompanied the British aircraft carrier Archer with 35 P-40s which were launched off of Casablanca in support of the hard-pressed forces battling the Germans in North Africa during World War II. His many daring exploits in this theater earned him fame and the attention of Gen H. H. "Hap" Arnold, who personally selected Cochran to plan and lead the aerial invasion of Burma as Commander of the First Air Command Task Force. After his notable duties in Burma were completed, the young colonel went to the European theater where he planned a similar air assault on Germany--Plan Arena--but the Third Reich collapsed before his plan could be used. Colonel Cochran retired from the Army Air Force in 1946 for health reasons but went on to serve as director for Howard Hughes and in 1952 returned to Erie, Pennsylvania, where he presently serves as the president of his brother's trucking company. The interview covers all facets of Colonel Cochran's illustrious career and gives revealing insights into the personalities of individuals such as Lord Louis Mountbatten, Gen Orde C. Wingate, Gen "Hap" Arnold, and Gen George S. Patton.

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TAPED INTERVIEW WITH: Colonel Philip G. Cochran

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 20-21 October and 11 November 1975

PLACE OF INTERVIEW: Rochester, New York, and
Washington, DC

CONDUCTED BY: Dr. James C. Hasdorff

H: Colonel Cochran, to begin the interview, why don't we talk a little bit about your early family life? How large a family did you come from?

C: Well, there were five boys, and that was it. No girls. We now range from age 68 or 69 to age 55. We were an Irish family. My father was a lawyer-type fellow. My mother was from Columbus, Ohio. Her name was Mary Lucy Dominica Reardon (laughter), and her father's name was Timothy Reardon. Timothy Reardon had come over to the United States as a boy. He told me he was about 6 years old when he came over, and he married a lady named Duffy. She had come over as a child, and they met in Newark, Ohio. My mother was born in Newark, Ohio, and was raised in Columbus, Ohio, and she was from a large family. My father, who was Bernard Cochran, was the son of Bryan O'Corcoran, and Bryan

O'Corcoran came over from Ireland when he was 18. He could neither read nor write. He had come off a farm, and he was one of those fellows that we read about that came over to find the golden bricks in the streets in Boston. He landed in Boston, and probably because he couldn't read or write his name--and the way he would say it he probably had a mouthful of Irish brogue that you could hardly understand. I can just see a paymaster trying to figure out what his name was when he would say it. But we found his first citizenship papers when he passed on, and lo and behold, we found there that his name was really Bryan J. O'Corcoran; and after he married a lady, who was his schoolteacher by the way, who had come from Ireland when she was a child, and her name was Ella McNiff, and Ella McNiff married Bryan O'Corcoran. We noticed in their Bible that the first child born died in infancy, and its name was "Corcran." Now the "O" is gone. And the next child that was born--and there it was right in the flyleaf of the Bible--the child's name was changed to Stella Cochran. So somehow or another, that got around to being "Cochran."

My grandfather came with the railroad, the "nickel-plated" railroad. He must have kept coming west with

his small family, and I guess he got as far as Erie, Pennsylvania, and said that's it. He didn't want to go any farther, and he settled down there. He learned to read and write by the way. I think maybe Ella taught him. But he was a delightful man; I knew him. He died when I was in college at Ohio State, but he was a fine guy. He was always wonderful to us kids. He was superintendent of the city parks in Erie, and we were very proud of him. His son, my father Bernard, became apprenticed in the study of law. In those days, you apprenticed in a law firm's office, and my father became secretary to the mayor of Erie, Pennsylvania. Then when the mayor of Erie, Pennsylvania, was sent to Congress, there was to be a 2-year vacancy in the mayoralty, and the council appointed my father as mayor. So my father was mayor of Erie, Pennsylvania, when he was 32 years old. We were looking at one of these things the other day, and I noticed that I was born on January 29th, and he was made mayor on March the 1st, I think. So I was a squawking infant when my father was made mayor of Erie. As I said, I'm one of five boys; I have an older brother and three younger brothers, and four of us went to Ohio State. We grew up as Irish Catholic altar boys. As I look back on it, we had a very, very delightful life.

C: I picked excellent parents. I find now that I picked excellent stock, going back, because I think they have given me and my brothers an insight into life that still helps us, and it has made for a very, very delightful life. All five boys are still alive. We all are very, very close. A day doesn't go by that I don't speak at length with one of them, and a week doesn't go by that we all don't speak to each other about anything that happens to come up--be it Ohio State football or what's happening in the trucking business, or what's going on in the legal business. My oldest brother is a lawyer. He is now retired, but he has been appointed counsel to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio. He lives in Columbus. My brother John owns the trucking company that I run, and that my youngest brother works in with me, and then we have a brother who is in television in New York City. He is a television producer.

So, as I say, we picked good parents. We had a good, a rather wholesome, typical Irish-American life. We were brought up, as you see, between the wars. I remember World War I quite vividly, because I was 8 years old when it ended, and I can remember the end of World War I. I can remember some of the mood of

our community and the mood of the people, and I can remember my attitude toward the war. It was kind of like a show for a kid, and the players in it were the men that went to war--and some who came back--and I would look at them in awe. I would hear different things about different ones--like Rennie Gerbracht's uncle went over with black hair, and here he is now 2 years later and he's got absolutely white hair. That's because, we would say, he either was frightened or he got gassed. The gas was the big thing, and we were hearing about the atrocious gas situation. I can remember buying surplus gas masks. They were bad ones, but we would wear them around. It was like cowboys and Indians to a kid at that time, and rather serious. I remember we had a large American flag in our church that hung from the choir loft, and on it were the stars that represented the boys from our parish that were overseas. If one of them were to be lost, or one of them killed, the star would turn to gold, I believe. I remember every Sunday turning my head around to look at that flag and try to figure which star represented which guy that was gone. That was kind of a scary thing, as I remember it. But, as I say, we were brought up during the war and had the normal public school education, lived in a medium-class neighborhood. We

never had any money that I remember. I remember it; we didn't have any money. My dad was a studious type. He was not ever much interested in making more than what was required of him to have a good middle-class family, and I think we lived in a neighborhood of good sound people who had probably a lot to do with our values as American citizens. A lot of that is still in us and, of course, in everybody in this country.

Our schools had a great influence on us. As I remember it, we had darn good teachers. I look back now and think of the dedicated people and what they put up with, but somehow or other, they got us through it, and they were excellent people. The institutions were good. The city of Erie was a good Eastern-Midwestern type city, and it was industrial. My parents were interested always in everything that was going on, and that passed on to us. I think it put into us a desire to educate ourselves more than just what was required of us. We all wanted to go on to college, and we all wanted to keep up on all manner of activities. We could class it as a good, typical bringing up, and for which I'm ever grateful, because it is rather fortunate.

II: Did any of the other members of your family go into uniform at any one time?

Q: Well, four of us were in the service. The one who was not was a young married with child, and that was John. John had fallen as a kid, and he had a cracked head. We used to kid him about it. That fracture in some way or other affected the pupil in one of his eyes, and it was enlarged, although he never had any trouble with it, and he is now an older guy. It never caused him any trouble, but he could not pass the physical. I know, unbeknownst to his parents and his young wife, that he at one time felt so strongly that he ought to be in the effort that he went to Pittsburgh and took the exams for the Air Force, and he was rejected, and he was rejected from the Army. Also, at that time, he had already started this trucking company that we now have, and it was getting to be of good size. As you know, transportation was quite limited. We were lacking in every type of transportation as the war went on.

Being in transportation, he was just about ordered to stay in it. He constantly worked in the war effort in that manner, and it wasn't easy on truck transportation

people during the war; they couldn't get the necessary equipment. We weren't yet used to this type of transportation. We were very rail-oriented; but before the war was over with, the truck came into its own.

Well, people are now griping about the number of trucks on the highway and all that sort of thing, but they tend to forget that it's our lifeline. That all started in World War II, that the rails, as you remember, were quite seriously inadequate, and the truck began to take up the slack and fill in. Then it was found that the truck was much more efficient for many types of schemes for moving goods, and the truck just came into its own and has grown and grown ever since until it just about--well, it's a necessity of life. It's just like food and shelter. There it is. People don't like them on the highway when they splash water on them and get in their way going nowhere at 90 miles an hour. Now we couldn't live without it. Our whole economy is based upon truck transportation.

I didn't mean to get into a plug for that, but John was the only one of the four that didn't go. There were three of us in the Air Force and one in the Navy. My oldest brother Paul, the lawyer, went into Navy

Intelligence. I was already in; as you know, I went into the Air Force. I went to the flying school in 1936, so I was already a professional.

Then my brother Tommy, who is the one now in television, was a literary type--that is, he was in journalism. He was in the service in the Air Force, and he was in the Glenn Miller unit. He was on camp newspapers for awhile, and when they formed the Glenn Miller unit, he went overseas with it as a radio writer, and he ended up first sergeant of that unit in Europe, which was quite an experience. Then when he came back, he went right back into radio and television. Then Joe, the youngest one, came right out of high school. I think he was 18, and they grabbed him. He was with the commando unit that I headed up in Burma, and he was a light-plane pilot, what we called a bush pilot at the time, liaison pilot, and had quite a career over there. He was in India for 2 years and went through that campaign with us.

II: Had there been any military tradition in your family before your immediate family?

C: None. None whatsoever. I remember Vincent Sheean. Do you remember the author Vincent Sheean?

H: Yes.

C: He was in intelligence, and he was over in Africa. He came up to Telepte where we were holding forth against the Heinies, and that fact kind of haffled him. He couldn't understand where this guy that was running things and dreaming up military ideas against the Germans, and dreaming up all kinds of campaigns and counteractions, and studying with the French and listening to their intelligence, and listening to their artillery people and their field people, and watching ground action and all that; he couldn't understand how I could be so steeped in military and never had any background at all. My background was marketing at Ohio State (laughter). But I have always felt that that was typical, and that's typical American and it's typically United States Air Force.

The Air Force was made up of all kinds of guys like that. As you remember, or as you know, a West Pointer who was trained in the military and knew the science, or had studied something, were very few and far between, and most of the guys, unfortunately, were caught up in logistics and administration. They would get hooked with those jobs, and the combat and the actual military

planning and everything was just about left to us college types who, when getting their formal education, had no dream in the world that they were ever going to be running wars and running squadrons or groups, and planning. And the whole backbone of the Air Force were the Reserve guys that had come out of Midwest universities and Western universities, and Southern universities. The place was loaded with them. As I say, I think that's typically American, and it's the adaptability of the American person, the American young man, at that time, and I have always felt that it will go right back to my bringing up: the community in which I lived, the schools that I went to, my church activity where I was taught that I had a responsibility, the large family; and if you don't do your share, you can't be in a large family and be a do-nothing. You just grow up knowing that you have to do some of your part, especially a farm kid. I was always looking out for a fighter pilot who was a farm boy. Because farm kids know that they have to get up and do their part of the chores. The chores on a farm have to be gotten done at morning, at night, and all day long, and those kids know it. It isn't something that they have to be told, they just grow up that way. When you get a kid like that and get him in the squadron, he already knows

that he has a responsibility to himself, a responsibility to the others and to the effort, and he just doesn't question it. He just goes in and does it. You get a good fighter pilot that has that sense of responsibility, and you have got something. We used to look for them when we were choosing flights or choosing squadrons, choosing men, candidates, for your squadron, you would look for the farm-type kids.

But that doesn't mean that the kid right out of the Bronx wasn't the same way. Our families just put that sense of responsibility into us, I think the American way. There is enough individuality required that the responsibility, most times, goes right along with it; it's automatic.

It's a long answer to your question, but it always did seem peculiar that how did this kid from 9th and Raspberry in Erie, Pennsylvania, that little altar boy from St. Andrew's Church, end up over in Africa "running a war," so to speak, running a sector of the war and matching ideas and brains with a formidable foe, the Germans, and watching their plans evolve and try to catch them at their tendency to do the same thing over and over again. They are very methodical as you have

always heard. I think that's true. I was able to see some of that, and watch their methodical nature, and then dream up some plan to catch them at it and beat them at it. We were actually inventing some pretty good military strategy at that time with no formal military background, and I suppose it was just--well, it was common sense. Our way of knowing how to use your weapon, the airplane, and innovating. We had no background. When I had the P-40 outfit in Africa, and we were pushed way forward there--really, up until that time no American unit had ever actually, on its own, faced the enemy. That was the start of it. Now there had been some action, and I know there were some air action out of England up to that time, but nothing yet big, and we didn't have anybody to brief us when we went forward there. I'm speaking of the western desert. You see on the eastern desert the P-40 guys had been there, the 57th was over there; there were several outfits that fought with the British, and I'm speaking of the other end over in Egypt, in that area. But when we went in from the western end from Casablanca, Morocco, and on through into Tunisia, there wasn't anybody around there to tell us how to do it. We started to form our own methods, and we changed our formations; we changed tactics as we went along to try to overcome the

adversities that would face us. In overcoming the adversities, we were unconsciously setting new strategies and new tactical methods.

So we were innovative, but again it comes back to our heritage, I think, having grown up in the United States, and then the training that I had in the Air Force, which was marvelous. I was pretty darn well trained.

H: Well, we will get back to this, but in the meantime I would like to ask you what prompted you and so many members of your family to attend Ohio State University? What was the big thing there?

C: It was cheap (laughter). As I said, we were now in 1929, and my brother had gone 3 years previous or 4. It was a matter of economics. We had to work, and Ohio State was not far from us. You see, we are right on the border practically. We are only 25 miles from the border of Ohio, and Ohio offered, even to out-of-state students, a very, very cheap education, and a good one. There were no state schools in Pennsylvania similar to the Ohio State system.

Penn State, so named, was not a state school at that time. It was like Pennsylvania and many of the others;

it was quite costly, I remember, and I never could have made it, nor could any of my brothers. Because the town of State College, Pennsylvania, is small; there weren't any jobs. Columbus was a pretty good-sized town, and there were jobs. So it was the requirement of having to work and, therefore, the chances at a job to get while you were going to school, plus you got to remember, as I told you, my mother was born and raised in Columbus, Ohio, and I had two aunts and an uncle there. And although that wasn't the prime reason, it was handy, and we knew Columbus, and liked Columbus, because we had visited there as kids, and we had a natural liking for Ohio State.

I didn't want to go to Ohio State; I wanted to go to Northwestern, and for some reason or other that I can hardly recall--but I remember that I wanted most if somebody would wave a magic wand and said, "Where do you want to go to school?" I would have said Stanford. For some reason or another, I was taken--I have read about Stanford, but that was so far away. In those days, it was just so remote that it was unthinkable. Northwestern, again, because of the big city, and I was looking for a job of any sort to get through. I stayed out of school between high school and college

for 2 years. I worked in a papermill in Erie and got enough money to get me through my first year, and that's when I went.

My older brother was a musician. He had a pretty good goal. He had already been to Europe with a band. He went with the Yale band, by the way, to Europe, because he knew a boy from Erie who was also a musician who went to Yale. And as an aside, in that band was Rudy Vallee, so they were friends. But he, too, needed a city where there was band work. So that took him to Ohio State, and then that influenced me. Although I didn't play an instrument, I was a singer, so I got in bands then as I got to Ohio State and got along, and that got me through school. I sang in bands most of my college time, all of it as a matter of fact, until I went in the Air Corps. I was graduated in June. I took my exams for the Air Corps in, I believe it was, October at Selfridge, and missed the October class. So they held me over then until the January class of 1936. So I took my exam at Selfridge in October of 1935.

It ended the day before the famous Ohio State game when Notre Dame beat Ohio State in the last minute

and a half of the ballgame, if you remember that one (laughter).

H: Where did you first encounter Milton Caniff?

C: Well, Milton went to Ohio State, and he was 4 years ahead of me. Let's put it this way: he was a senior when I was a freshman, so I hardly knew him. I knew who he was, and he knew who I was because he knew my older brother. But Milton, well you can imagine, you know the relationship between a senior and a freshman. It's quite a gap. But Milton was a very, very well-known person even then. Milton was showing his greatness as a youngster. He was known by everybody and, therefore, I knew him. And he knew who I was. And then we didn't see each other for many years. But we had mutual friends; I knew people that he knew.

Milton, by that time, had started his career and had become quite well known as a cartoonist, and he wanted to do Air Force sequences. He wanted to write about flying airplanes, and fighting airplanes, and that sort of thing. He realized that that was the coming thing. I remember him saying you couldn't have a hero in an adventure strip that couldn't fly an airplane.

C: You just had to do it. And the mutual friends got us together by saying, "Well, why don't you talk to that Cochran guy? He's now in the Air Force. You remember that guy, you know that used to sing? He is now in the Air Force." And Milton probably said, "Oh yes, I remember. He was a friend of Frank "Dude" Higgs, and I knew his brother. Why don't you get him to come around?" They got us together, and we started to talk, and Milton started to pick my brains, as he said. We just became so close that Milton became one of the family, practically, and we still are very, very close friends. He used to come and visit my squadron and watch the training that we were doing.

We were at Groton, Connecticut, and he would come down and watch us. We would dive-bomb right off the edge of the field there into the Sound, and we had aerial gunnery right close that he could watch. He would watch our aerial combat work, and then he would talk to the kids. He lived with us for awhile, and he was imbued with this group of young Americans who were "girding their loins," so to speak, training themselves to get ready to go and fight. He was just enthralled with the type, as anyone should be. Here was the cream of the United States young manhood. And typical

of wars, here were the men who were converting themselves from high-class college kids to high-class airplane drivers, to go over and fight and were sharpening their talents and their capabilities, and working very, very hard. They would come in the room and slam down their hats and berate themselves because they hadn't held the dive long enough and missed the target, and all that sort of thing, and he just was so taken with this great part and serious part of Americana that he couldn't help but write the Air Force and the combat pilot into his strip, and that's where--do you remember the character Charles Charles? Do you remember any of this? You were quite young.

They had a character named "Charles Charles" who was called "Hot-Shot Charlie" who was the hot-rod fighter pilot with the hat way back on the back of the head and the very, very self-confident attitude, lovably self-conscious, not arrogant, but there was a touch of arrogance. And Charles Charles was sort of a cartoon of all of these kids, and he was not a real character. He always drew him as a cartoon-kind of character. But the Charles Charles came to him because it was the Charles River, and Boston, and the start of the Revolution, and he named that kid

"Charles Charles," because he saw in us young guys, the guys getting ready for combat, he saw the very basis of this country. It not only intrigued him, it just dedicated him. And boy, he started in and started the Air Force thing until the Air Force just said, "Hey you, keep that up," because Milton was a marvelous communicator for the Air Force to the public, and he did a great service of communication. He was very, very informative, and people read him because they were being informed and entertained at the same time, and he was fulfilling the avid hunger of people for information about the war. He was able to communicate; he was a communicator and a great journalist; great storyteller, too, and a heck of an artist. He's still at it. I met him then, and, of course, we [could] always [more] easily say, "Well, we went to Ohio State together," so that you don't have to go through the thing. But the truth of the matter is I hardly knew him at Ohio State. And we got together later when I was long into my Air Force career, and he was long into his comic strip career. Then we formed a very, very close friendship. He started that character which is supposed to be based upon my doing, which I never have allowed myself to admit to. But he started the character "Flip Corkin" as a gag. He started it as a kind of

fun thing for both of us, and it took such hold. The character got such great response from the readers that not only did Milton know it, and his bosses, his syndicate that owned him, but the Air Force noticed it and told him to continue it. The character was a sympathetic character, and the Air Force's attitude at that time was--the public relations people told Milton that for some reason or other, parents felt that if their boys were in the hands of characters like that Captain Corkin is, that they felt relieved. They felt that he was going to take pretty good care, and all that sort of thing. And yet, he was a dashing fellow. He was dashing enough to be intriguing, but he was solid enough for them to have confidence in, and he kind of symbolized the Air Force officers that their boys were going to fight under, and that sort of thing. These aren't my ideas; this was told to me. They said, "You've got a sympathetic character there that people identify with, and they can identify with him, and that gets them closer to what the Air Force is trying to say and trying to do; and through that kind of thing, they may be able to understand. So hey, Milton Caniff, you keep that character going!" So what started out to be a gag ended up being sort of an institution, if you will. (laughter)

C: Milton kept it going and, of course, he was using a caricature of my face. The name of the character was "Corkin." Now he got that because that was my nickname in the Air Force. I was known in the Air Force as "Corkin," and that came because my first squadron commander when I came out of flying school and was assigned to a squadron, the 33rd at Langley in the 8th Group, was a man named Captain Schulgen. Captain Schulgen was a Brooklyn Irishman and a delightful, delightful person, and he changed everybody's name to Irish, and when he wrote it down, not wanting to bother with Cochran, he always wrote, when he was lining up a flight and assigning you an airplane in a position in a flight, he would write "Corkin." We had a guy that was in my class that came at the same time, and his name was Brogger, Jacob Jervil Brogger. And Jacob Jervil Brogger came from the cheese country of Minnesota, and he was as Norwegian as you could get--big long, tall Norwegian, and Schulgen named him "Broggin." And then we had another Irishman whose name was Hillary. So he qualified, and Schulgen didn't change his name. But then we had a boy named Donald McDonald who was quite Scotch, as you can hear the bagpipes in that one, and he changed him to "MicDonald." He didn't want that "Mac" stuff. So that became "Corkin." Well then,

when the operations officer would take over and assign the flights, he, as a gag, would write "Corkin" for my name. Then lo and behold when I became a flight commander a year or so later, and became operations officer in the same squadron, I always wrote "Corkin." It got to be a thing. I was known as that. For instance, my helmet had "Corkin" on it. My jacket had "Corkin," and Milton saw that, and saw that I was called that. So he named the character "Corkin." And then the character was rather flippant, and he shortened the Philip to "Flip," and that's where the "Flip Corkin" came from.

Of course, that character was operating in China, and at the time the character came out, of course I was in Africa. So that's how close it was. (laughter) It was a gag, and I saw the first cartoon of the character when I was in Africa. Some guys brought it to me. They had found it. It was about a month or so old, and I remember the first box, it was a P-40 flying into the scene and you could see that there was a character in the cockpit, and in the balloon above he was saying, "If I ever get through this mess, I'm going home to Erie, Pennsylvania, and sit on the front porch." (laughter) He was quoting a thing that I had said at

his house. "If I ever get through this thing, I'm just going to go home to Erie, Pennsylvania, and sit on the front porch." I must have been tired at the time. I did get back to the front porch, but there was a lot of compromising before I got to that horizon, as the song said. But I did get back to the front porch, fortunately.

H: What prompted you to apply for the Air Corps in the first place?

C: I remember that. Number one, I wanted to fly an airplane. It intrigued me. Number two, I was passably mechanically inclined. I could take a Model-T apart. My father gave me a Model-T once when I was 16, and just like the kids are doing today, I was always modifying it--I always took it apart. Now that wasn't that prevalent at that time that I remember. All the kids do it now, but in those days I did it. I always took my bicycles apart. I could overhaul; I could do a valve job, a ring job, and a band job on a Model-T. My uncle had taught me that, and I was a pretty good pupil because it intrigued me. I liked to fool with things like that. I think that was in me, the desire to get up and fly, and to manage that machine intrigued

me. Then when I was a sophomore at Ohio State, I was finishing my sophomore year, it was deep depression, and I didn't think I was going to get into my third year. I didn't think I was going to get to come back. It would depend on band work, whether I would get work as a singer. At that time, people didn't have any money for bands. They didn't have any money for dances, and that was the basis of our work--fraternity dances, country club dances. In those days of depression, kids could barely get to school, let alone belong to a fraternity. Most of them closed. It didn't look as though I was going to get back for my third year, so I started scratching and I read an article that I think was a three-part article, and it was written by a guy, whom I later met and was in a squadron with, named /Richard "Red"/ Weller. And Lieutenant Weller had written a Saturday Evening Post series of three articles about the flying school in Texas.

(End Side 1, Reel 1)

(C: "Red" Weller must have written an excellent article, because I didn't forget it, and it intrigued me. I remember one of the things that he wrote about was what value this course at the flying school was to

the young man that got through it. I remember him saying that it cost the Government \$75,000 to put a kid through the flying school, and that one out of four made it. Another thing was that it was the toughest school. He figured it to be the toughest school in the world, to get through the Army Flying School at San Antonio, Texas--Randolph Field--and that if you could get through that, you really had something. Then he said you could get into the school if you had 2 years of college, and I don't remember if you had to take an exam or not at that time. I think you didn't have to take a written exam. If you didn't have 2 years of school, you had to pass an almost impossible written exam.

So here I had 2 years, and I was afraid I wasn't going to get the third and fourth. So this looked like something to take the place of the next couple years of college. I figured that if I could get through that toughest school in the world and also get to fly an airplane, I was interested. Now, I remember that first interest--and then I did get a job that summer, and I did get jobs that could help me get back through my third year. I did come back and I got my third year. Then I dropped out a year and worked in Eric.

C: Everything had fallen apart then in 1933 and 1934. There were no jobs, there was no money, and I was fortunate enough to be hired back in Erie at the Hammermill Paper Company, and I worked there and saved up that money. Then I got back, and with the band money and so forth, I got my fourth year.

In the meantime, a very good friend of mine named Frank "Dude" Higgs had gone into the Air Force, and I, of course, heard about him and heard that he had made it through the flying school, and that he was, lo and behold, a fighter pilot at Selfridge in Michigan. That, again, intrigued me. I said, "Now that rascal has done something that I kind of have an idea I would like to do." And I also thought, rather arrogantly, "Doggone it, if Dude Higgs can get through, I can get through." I remember that thought.

So it just kept niggling at my head, and then I was graduated and no job. What do you do? I'm still a singer in a band. Am I going to continue that? I was with a band that was at an amusement park in Ohio. We had a 2-week booking, and after the first week, lo and behold, there were no paychecks because the park went bankrupt, and there we were without any money and no

job for the following week, and that disbanded the band (laughter), and things were pretty rough. I then came back and I got a job with the State of Pennsylvania, because I had had 3 years in a papermill, and I had ended up in the laboratory of the papermill testing paper, and I did know some technical things about the testing of grades of paper. There weren't many of that kind of cat around, and, lo and behold, the State of Pennsylvania needed a person like that to test the paper they were buying and the paper they were sending out to be printed on at printers and then brought back. There was a requirement and I fulfilled the requirement and got that job. But in the meantime, I had taken my physical for the Air Force and passed it. I remember there being two of us that passed it out of 12, I believe, who were at Selfridge for that week. I remember wondering after I saw the other 11 guys, I remember my mind saying, "What in the hell are you doing here?" Because I was small, I was not the great physical type, and one of the guys was an Olympic diver and, hoy, he had a body on him that wouldn't quit. Another guy, I remember, came in his Reserve 2d lieutenant uniform. He was ROTC from Wisconsin or someplace. Another man was a football player, and I looked at those physical types and had a misconception that certainly they were

going to take all the slots, and little old me wasn't going to get there. But I noticed as we went along, the anxiety was terrific because you'd notice the first day there were 12, and then the next day there were 10, then the next day you noticed that there were only six, and you began to say, "Well, what the hell, I'm next. They are just going to get rid of all of us," and none of these guys could pass it. When I heard that the Olympic diver went out, I thought, "Gosh, if he hasn't got coordination (laughter), my coordination ends up riding the bicycle." But there was a guy who really had it, and he had an excellent body, and a fine young man. Gosh, if they were throwing that kind of guy away, I thought, "They aren't going to want me." Oddly enough, we ended up on Friday and there were two. Both of us were half-blind because we had drops in our eyes. Well, the other kid was a kid named Lyons from Buffalo, New York. So we had something in common. Buffalo is 90 miles from Erie. Here the kid from Buffalo and the kid from Erie, Pennsylvania, end up being the only two candidates. I think we went through the psychological test that day, and then we met an officer who had the grand rank of captain. You know a captain in those days, you figured he ran the whole place, and he told us that the only thing he could tell us was we had

passed the physical examination, and that was as far as their jurisdiction went. He had no right to tell us that we would or would not get an appointment and that we'd be hearing from the Air Force, but he could tell us that we had passed. Then, of course, we did hear from the Air Force. The kid from Buffalo and I went to the same class at Randolph and met 110 others of our ilk, and Lyons never soloed. He didn't make it. As I remember it, there was something wrong with his depth perception. He would land an airplane too high, or he wouldn't land it soon enough, or something like that. I barely remember that, but he didn't make it. And, by the way, neither did 80 or so of the others, so I think in my graduating class there were 28 guys. So you see that was about what the Air Force was going through in 1936. There wasn't any money, and they were barely keeping the school open, just to keep its cogs from getting rusty. I'm pretty sure there were just about 28 guys, and that was a third of the effort for that year. I think there were three classes a year at that time; they were all small.

H: Who were some of your more prominent graduates that you finished up with in your flying class?

C: Well, several of them became generals but not during the war. We had no people to reach that during the war; but right after the war when the Air Force was still expanding, several of them made it. [Henry] "Hank" Thorne was one of them. Arnold Tate became a general. Of course, they all ended up in the war effort somewhere. Many of them are gone; several of them were killed even before the war in training accidents and stuff.

So we were whittled down pretty good what with retirements or illnesses, or four or five of our members were killed before the war or in the early parts of the war. So we were whittled down to not much of a class, but very high class. Some damn fine men and, of course as I said before, this is the type of guy around that time that became the leaders--the core. Because they were old enough and long enough in the Air Force to have gained the experience, and some rank, and yet they were young enough to still be combat-oriented men. Aged somewhere between 28 and 30, you see, with about 6 or 7 years of Air Force experience on them, and a good bit of flying time. The classes then started getting bigger and bigger, and it was this strata that became the squadron and

group commanders, if you will, the guys directly into the combat, that were the backbone of the combat air effort in World War II. You had the youngsters coming along to do the combat work; the leaders, the commanders were about in that age group, around somewhere between 26 and 32. I was 32; I was an old man. Really, I was quite ancient. As a matter of fact, the first time I was shot at, I was 32 years old--a rather young 32, maybe. But I had never been in anything but combat. I was just fighter aviation steeped. I was just full of it. I couldn't do any other; I couldn't do anything else.

That took care of a little bit of the age. I used enthusiasm rather than youth. But most of those people were Reserve or recent regular Army. It goes back to that peculiar reserve--not peculiar, but that wonderful reserve Army thing that we do in this country when we get into war. We bring in the shoe clerks, we bring in the business man, and the musician, and everything, and he turns into a military man, part-time, who can't wait until he can get it over with and get out and go home. That's been America. It certainly came out in World War II in the Air Force. We needed so many men so fast, that you really had to have some

pretty doggone fine talented people to run that big wonderful thing that was the Air Force, which--I know this--it was the biggest human organization I think ever devised and ran. I still don't know how we did it. (laughter)

H: What was your first assignment after you left flying school?

C: After I came out of flying school, I went into the 33d Fighter Squadron of the 8th Group at Langley Field. It was a typical fighter squadron, and we were flying P-6s when I first got there, and then we got an awful machine named the PB-2A. It had a habit of burning, and wouldn't come out of a spin, and had some other nasty characteristics. We were the only ones, I think, that had them. But it was a good airplane for some things. It was the first airplane in service that had a fully retractable gear. It had flaps which weren't yet common. It had a constant-speed prop which was electric, and that was a first, and it had an exhaust-driven supercharger which was really mounted on that airplane, I think, as an experiment. It was quite a machine, and that is the supercharger that enabled the B-17 to get its altitude, because it later ended up

doing its biggest job on the B-17. This could get you to great altitudes.

We held an oxygen tube in our teeth. We didn't know of such a thing as an oxygen mask. We knew very little about oxygen as a matter of fact. The only thing we knew was if you didn't have the hose in your mouth, you blacked out--you went cuckoo above 16,000, 17,000, 18,000 feet. I remember going to the great height of 35,000 feet with that tube in my mouth. It was a pretty good gunnery airplane. It was sleek, it was fast, and at altitude it could get up some speed. So it was kind of a test bed, and I don't imagine they made very many of them--maybe only a hundred or so. It was quite an advanced airplane, so we got some advanced training rather quickly in that airplane. Then I stayed in the 33d Squadron an uncommon length of time. I went in as a flying cadet. You see, when we went from flying school to active duty and were sent out to a combat unit, in those days there wasn't enough money to provide reserve commissions for Army pilots. Now we were already Army pilots. We held that rating. But we were still flying cadets on active duty, and we wore the blue suit; we wore the cadet uniform. And around the squadron, and in the flights,

and in the training work, and in the flight work, we were treated as Army pilots. When we were in an airplane, we were equal to an officer. But on the ground, we had none of the responsibilities of an officer nor did we have the pay, and we didn't have any of the authority. We were kind of in limbo. We were no longer students, we were no longer cadets, but there we were. This went on for quite awhile. Some guys remained cadets for a year.

I remained a cadet, it seems to me about 6 months, and then got a reserve commission, but that was because there wasn't any money in the military, and the military wasn't very popular. You didn't spend federal money the way they spend it nowadays. They were counting their pennies, and I think, at that time, we made 62 bucks a month. We got the pay a little bit above a private in the Army and had no rating, except we were rated flying cadets; no rank. We weren't a sergeant, but we were treated sort of as a warrant officer; we were not treated as enlisted men. When I say treated, I mean we weren't categorized as enlisted men, and yet we weren't officers. But I remember that everyone was marvelous to us, very kind, and naturally we had the use of the officers' club and

all that sort of thing because, after all, we were graduates of the flying school and were rated Army pilots.

So I went from flying cadet in the 33d Squadron to its commanding officer. I was there, as I remember, at Langley almost 4 years. They used to have kind of a fun thing that the person who was on the base the longest was known as the "mayor," and I remember aspiring to that exalted position, because I had been there so long. Now, that wasn't common. You didn't usually stay in the same place in the same squadron for that long, but I'll admit to a little bit of maneuvering and chicanery. I remember a dread thing at that time was to be taken out of fighters and put into bombardment. They were building bombardment as fast as they could toward the end of my stay at Langley, and there was a bombardment squadron on the base. They had gotten the first of the B-17s, but with the coming of the--what was the designation of that fat airplane? It wasn't much use, but we had a lot of them. I can't remember its designation. But there were a lot of them, and they were expanding bombardment very, very fast, and they were getting their pilots from guys that didn't make it in fighters,

that weren't amenable to the fighter aviation requirements, guys that didn't like the single-seat type of flying or couldn't fly the type of thing the way it was required of them. There are certain types that are fighter types, and there are certain guys who are bombardment types, and neither can do what the other does. I'm being much more kinder than we were at that time, because we had an idea that we were the elite, and that the fighter pilot was the cream, and then if they couldn't make it in fighters, you went to the other branches--observation and bombardment. But the bombardment requirement was quite large, and they had to dip down in the fighter organizations to get their pilots. And usually it was guys who couldn't make it in the fighter business that would be transferred to bombardment, and then they would get a slower indoctrination as a copilot for awhile and then bring on and on, and they would learn the bombardment business, which became the most important part of our effort in World War II. But those of us who were dyed-in-the-wool fighter people and loved fighter aviation, wangled any way we could to stay in fighters. I wangled my way through 4 years of it, and ducked and dodged, and I was able to stay in, for which I have always been grateful, because I remember thinking at

one time, when it looked like they were going to take most of us into bombardment, that I would resign. I felt that strongly about it, and I'm pretty sure I let somebody know that, not as a threat but to show how strongly I felt about it, that if I were to be transferred to bombardment, that it wouldn't be worth the candle, and I'd resign. Now this was long before the war when you would do a thing like that, when we didn't know we were going to get into such a thing.

Now I later came to admire the bombardment people something fierce, because, as I always say, they were the first team. If you were a group commander of B-17s or B-24s out of England, you were the first team. Those were the people who carried the brunt and did the big job. I remember always teaching that it was our job in fighters to keep them at it. We were there to make it so they could do their job, because that was the job, and that was the one going to win the war. I don't think any war has ever been won by one fighter pilot fighting another fighter pilot. Nothing is decided and not much accomplished except to gain air superiority, but we were there to make it possible for the bombardment people to do their job, and they did a marvelous one, a magnificent job.

II: What positions did you hold while you were at Langley?

C: Well, the usual progression through a squadron. You would start out as an assistant engineering officer, say. I always tended toward that; I'm getting into maintenance again. I was intrigued with the maintenance of airplanes and keeping them running. Then I went from assistant engineering officer, we'll say, to engineering officer, and then from there to assistant operations, and then operations officer. That's the number two job in the squadron, the operations officer, because you're the guy who actually assigns the work and sees to the training. You are really the assistant squadron commander, and then moving on up to squadron commander. Although it was short-lived, I actually was a commander shortly. But, you see, then started the amoeba-like forming of more and more groups out of the few groups we had. They started to split the groups. The 8th Group was split, oh boy, so many ways. I remember how traumatic it was, and we thought they'll never make it, because they split the 8th into the 57th, and the 56th, and the so-in-so, and the so-in-so, and then they split that. As I say, it was like amoebas. And they split the 1st Group, and the 21st, I believe it was. There weren't many groups.

C: Starting along about 1939, there was a group at Langley, and there was a group at Selfridge, and a group at March, and one in Hawaii, and I believe one in the Philippines, and maybe one in Panama, and that was it. And from that grew the multitude of groups that just kept coming and coming. At one time, I forget how many groups I commanded there for a while, because you'd get one formed and you would have it about a month, and it would be gone to do something else, and you would get another one. I got so I couldn't remember their numbers, and I can't remember them now.

I can remember the 79th, and something that had a hundred-and-something on it, up in New England, but you just lose track of numbers, and also you start to get exasperated. I got exasperated. The 57th was always what I considered my group. It was my first squadron, the 65th of the 57th Group, and that was the split off of the 8th. It was the first split off, and I got the 65th Squadron. Johnny Alison got the 66th, and John Eakin got the 64th, and we just were in heaven. We had reached the finest of all positions that a human being could aspire to. We were squadron commanders. By the way, that's the best job in the

world. (laughter) Squadron commander is the best job in the world. You are still close to the fighting; you are still close enough to a combat, and yet you're running the thing. You have an opportunity to express yourself, and it's yours. When you move on from that to group commander, then "old man responsibility" starts getting you. (laughter) You start to have to be a responsible person, and you are not that close to the actual fighting. You're now a leader, and it's a different kind of leader with more responsibilities, and you begin to get into the tough stuff. A very admirable job and probably, really, the best job in the Air Force is the old group commander. You'd have three squadrons and a headquarters squadron, and you had a lot of authority, and a lot of autonomy, and he really could affect now; he could affect some real pressures. He could be a big hunk of a war, you know, when you get that big--a good job.

But I got the 65th, and then it looked like I was going to get the group, the whole group, to take it to Africa. At the time it went to Africa, I was sick. I didn't get a chance to take it. Boy, I resented that for a long time. Then the next group I got was a brand new one, and I trained it, and then I got another one.

C: Pretty soon, I kept saying, "Hey, when am I getting one of these overseas?" Everybody wanted over, you know, and I wanted to stop the building and training situation that I found myself in, and I wanted to get into the action and get over. I finally went over, not with any one of the groups I had, but, lo and behold, I was sent on a last-minute kind of job to take 35 pilots, who were the replacement pilots for the 33d Group, my old group, which was going off catapult carriers into the fracas at Casablanca. The plans called for 35 replacement pilots, and they had to get them off a carrier. They were just brought from everywhere, and they were supposed to be the replacements for the losses out of the group in that engagement--in the battle--of when we went into Africa. So they needed somebody to take that ragtag outfit over there, and I got the job. I was immensely pleased with anything that would get me overseas. That's how I got over there, oddly enough, having had all these groups, I never got over with one of my own.

H: Did you move from Langley then right over to Groton, Connecticut, prior to going overseas?

C: No, we were moved to Mitchel [Field, New York]. We were moved to Mitchel right about the early part of the war, just before the war started, and that would be 1941, along in there. There were some changes. They made Langley a complete bomber base, and they moved the bombers off Mitchel and made it a fighter base, putting the fighters closer to the industrial East, and they started to move a lot of fighter outfits up into the New England area, closer to the industrial complex that is the northeast--Boston, and Connecticut, Massachusetts--that whole area in there.

Then as we started to amoeba out of Mitchel, we were sent off. I remember I had one group at Hartford on the field there. Groton, Connecticut, had been an Air National Guard camp, and what it was was a cow pasture, and we lived in the dairy barns. Our men, the mechanics, lived in the dairy barn. It was a good-sized one, a beautiful building. The pilots, the officers, lived in houses in town. We had P-40s on that base. I had the squadron.

Now we were there, and then there was another of our group's squadron up the way at Providence, Rhode Island, in that area. Then another squadron, and the headquarters

was in Boston, of that group. You see how we were spread there, and our control center was Boston.

Then there were other groups down along in Delaware and Pennsylvania--Philadelphia--along in there. That's how we began to spread out. There was a twofold mission, of course. We not only were building and expanding, and training, but we were defending, too. We were part of the defense network. So I went to Langley, Mitchel, and Mitchel was wonderful. Boy, that was a wonderful duty. We went into New York at the drop of a hat and had a grand old time; then from there to Groton, Hartford, that area of Connecticut, and then from there I went overseas.

H: How did you finally manage to wangle your way out of that training assignment?

C: Well, I had a patron saint (laughter). General Joe Cannon knew of my plight and my desires, and I had worked with him enough. He was a fine, fine person, and he was the Commanding General of the First Air Force, and he was at Mitchel. And we were his guys; we were his guys, and he knew everyone of us, and he was close to us. He knew of my dire disappointment

that I didn't get to take the 57th over, and he also knew that, although I didn't like it, I shut my mouth and did my work. Well, I didn't shut my mouth (laughter), but I did my work, and I think what I was unconsciously doing was saying, "Well, I'm going to do this damn well, and I'm going to work very hard at it, so that when I say, 'Hey, I deserve to go, I'm going to deserve to go.'" That's about the way I did it. General Cannon was a very perceptive person. He was a very kind person, and he was a very good leader. When they said we need a guy quickly that can grab these kids, these replacement kids, and shepherd them on that British catapult carrier; by the way, that was the first, no one had done it. We had never seen a catapult. General Cannon said, "It's a lousy job, but that guy is going to die from anxiety if he doesn't get overseas." So he put me in it, and got me over, and, lo and behold, he went over. Lo and behold, we met again in Africa, and I worked again under him in Africa, and had a close association in Africa, and followed through . . . Of course, when I came out of Africa and then went on over to Burma, I lost track of him or he lost track of me. I mean the situation changed, but we had a relationship there of commander and underling for quite awhile, and he was my patron saint. He sent me to Africa with that outfit, knowing

that I was dying to get over there, and I got over and inserted myself into the combat situation over there, sort of with the idea, "Hey, General, just get me in the area. I'll get going. You just let me go." He did it for me.

H: What were conditions like when you first arrived on the scene in North Africa?

C: Atrocious. I'll tell you what, it was a situation that called for the ingenuity and the flexibility that I talked about before of the American guy, especially the American Air Force guy, and especially the American Air Force fighter guy. Patton and his army had invaded, and there had been some mess up in that invasion. He had lost some ships; he had lost his transportation, as I remember it, and that caused a lot of difficulty, but I landed off that catapult carrier at Casablanca when the field had shortly been shelled, mortar shelled. It had a lot of holes, and we lost a couple of aircraft. But there we were, and we were a unit. We were part of the group that were up forward north of us at Port Lyautey. The main group came into port at Port Lyautey, and they were still being bombarded. They were cracking up their

airplanes trying to land, and they shifted us, therefore, down to Casablanca where the shelling had stopped.

Now, of course, at first we had no place to stay, but that was minor. We had no parts; we had no gasoline and ammunition; but, lo and behold, it started to come in, and plans started to work out. It took a few days, but we started to get our feet on the ground and get ourselves sorted out, and we started to run our jobs. I had the job then of training these 35. We now were 33; we lost two on the catapult takeoff. One kid spun in; another was dribbled into the sea right off the nose of the carrier. The mechanism malfunctioned and didn't get enough power to shoot him into the air, to catapult him into the air. It just dribbled him off the end of the thing. I believe he was picked up though. We lost four airplanes, and we lost two boys-- two pilots. The other two were fished out of the sea.

Now these were all very, very young pilots. They were new out of the flying school. I had one kid named Rodriguez that was only 3 weeks out of the flying school. And some lousy unit, doing a dirty trick when they were told to supply some fighter pilots for the

replacement, supplied us their youngest. That's a human thing to do; you want to keep your good guys. There was a stipulation that they would have so many hours in the fighter airplane, and we found that most of these kids just had hours going up. Everybody was so busy that they didn't have time to train everybody, and these kids were just getting used to their airplanes. They'd say, "Take it off, and circle the field for a couple of hours," and that sort of thing.

Now they all weren't like that, but I'm speaking of the most outlandish, and that was the most extreme case. There was a kid who was just out of the flying school, but he was a peach of a kid. He was Mexican-American, with a great, great sense of humor. Everybody had a lot of fun with Rodriguez. But now here we had these guys, and they weren't needed immediately as replacements, because we hadn't lost that many pilots in this invasion.

So here was a group of kids, and we had airplanes. So General Cannon assigned me to take that group, take that bunch of fellows, take them off to a field of their own, which we wanted to occupy anyhow. We wanted to occupy the airdrome at Rabat, which was the capitol

of Morocco, and there was an airfield there, and the French were holding it. You see, we had been battling the French in that invasion, the French who were still a part of Vichy, France, which the Germans still had control of. And they said, "Go up and fight those Americans that are coming in here." The French, it wasn't a job they liked, but there they were; and 2 days before, we had been fighting these guys. Now we were in command, and we had occupied, and somebody had to go up--and their headquarters was on this field at Rabat, which was a former airbase, pretty good. They had barracks, and hangars, and this sort of thing for this French Air Force.

So they said, "How are we going to do this?" Well, we said, "Let's get at it." It was going to be mine. So it was suggested that I just go up there and see what conditions were and when we could move in. So I took my P-40 and went up to Rabat, which is about 65 or 70 miles north of Casablanca, and looked their field over and went in and landed. I looked over and saw the apron, and I saw a whole bunch of people lined up there. So I taxied over to the area and parked in a logical spot and got out of my airplane. I was in flying clothes, coveralls, and I got out and wandered

toward these people, and I noticed it was kind of a formation. And three men had advanced, and then one had advanced more, so I figured: Well, that's the commander. There was kind of a misunderstanding. They thought that I was the American that they were to turn that field over to and surrender to! So I started walking toward them, and they started walking toward me, and I said, "Does anybody speak English? Do any of you gentlemen speak English?" One long, tall drink of water stood forward and he said, "Yes, I do, sir." He introduced himself, and his name was [Edmond] Marin LaMeslee, and Marin LaMeslee was the top ace of the "39 war," as they called it in France, when they battled the Germans. That was quite an air battle, and there were a lot of French fighter pilots who had run up pretty good scores against the Germans. And this man was the top man, and he was a very famous person in France. I learned all this later, because I became his fast, fast friend. As a matter of fact, he had a baby born that day, or the day before, and he named the child, he christened the child 2 weeks later, and he named it "Philippe." So there is a kid named after me somewhere in this world named Philippe Marin LaMeslee. I'd like to know him.

C: His wife was in the hospital and was having the baby during--that would have been November 10th or 11th of 1942. She was having that baby the day her husband was out there running around shooting at American Navy people and us. Then 3 days later or so, he was speaking to me, the misguided we'll say, the fighter guy who came in and was having an air force handed over to him. So I went along, and we did all manner of saluting, and shook hands, and got to know each other. Then I said I wanted to see the barracks and how many men we could bring in there, and that sort of thing. I was a little embarrassed by saying, "We're coming in here, you know, and we're going to take over you guys."

(End Side 2, Reel 1)

C: Well, after I had the big ceremony of taking over the field, and they showed me the facilities, I went back down and got the replacement pilots and moved them, as a unit, on to Rabat. We started a fast training course, a kind of concentrated training course. We set up some ground targets on the beach and started to teach the boys how to use their guns. Many of them had never fired their guns. So we concentrated day after day and worked very, very hard, and rounded

them out into some pilots that were capable of going forward with the squadrons. Naturally, in doing it, we became sort of cohesive. We started to form a squadron, actually, and we started to act like a squadron. And having no number or name, we called ourselves the "Joker Squadron." That took, and the boys began to get sort of an esprit de corps, and we began to feel that we were a little better than everybody else. You know how units do. Then there came the feeling, the kids began to feel that they wanted to go ahead into combat as a unit.

Naturally, to get things done, I had formed them into a squadron formation. I had an operations officer, engineering officer, and flight commanders, and it was just the quickest and best way to do it. And before we knew it, we were a squadron. They wanted to remain that way. They didn't want to be separated. They didn't get their wish, but they began to pick up individual markings and emblems. We had been issued some scarves for some reason or other, and they were red. Where we got the red, I don't know, but they began to wear the red scarf which wasn't common among squadrons. They didn't wear scarves as a rule. But they began to wear the red ones, and there was an

impulse in them to have some form of identity, so they called themselves the "Joker Squadron." That was fine with me, because they were working toward becoming an effective group of guys, and that made them better pilots.

So we worked hard at training ourselves. By the way, along the line, I checked out this pilot, this French ace now, who had become my fast friend, because he became a liaison officer to us, and he was most, most helpful. He spoke beautiful English, and when we couldn't get something done, he could. He was a great assistance to us, just became one of us. I checked him out in my airplane, my P-40, and that pleased him no end, because it was a gesture of friendship, because he was still a French officer, and they hadn't been taken over by us at all. It was a little irregular, but I knew nothing bad was going to happen about it, and I told the General I had done it. But that just cemented our relationship more and more; and, as I say, we became very close friends. And the French became very helpful to us.

Let's go back. You were asking what conditions were like. Being a squadron that had no name and no number,

and we weren't even on the books, there was also no food (laughter), and there also were very few darn supplies, so we had to scrounge. We scrounged from everybody, and we would eat with Patton's various units. We would find a unit near us; we would find anybody near us where we could eat. We would eat with the French. We were eating their stuff and drinking their wine, and were in their bar at nights. We were just a whole bunch of scroungers. Of course, we wanted to be a squadron, but we didn't have the wherewithal, and we had to live off other people.

So our supply situation was a little bit different than others. The supply situation was short, but, as I look back on it, it's amazing that the squadrons landed at Casablanca, did some training, got themselves together, and we just moved in as though we had been there for a long, long time. We acclimated very, very quickly.

Then there was a call for a squadron to move forward-- one squadron, and they wanted it forward into Tunisia. It had gotten forward and kind of bogged down. It got ahead of its supplies, and the fields were poor. There was no place for them to live, and that sort of thing. Right about the same time, a call came out to send

forward six replacements and their airplanes. And those airplanes were to be taken right up to the advanced squadron, and that was the 59th. It was under the command of a guy by the name of Turner; he was squadron commander. I was to take these replacements up and find him, give him the airplanes, and leave the pilots there, because they had lost quite a few in one or two tangles they had had with the Germans.

Now, they were the first probe into that Northwest African campaign. They were the first guys to bite the bullet with the Germans. Now I landed at Algiers with these pilots, and a guy came to me and said, "There is a telegram here that says you are to stay here and wait for further instructions. You may be sent back." I said, "Why?" I suspected that there was a mess up farther on. As I remember it, I don't know whether I was told about the order and actually saw it on a teletype, or whether I actually saw it or whether this operations officer, or someone there at Algiers, told me that that is what it said.

But I began to think that I didn't want any part of that. I did want to get forward. I wanted to get up with that squadron that was up there. I had met a

couple of guys that were coming back from the area; I met a boy by the name of Hubbard that I knew. He was a Selfridge guy, and he was telling me about what was going on, that there was a lot of strafing and work to be done up there, and that this one squadron was beyond where he had been. So I really think that I didn't disobey an order, because I could rationalize that I hadn't gotten it, and I got out of Algiers pretty fast before they could catch me. (laughter) I'm not saying that in an arrogant way. It seemed to me, at the time, that I had been told to get those airplanes and those pilots up there, and I knew the guy that was up there, and I was going to go up and get them there. Then if somebody ordered me back, I was going to fulfill my mission, and if they wanted to retract it, fine. I wasn't very far, so we gassed up and went on. I went on and found the group. I found the squadron, and it was a very, very poor field. It was just a hunk of desert. Actually, it wasn't desert, it was flat land that they called desert, but it had a growth on it--alpha grass--that you could land on darn near anywhere on some of those areas down in there. Long stretches of flat land that you could land on, and the base was sturdy enough to hold your wheels up. But it had been raining, and this

squadron was bogged down in some mud. They also were living in pup tents. Boy, the nights got cold, and they were in these pup tents, and they had orders to move on further forward to Telepte. Because of the urgency to get up there, they weren't too well organized. They weren't as well organized as they wanted to be themselves, and they had been in a couple of scrapes. They had been sent over to work over a German airdrome over on the coast, somewhere over in Tunisia, and they had just gotten themselves into a mess. They walked into some withering ground fire on that airport, which just kicked the hell out of them, and they lost quite a few pilots. They were demoralized, and had reason to be. I think they had gone in with 12, and they just lost them. They got all cut up, and didn't realize what they were walking into. It was a hard way to learn. When I got up there and heard the recounting of these missions they had been sent on, naturally my sense of duty, I'll call it, made me realize that things should be a little more stable in this situation. There I was on an American Air Corps base, so to speak, an advanced one, and I saw a situation that required some doing, taking hold of, and I was a major at that time, and the boy that

had the squadron was a friend of mine. He was a captain, and he needed help, and he wanted it.

So I had some ideas of how we should strengthen the situation and make it sounder, and how to get down to basic principles of how to proceed. So I just said, "Well, I think I'll stay here, and I think I will get into this with you." They were happy that I should do it. I wasn't dismissing anybody, I was just getting in with them. But I was the ranking person, so I took over. We moved on up to Telepte, and we began to form ourselves into a capable fighting unit; we figured that was the first thing we had to do, and we did it. We collected ourselves, and we started to make sense. We started to learn the German habits and started to know when to feint, and when to attack, and when to try to out-maneuver him, and try to out-guess him, and then out-fight him. That's how I got into the running of that base at that time. Then later, the base grew to more and more airplanes, and more and more men, and it got to be quite an establishment after awhile. We'll talk about that later. But that's how I was inserted or, if you will, inserted myself into that combat situation in North Africa, by taking over the running of that squadron and getting it in position. Then it

was the forerunner of many that came along afterward in the ensuing months. By the way, the first thing we had to do was dig our homes. That pup tent thing left a lot to be desired, and also we were getting hammered by day by the German fighters, and the situation above ground was so precarious that we didn't allow more than three men to gather at any one place, because we had situations where four or five guys would be standing around and a German fighter would come over the hill, out of the sun. You couldn't see him, and before you knew it, he was on you. We had people killed just right then and there by strafing, and so it behooved us to do something about that, and the only place to go was down in the ground, and we dug our caves. We dug our living establishments down into the ground, and then we put boards over the top of them and planted back the alpha grass on the top, so that a strafing coming over couldn't pick out our places where we lived. We lived down in those things, and the first thing anybody did when they arrived at Telepte was dig their hole, dig their home, and they were around the perimeter of the field. Then we dug slit trenches, of course, because each airplane was dispersed. We had to disperse them so that the German strafers couldn't have a field day of getting us all lined up. We were

dispersed all over the field, and we had to have instant protection for our mechanics, so that they could jump into a foxhole that they had dug right there. Right beside every airplane was a well-built foxhole where they could just drop into, and they had to do it many times when the Germans were over there trying to get us out. They were trying to root us out of our advance base, and they hit us quite often.

We noticed some humorous things. If you would look at all the airplanes that were dispersed around this wide, flat area of plain-sort of topography, you'd notice that they all faced one way, and they faced the hill that the Germans had a habit of hopping over and catching us by surprise. The mechanics would stand there doing their work facing the precarious area out of which would come the Germans spitting lead at them. We slept underground then, and some folks had very palatial places. The one I lived in had as many as four compartments, and we would cook in there. We had two meals a day: in the dark in the morning and in the dark in the evening, because we could not line up. You wouldn't dare line up a chow line, because that would just be asking for it. You were making a damn fine target for some German that wanted to come

over and splatter you with lead. So we had to eat in the dark in the morning and eat in the dark at night. It was difficult to maintain airplanes, and it was difficult living, but you would be amazed how we acclimated to it. For instance, anybody who was in a fighter squadron that had houses that they lived in, had actual mess halls, and all that sort of nonsense, were a bunch of sissies. It's funny, our attitude was that we were the roughest, and we were the toughest.

We had quite a go with the Germans. We got to know them pretty well. I think of it now, and I'm pretty sure I was aware of it then, that what we were kind of doing was World War I stuff. We were up forward; they weren't far away. They were over the hills, and then they had a base. I would wake up in the morning and the first thing that my consciousness would do, would be listen to see if the Germans were already patrolling our airdrome. They used to do that. They would have a couple of airplanes over there just as we were waking up and beginning to run our engines up. And before the engines would run up, I'd want somebody to awaken me and would listen, and they would be up there. Now, we would do the same thing to them. We would take off in the dark and go over and patrol their airdromes so

that they couldn't take off. Then we got so that when they were patrolling us, we would call the P-38s who were behind us, farther away from the front, back, and we would say, "All right, they are up there now. Come on and get them. Sweep our airdrome clear so we can get off, because we can't do anything as long as they are up there. We can't even get off. They will come down and whack us when we try to get off."

Now I characterized that as rather primitive, but it was our first efforts, and it was kind of old-time war, fighter against fighter, and then we became more sophisticated afterward. We started to get teletype, and at first our chain of command was rather loose, because our headquarters was not yet in place. Then as it came in place, we became more formal, and we were not as freewheeling as we had been. But we started out to do our job, and we considered our job the protection, air cover, for the French troops that were in the hills holding the passes, and protecting bombardment who would come by, and we would be assigned to go with them, B-25s, and they were bombing the ports and so forth, strafing of airdromes when we thought we could get away with it, if we knew they moved and their guns hadn't come along with them. They had excellent antiaircraft

guns. They had radar sights on them and trackers, and that's how they would get us. It was hard to strafe them, but then we would find out where their ground troops were, and we did an awful lot of strafing of their ground troops. We finally owned the area, and they couldn't move in the daytime very much. If they wanted to move in the daytime, they took a chance of having us hit them pretty hard on the highways. We hit any railroad locomotive we saw, and we just started the interdiction thing that is now known as tactical air work. We unconsciously went right on into that. We didn't have a name for it; we knew we were tactical. Now we didn't know that we were doing long-range interdiction, or anything like that, but we were doing it. Oddly enough, we lost more people strafing than we did in air combat, because that's a tougher job, and they got so they were defending against us. You have to know how to strafe. It gets to be a technique. If you know your way in and plan your way out, you'll make it; but if you just go in by the numbers, you're going to get it. But in the air, we were fighting against good Germans--that is, good squadrons. They were established squadrons, and they would let you know it. There were the "Yellow Noses," and then there was another outfit which was a Göring outfit.

C: They had names of their World War I aces. They had distinguishing marks--one had yellow wingtips or white wingtips, the other had yellow spinners on their noses, and that sort of thing. I remember one of them buzzed our field one time and they dropped a message, and they said, "We are the Moelders Squadron, Geschwader"--whatever it was--"and we moved into your area, and we want you to know it." They were pretty cocky. They said, "We are the ones with the yellow wingtips, and we are the Moelders." Evidently, Moelders was one of their old aces. We had quite a go with them, and I'm pretty sure we came out better than they.

They had Messerschmitt 109-Gs, and we had P-40s. Now, their airplane could outrun us, they could outclimb us, they could outdive us, but they couldn't outturn us, and we became very proficient turners. (laughter) It was our nature, as I remember all the time we were training, in fighting each other, used the tight turn as the best defensive maneuver you had. And we were excellent turners, and I think I was the tightest-turning guy that ever was, because that to me was the way to keep myself intact. We lectured this, and we just tattooed it on everybody's forehead: turn, turn, and keep your eyes moving. I remember everyday, we

said to each other, "If you are in a P-40, and you see him, he ain't going to get you." If you could see the Messerschmitt, you could do something about it. You can turn, and turn, and keep turning until he'll break off or you will get him, and we had good scores against them. Not the big scores that they were running up in England, but if you got two or three, you were real, real good, because we had to use our disadvantage as an advantage. We couldn't run, we couldn't outclimb, and we couldn't outdive him, but if he would come down and fight us--and we couldn't get up to where he was either. The P-40 was nothing above 10,000 or 12,000 feet, so we always stayed around 10,000; and if he wanted to do his job, he would have to come down and get us, because we'd be hammering the hell out of his ground troops. If he was sent over there to clear us out, he would have to come down in there. And if he would come down to our altitude, we were good and we could turn down there. We had six .50-caliber guns, so we were well armed, and the P-40 would take an awful beating. It was a rugged doggone thing. Naturally, even if you got old Dumbo, you'd get to love them. We were proud of the P-40 and proud of its ability, but we knew its shortcomings. I remember General Cannon, I think he said it himself, but he was paraphrasing what he had

said. Somebody asked him "If he could have the best for his boys, what airplane would he want?" He said, "Messerschmitt 109-B." We would have loved to have had them. But the P-40 did well, and it was all we had, so we fought it and we used its best attributes, and that was, it had a good range on it. We could go 200 miles into their territory. We could go from our place and go all the way over to the coast of Tunisia, to Sfax and Sousse, and to Gabes. Those are the port cities. We could look for Germans if they wanted to come up and battle us and keep us away, then we would put a top cover on, and then we would go down and just beat the hell out of any piece of transport we could find, or we got to dive-bombing bridges we tried to knock out. We got to learn our territory like the back of our hands so we could get home. There weren't any cities, but there were landmarks, and we just moved in and took it over. It became our alley, and it became their alley. As Rommel came north and tried to come up through that corridor, we were on his flank, and we used to beat up everything we could and, of course, he had his airplanes to try to keep us from doing it, and that was quite an air war.

C: Then the B-17s moved in, and the B-25s moved in, and they started pounding those ports over in there and started getting his supplies as he was trying to come north. Our job was to make it so difficult that he couldn't come north. His job was to try to push us back. You see, he was trying to get out of Africa, and he was coming up that corridor of Tunisia, and his plan was to get across from the top of the Tunisian peninsula there, the Bon Peninsula, over into Sicily, which was just a little bit across the water there. Sicily, we could see from the air over the Bon Peninsula, but our job was to snuff him off, and keep him from doing it, and beat the hell out of him as he came up through, and eradicate that whole Afrika Korps. Patton was coming at him from the west, and Montgomery was chasing him from the east. He had to come up that area if he wanted to get his army out of there and save it. So it was our duty to stop him. As you remember, they pushed us back, and they actually got through the Kasserine Pass. Now if they could have gotten through the Kasserine Pass successfully, we'd have lost a whole range of hills, and we would have had to evacuate and go back to the next range and establish ourselves there, and we would have lost that flank, and he could have run up there. That's what that whole thing was about.

C: We then found ourselves over tank battles. I've seen some beautiful tank battles on those plains down there where Patton's tanks would be trying to move forward on Rommel's tanks, and watch those old tank battles. We would get right down in them a couple of times. We tried to devise a way where a P-40 could be effective against tanks. We had armor-piercing ammunition, and we were trying to hit at the bogey wheel, or some sensitive spot of the tank. We weren't very successful, but we tried hard. I imagine we knocked out a few, or else they went out, because we could see them stopped. It was a closeup kind of a war, and we knew where the Germans were, and they knew where we were, and they were still pulling that old "wings" kind of thing where they actually would come over and drop a challenging message. Naturally, that would require an answer from us. We would go over and make a pointed thing of beating the hell out of something that they should have been protecting, and we would say, "All right, you arrogant bastards, we'll show you a little bit of what we are made of, too." And we would answer it. I think it was that close, and probably never happened again after that first half-year or so of the African campaign. From then on, things became quite formal. There weren't any actions where a squadron commander, or group commander,

was kind of running his own war, and dreaming up the ideas of his own and passing them back. From then on in, when we got our intelligence up, and we got radar, and we got headquarters, and we got well equipped, the war became more orderly, and less barn-stormish, and less guerrillish. But for those first few months, that area was our oyster. We knew what had to be done, and we went about it in our own way. I can remember flying as many as four and five missions a day myself, and being over in that area and looking for transportation, and anything to cripple the enemy that we could, and keeping our eye out for movement over in there. We were the observation people. We screamed bloody murder when we would see tanks moving and forming themselves and coming at a certain area, coming through a certain pass, or something. We would run back and get on the windup telephone and scream to our headquarters, "Tell those ground people that they are going to be surrounded." We then informed headquarters about ship movements into those ports over there, which was very important, because these were Rommel's supplies, and he was fast running out of gasoline and supplies on his way up; and if we could get the shipping, we could beat them.

C: I remember one morning popping over the harbor at Sousse and seeing as many as 30 or 35 freighters in that harbor trying to get him to unload. And I thought, Oh my goodness, what an opportunity! And I turned quickly and got back and tried to get in radio range, and I said the hell with secrecy, the hell with code, or anything. I was just screaming, "Get on the phone, and get back to General Cannon and tell him the harbor at Sousse is loaded. Get the B-17s over there. My goodness, they'll have a field day!" And I got back and got together, and we were to escort them. It takes some time for bombardment to get ready. They had to change their bombs and everything, and the whole day was gone; we didn't get over until late in the afternoon, and I was with them as escort. Boy, my anticipation was great; we were really going to get some shipping.

We got over there, and it was just one or two ships on their way out. They sighted me, evidently, and sighted my formation, and said, "Oh, oh, that guy has got us in the back." I don't think it was my yelling in the clear, but they just would have to know that we had seen them. And here it was daylight; they were trying to unload in the darkness. I don't think they

had been there the day before. By the time we got out, they did the only thing they could--they just scattered to sea. So the B-17s took a whack at the harbor anyhow, and got anything that was at the wharf that couldn't get away. As I say, we were observation, we were almost everything. It was just the kind of exciting war situation that called for a lot of informality and a lot of innovation, and it was great satisfaction to work on it, and work hard at it, and we just ran ourselves into the ground fighting that kind of war. I remember a gag. John Stevenson [Maj Gen John D.], was operations officer of the XII Fighter Command, and their headquarters had been hit the night before, or that morning--I forget which--by a German, I believe a JU-88 or a fighter--I don't remember which--but blew them all apart, and several of them were hurt, not badly. But it sure wrecked the headquarters and wrecked the communications. They got word forward to me, and it was from John and he said, "The war is all yours (laughter). We're knocked out." So for about 12 days, we didn't even have communications back with our headquarters. But we knew what had to be done, and they would get messages to us. "Can you escort so-and-so?" "Yes, we will."

C: We were supporting French troops quite a bit, and there were some battles the size of which you could see. That's another peculiarity: you could see this isolated battle going on, and you could see us protecting it and the Germans trying to protect their people in the clashes between us, and we were actually trying to get air superiority over one isolated battle where they would be trying with tanks and artillery to take a certain pass or a certain crossroad that would be important. They were isolated battles that you could actually define. It wasn't one great big old war where you could lose yourself in it. They were actually combat situations that you could see, and define, and work on. So, it was that kind of war that we were introduced in. We were good at it, surprisingly good at it, as fighter pilots. I remember that the ground people used to wonder where we got some of our military know-how. We didn't; we were just observant guys, and we saw a lot, and we put things together, and we started to work with them. As they moved forward, we would have meetings with them, and we would make arrangements to be their air cover, and they'd call us forward. What we were doing was fulfilling the new kind of action of ground-air support. They had spotters that would tell us where things were, and we

learned from that. I remember learning a very serious lesson that we soon taught, and I remember talking about it, probably in this briefing in the War Room when I came back. We soon learned what the Army guy, the tank people, and the artillery people, and the infantry people wanted were the things that they could see. They would say, "Well, would you please send a couple of airplanes up, because we've been stopped by some machine gunners that are in a house up on this hill? We'll tell you where it is, and you go get them out of there."

Well, we thought it was a misuse of aviation. In other words, they were carrying the ground-air support thing a little too far in our estimation. We went over a couple of times and did that, but we found they were using us to do their hard jobs, we thought. But, in doing it, what we became intrigued with was, if there was a battle going on and there was a contact between our troops and their troops, there must be a support unit behind those troops that are up there on that front. If there are tanks involved, if you will look behind the action a few miles, 10 or 12 miles back, you'll find the tank reserves, and you will find their supply unit, and you'll find their shops. We then

learned if there were German tanks working in a small front, go about 20 to 25 miles behind, or even 10, and you will find their big old green trucks, and you will find them in a square. What they had, this was the tank service station. They would come up and fight, and they would go back and be refilled and serviced back at this place, and they would be doing their maintenance work, and there would be a whole bunch of support troops back there in order to keep the ones up front fighting, so that they could go up and fight, turn around, and come back. Well, we learned the best way to help our effort and to help the guys that were actually doing the fighting was go back and burn that damn thing and get it out of there, and that would cripple the guys, and that would lessen the number of tanks you had against you. Now you could move on forward. So, in a way, we were becoming a close up kind of strategic thing, to learn to find the support unit and beat it up, as well as cover the guys who were actually right up there banging against each other on the frontline.

I remember one time where we caught a whole trainload of reserves coming up to be put into the lines, and before those poor devils actually got out of their trains, out of their cars, they were pretty much beat

up. Now that was the kind of thing you looked for as a fighter guy, and I hope I'm using the right word. This became the interdiction idea. Get back of that front, right in back of it, and get the tactical stuff, beat up the rails coming to it, keep the trucks away in the daytime, beat up their supplies, and try to get their reserves, and get anywhere they gather. Now, of course, they were doing the same thing to us. (laughter) It was mutual; we were hitting at each other in close quarters. It was a real contact kind of war that later wasn't run that way.

II: You mentioned earlier that you took a lot of initiative on yourself in moving on up to the front. Did this cause any consternation on the part of your superiors?

C: Only slight. Things at that time were so fluid and so informal that an act like that was really not out of order. It was permitted, and in this instance I sensed it was the right thing to do; it was the responsible thing to do at the time, and a thing like that would be allowed, especially in the Air Force. Now maybe elsewhere in more formal outfits or more spit-and-polish outfits, it would be considered improper. But many an officer finds himself in a situation where he realizes

that someone must take the responsibility and grab it, and take the authority, if you will, and have to choose and say, "All right, I may be doing something a little bit out of line here, but it's my judgment that someone better do it, and I'm the someone." If you happen to be the ranking guy, you do it; or else if you are not the ranking guy, you tell the ranking guy, "Hey, you better do it. We better get together here and get this thing done." So I think that the spirit in which it was done allowed it, and if there was any being out of line at all, it was forgiven--because luckily, it worked out well. Now, had it not worked out (laughter), I might have been criticized but not ever really punished, I don't think.

(End Side 1, Reel 2)

H: All right, we were talking about the buildup at Telepte earlier. Would you like to continue discussing that at this point?

C: Yes. We are talking about the latter part of November, maybe the last 2 weeks of November, or around that time, as we moved forward into that area of Telepte. First, of course, as I say, there was this one squadron,

and then a second squadron from the 33d Group came in with us. Then, along the way, we picked up an A-20 squadron. Now the A-20 was an excellent airplane from a pilot's point of view, but it didn't adapt itself to this kind of warfare at all. It couldn't do anything. It was a tac airplane; therefore, the designation A, but it wasn't a fighter bomber. It couldn't do support work, and it couldn't do bombardment work. It didn't have the bombsight mechanisms to help it. It was a fast airplane, and a delightful airplane to fly, but it was out of place; it couldn't do anything. So we immediately turned it into a medium bomber type of thing. We saw that as its only use. They had thought they were going to skip bomb and maybe be useful against tanks or something, but it never worked out. We started to use them in a medium bomber role, bombing from around 7,000 or 8,000 feet, and going over the harbors and the installations on the coast of Tunisia, and being protected by our P-40s. It was effective in that way, but, really, we were taking the role of the medium bomber like the B-25, and soon many of those came into play. They would come from the rear of us, and then we escorted them in and out of the combat zones, and they did a much better job, because they were designed for that. But the A-20 moved in on us, and we operated them.

C: Then we also got a squadron or two--I can't remember-- but we got a number of P-39s that came into us. Now, they had the tricycle gear, and they would have had difficulty on the rough, clumpy terrain of the Telepte airdrome, and so we landed them on an asphalt highway that ran along one side of our airdrome. Then we would taxi them off; I wanted to hide them. I didn't want the Germans quite to know what we were up to, and I was kind of saving them, because I had an idea in the back of my head. If you remember, the P-39 had a cannon that shot through the hub of the propeller, the engine being in the rear of the pilot, and the driveshaft coming between his legs and on forward. The P-39 was fast, but we found that it was not a capable airplane for the area for this reason: It could not outrun a Messerschmitt nor could it outclimb it. It might stay with it in a dive, but the key factor was, and this is what we come back to, it couldn't outturn. So it had all the disadvantages, and not even one advantage; and when they would meet, they were not a good match for the Messerschmitt. So we decided they were good on the ground, having the cannon capability, shooting forward. We figured they would be good ground-support aircraft, but we were worried about them running into the German fighter. So what we ended up doing was we would put

P-40s over it, and when it went in to do its ground job, we would have the P-40s above it to protect it. It was the only way we could figure it was a sensible way to do it. So it didn't add much to our capability, to our power, because we were having to use our very, very limited number of P-40s--our scarce ones--to protect the other fighters who were doing the ground job, and they weren't doing it that much better than our P-40s could do. The P-40 could do the ground job and protect itself. So we didn't think much of the P-39s, and there's an anecdote on that. General Jimmy Doolittle had gotten them to come in, and he was kind of high on them. He was in hopes that they would be a match for the Messerschmitt, and it would be the answer for the disabilities of the P-40s. He was rather high on them until we got them in there. He came up, and you could tell he was looking for good things about them, and we ran them down. We said, "They are a drag on us, General. They end up being a damn liability. You send them out, and you have got to protect them. They can't protect themselves." He didn't like that, at first, very much, and he said, "Well, I don't know about you guys." But he came to see that later. He was, naturally, interested in the longer role of the new airplane--the P-39. They were hoping, I suppose, that they could get

a new, better, faster airplane into the inventory of the Air Force, because we knew we had to get something better than the P-40, and the P-39 was available, and it was in production, and it was going. I think it was quite a disappointment there. Now they served well in other theaters, but they didn't do well in our immediate situation there. We didn't much care for them, but we had them, and I had them stashed over there under the olive trees, kind of hiding them, because I suspected that someday I was going to be able to figure out a way to use them against tanks. I was holding them for that reason, to try to use that gun that they had, and see if it couldn't knock out a tank. In that way, I said, "Now they're worth it, and we will put P-40s over them, and we'll go down and knock out tanks." I thought maybe we had found a role for it. So I wanted to kind of keep it so that the Germans coming over and taking their pictures, and everything, would have a little trouble trying to figure out what we had until they saw them. It didn't work out. I later tried to use another group, a group of P-39s that were behind us. I can't tell you the airdrome, but it was back.

C: One day, while we were over on one of our missions, I spotted a tank battle forming, and we knew that Patton was moving into position, and we knew that Rommel was coming up, and we knew about where they were. We were told everyday how far they had advanced, and I was over this area. I could see the American tanks going forward. They had come through a pass, and they were coming out onto an open plain area that was many, many miles long. It seemed to me that I could see, and I went over and looked, a German column of tanks that looked to me as though they were coming around the flank and going to come in behind and cut off, hook into, the American column coming. I was probably at 10,000 or 12,000 feet, and I could see something forming up that I didn't like. I wasn't versed in ground warfare, but this one was so obvious that it was almost like "cutting them off at the pass," you know, the old cowboy and Indian thing. It looked rather plain that this is what was happening. Anyway, I thought it won't do me any harm to report it. So I got on the radio and reported it, and I said, "Tell those guys to look out." I came back and, again, got on the telephone, which is a little better, and described what I saw. And they got one of their Army corps people, one of their staff people on, to listen to what we had seen, and I described

it to them. I described the area, and I tried to describe the position and the directions in which they were going, and that it was my opinion that the enemy was going to hook around in back of them, or at least to their side, and change their direction, and it was going to be a hell of a confrontation that they might not be planning on.

So I gassed up and got everybody ready, because I said, "There's going to be a big smash up there, and we are going up. We have got to have airplanes over that thing." So, in the meantime, I called headquarters and said, "Here would be the opportune time to use those P-39s that I know are back there." I said, "Those guys have got their guns working." The P-39s that I had could never get the cannon working, but I heard that they had the cannon. I said, "Now here is where to try the cannon with a whole bunch of those P-39s. I'll put my P-40s above them, and let those P-39s go down and just try to pick those people off, and have a field day. We'll try to keep the Germans off the P-39s, and see what the P-39s can do to help the ground people, help the tanks." Well, that was a good idea. They said, "Where is it?" I said, "You send them up, and I'll rendezvous with them." We set a rendezvous point

and a rendezvous altitude, and I said, "We will lead them, and I'll take them right to the tanks. As a matter of fact, tell them one airplane will bust out of formation, and that will be me. I'll take their leader, and I'll point him right down at him, and I'll show him what I'm talking about, because it's hard to tell a German tank from an American tank in this situation. There's all kinds of dust, and there's everything over in there. I'll point them out, and I'll let them study this thing." That was a good idea. I forget where we were to meet, but I described that they were to work on these tanks, and that they would find all kinds of tanks, and that they should know which were the Americans. I told them to look at the insignia, because oftentimes it was hard to tell. Figure out which is the enemy, and then use your cannon on them.

Well, I waited and waited, and they never came to the rendezvous point. Something got messed up. So I said, "Well, to hell with this." So I went on over to the battle again. I went over, and with all our guys we kept going down trying to hit the bogey wheels, trying to get the tracks, trying to smash anything we could, and we stogged around that battle, and it was quite

a battle. It was a big one. So then we went back home, and I learned that night that my P-39s that I was supposed to meet had missed me. They didn't hit the point someway or the other, but they went on and they stooaged around, and they suddenly came upon a whole bunch of tanks and a whole bunch of trucks, and, oh boy, what a target! They went down, and they just beat the living hell out of some of Patton's tanks. (laughter)

H: Oh, no. (laughter)

C: I don't know whether we'd better keep this in there or not, but it happened, and I believe the name of the place was Sbeitla. But I remember Patton was the angriest man in the world, and he had a right to be, but you can understand how those things happen. They, oh my goodness, thought they were beating the hell out of the enemy, and they just burned up more stuff with their cannon, and, naturally, it was quite a deal. Patton got very, very irked at the Air Corps for things like that, at that time, and he had a ruling there for sometime--I don't say he had a ruling--but his troops got so if we flew over them, they would shoot at us, because they didn't care whether we were Germans or anything. They didn't wait to find out. Oh boy, they

just shot us up something fierce. They were shooting at B-25s that would come over them. I remember, they'd limp into our place and say, "Gee whiz, somebody up there licked the hell out of us, and it would be our own troops that were whanging away at them.

H: You know, General O. P. Weyland mentioned in his interview that Patton had a very, very poor opinion of the Air Corps when they . . .

C: At that time.

H: . . . joined him in England for the Normandie invasion.

C: Yes. Weyland really showed Patton how to use airplanes, and then, of course, Patton became an expert. He was very expert, and we used to laugh and say his expert is O. P. I saw Patton point kiddingly one time, I think it was to Doolittle and General Carl Spaatz, and he said, "Well, they ask me about--when I run on one of these long forays with tanks--what I'm going to do about my flanks." He said, "What the hell, O. P. Weyland takes care of my flanks. He's my flank man." That's what they did. They perfected their method that came out of the action there in World War II,

where Patton could run and leave his flanks wide open because O. P. and his tactical air people, his fighters, could keep him pretty well protected on both sides of him. They learned how to do that together, and they were very, very effective. O. P. and Patton got along very, very well, I know that. I was at O. P.'s headquarters one time with General Spaatz, General Doolittle, General Vandenberg [Hoyt S.], various other ranking guys, and we were at O. P.'s headquarters and Patton was there. I had been sent up to talk to Patton about aerial invasion, but that's another story that's way down the road. That's in Europe after I was in Burma, then came back to Europe. But while we are on Patton, he had some reason to dislike the Air Force, and the Air Force had some reason to dislike him.

I would like to tell an amusing anecdote of the time. If you remember, Patton was no shrinking violet, and Patton was a character. Even before he got into war, he was the biggest warrior we had and never had a shot fired at him in anger. He was still the spit-and-polish general. You remember, he wore a chromed helmet with the three stars on it, and he carried the pistols, the pearl-handled pistols in his belt, and he wore the boots, and he was really something. He always had a

whole planeload of press along with him. He had botched part of the landing at Casablanca; some of his plans went awry. The weather didn't do him much good, and they came forward anyhow. They had a lot of trouble, and they lost a lot of equipment and stuff. It was an unfortunate circumstance of the war, and it shouldn't have happened. It shouldn't happen to a dog, let alone the great Patton; but he took that, and he was back in the mud, and the war was going on and on and on. We were up there fighting with the French and holding off what we could, and trying to hold the fort while he was getting forward. So we didn't appreciate a lot of his attitudes, and his MPs would arrest Air Force enlisted men and officers because we didn't have our puttees on. He insisted that if you are going to be a soldier, you are to be a clean one and a dressed up one--everybody in his zone. When he came over, he took over the zone; he ran it. Everybody was going to be right up to snuff as far as their uniform was concerned. He didn't like this sloppy attitude, as he called it, of the Air Force. Oddly enough, we weren't even issued that kind of uniform. We had what we had, and we were lucky to have it. We used to say to his officers, "Well, because you guys got all our stuff sunk in the damn invasion, we don't even have underwear,

let alone puttees. You guys got them all." This started a little bit of rancor between Air Force personnel and Army personnel. The other thing was, "Well, we're up there fighting it, and you guys are still back here talking." That kind of thing that goes on in armies, you know. A lot of it was very amusing.

Well, I came back. I got a chance to get a break from Telepte to bring back an airplane that I had just about worn out. It was a pretty worn out article, and it was the airplane that I had come forward with and that I kept. I remember the last number on its serial was 112, and it's the airplane that I had gotten shot off the carrier in. I always kept it, and it was my personal airplane. I had a few special things on it; I had lightened it up somewhat so that I could turn better and that sort of thing. It finally was wearing out and was doing me in. It was putting out so much black smoke that finally one of my wingmen said, "Major, did you ever realize why the Germans always jump you, and why they are always on to you?" Now this was my wingman, and he knew it, because he was back there protecting my wing, and he noticed that in a squabble I would always get jumped. I said, "Yes, how do you suppose they know who the leader is?" He said, "Well, sir,

what they figure is, is that you are in an airplane that is hurt, because you are putting out so much black smoke that they think you have been hit, and they will jump on you." I said, "Oh boy, that's a good draw. That's a good come-on." But I realized then that my engine was beginning to get valves about the size of a fountain pen, I suppose, so it was to go back and get a new engine. So I took it back to Algiers, and I was waiting to get a new airplane. It wasn't ready, and I was sitting around. I remember being rather dirty, and rather tired, and was waiting for the airplane. I wanted to get back, and I was sitting on a bench out in front of the operations office. I noticed this furor going on and people running back and forth, and a whole bunch of things. I said to a friend of mind there that was in operations, "What's coming off?" He said, "Patton is supposed to be coming in." It didn't mean anything, and pretty soon I noticed that two DC-3s came in and parked and a whole entourage got out of them, and here comes General Patton and a lot of his staff, and they were all following behind him, and he's madder than a hornet. He's hot. What happened was, he came in at the wrong time or something, and there weren't any cars there waiting for him. Here in front of the whole press corps was General Patton, and there weren't

any cars. Something had fouled up. So he came stomping forward, and I was just sitting there. As he came by, I stood up, naturally, from this bench I was sitting on. I stood up and saluted. He came over to me, and he said, "You get your ass out of here, and get in there and get me some cars!"

He was fuming (laughter), and I looked at him, and I said, "General, I'm more transient than you are. I'm a transient officer here; I don't belong to this establishment. He said, "I don't care what establishment you belong to, you go in there and get some cars." There are all these press guys looking at me, and I'm thinking, "I'm a major in this guy's Air Force, for heaven sake. I'm no guy to be screamed at, and furthermore, I have been up and gotten shot at, and I got more combat experience than this guy is going to get in the next 4 or 5 months." I kind of out-ranked him as far as that went. I was more experienced in warfare than he was. He hadn't shot anything yet. So I resented it, kind of, but I had sense enough not to do anything about it at that time.

So I turned and started to walk toward the door, and he said, "I said run." I said, "No, that I'm going

to stand on. He's nibbling away at my dignity, and I'm not going to do it." So I walked through the doors, and I walked upstairs, and there was a balcony on this thing. This was an old French operations place, an airdrome. I knew there was a balcony up there. So I went up on the balcony, sat up there and watched him fume some more, and watched him scream at people. Pretty soon the cars started arriving, and I got out of it. But that was my first meeting with Patton.

So then we went along, and he started getting into the forays, and he wanted more and more and more airplanes. At that time, I think Patton and all of the people in the Army did not quite yet understand the uses of air, especially close air support. We were both learning. I think the only practice work that had been done on it had been the southern maneuvers before the early part of the war, and this is where we first began to understand that the word was air-ground support, and that it was a phase of air military use, close support we called it, air-ground, that sort of thing.

He began to ask for more and more of it, his units did, and he began to get more and more. But about that time

we were getting down, and I remember one day where I only had 12 airplanes, and I was about his only support. He had gotten himself--he went toward a town named Sened, and he took one of his long dashes with his troops, and he was coming along. He had infantrymen in trucks, and the German Stukas and Messerschmitts got after him. They found him, and they just hurned him up. He took quite a beating, and I remember it, at this little station called Sened. It was south of us. I believe that's the skirmish where his son-in-law was killed, and I know I was over them all day long. We tried our damndest with the airplanes we had. I believe I flew five missions that day trying to protect them, and I didn't know that they had been beaten up. But he criticized us roundly later, and said that the Air Force had just let his fine boys, his infantrymen, get burned up by those damn Germans, and they had the run of the air. It rankled me, and when asked about it by my commanders, I said, "Well, we did everything we could. We are limited in our capability, and we went all out to cover him on that thing." But I said, "I will go back to the basic thing: Who in the hell put the soldiers out there in the middle of the day in trucks on highways to be gotten by these people? Who ran this thing without proper air support and without

knowing how he was going to do it? I'll put it back there." So, again, I got in contention with Patton's way. This is odd. Then, later, we did a lot of work with him and for them, but then there was this rankle with the P-39s that didn't meet me, that beat the hell out of his own places, and my watching him get beaten by Rommel on that fight over in the plains on the other side of the mountain where I described the people came around in back. In fact, they did; they flanked them. Our tanks walked right into it. If I remember correctly, they lost, I believe, up to 100 tanks in that battle. Now I don't say that they lost the battle; I don't know how many the Germans lost, but this was one of our first meetings. This was one of Patton's first meetings with Rommel, where Rommel's troops and Patton's troops were fighting this thing out on this wide plain, valley kind of thing, between mountains where I saw them hook and engage, and this is where I wanted to use the P-39s. Unfortunately, the P-39s got misdirected, and they were green, and they beat the hell out of one of Patton's rear reserves.

So speaking of Patton and O. P. Weyland, later I became a great admirer of Patton, and he became a great user of aircraft. He learned, then, how to use aircraft,

and he learned that they were a great capability for him to use, and he knew how to use them. And O. P. Weyland was the guy who was working with him down there. But that was in Europe. But Patton's first attitude toward the Air Force was, I would say, almost antagonistic, and we couldn't help but return it, even though we still did our respective jobs. But this is the learning process, I suppose. We had to go through that sort of thing in order to learn how to help each other; and certainly, we were all trying. Now I told you that we got down to damn near 12; I think that's all I could get up. Then General Doolittle came forward, and we had a meeting down in my cave. We had it there because we were scared, because there was our great, wonderful Jimmy, and we were scared that the Heinies would jump us, and maybe get him, and so we hustled him out of his airplane and into one of the underground things. We had a meeting down there, and we all were there together. He heard our stories about the P-39s, and heard what we were doing, and how we were beat down pretty far, and he said, "All right, what do you want?" And just about in a chorus--there were three or four of us--and we said, "Just send us more P-40s. Just send them on. We'll get them, we'll keep going." He went back. I forget what group it

was, but they sure had no love for us, because this was a group that had just landed in Casablanca, I believe, or one of the ports, and they had a whole bunch of brand new P-40s, and he took all 75 of them away from them, put them on the ground, and put them on the shore, and gave us the airplanes. That, of course, didn't make them feel very well. Then they got some more in the next batch; they knew there were more airplanes coming in, more replacement airplanes, but they were late. So we got those airplanes, and we went through those, too. It was a rough go. We used the airplanes hard. It was a hard place to maintain airplanes. That flat desert, dusty kind of place, is a miserable place to maintain airplanes, but the guys did it. Our ground personnel, the mechanics, were just exceptionally capable people, and dedicated. Gosh, they worked, and they worked morning, noon, and night, and living under those tough conditions. I remember they were living in caves. There was a ravine near us, and they were all in there, and eating in the dark, and bad rations, bad food, and cold at night. As soon as the sun goes down in that area, you know what happens on the desert. It just gets instant ice-box the minute the old red ball gets down over the horizon, and, zam, you're in a different country.

C: (laughter) We were cold, and we were dirty, and we were without good food, and we were hungry all the time, and we had dysentery. We had whatever the British called "gibby tummy." Whatever they called it, we had it. A lot of our guys were ill. A lot of them messed up their airplanes because they couldn't control their diarrhea. Oftentimes, you would see a guy come in, and he would say to his crew chief, "Sergeant, stay away from me. Don't come near this airplane," because he would be embarrassed. He had soiled his drawers, and not because of fright either, but because he would be ill. He'd still go and he'd still try to make it. And many a time, you'd see a guy get out of a P-40 and run for the space where he could lower his pants and let it go, because he was sick. We weren't eating properly, and in the cold in the morning at 5 o'clock or 6 o'clock in the morning, or when it's dark and 7 or 8 o'clock at night, isn't a time to be very hygienic about your mess kit, and that's where we would get this stuff. We'd keep preaching to each other to boil the things: "At the end of the chow line, when you are through, make sure you go to the boiling water." But we'd miss, and the guys would get sick, although we were trying to keep ourselves healthy. Many of the boys weren't up to snuff, but they went. They went, and they went hard, and many of them wrung themselves out.

C: Let's talk about that for awhile. It's an interesting part, I think, of war, of that phase, that not many people have talked about, but it's embedded in my memory because I saw it happen, and it was an experience that was full of education. You didn't like to see it happening, but I learned a lot. These wonderful, eager boys, these guys were a superior race within the race, at that time. Adversity brings this kind of thing out, and our country was in trouble. The good ones come out, and the best comes out of everybody in times like that, and it was coming out of these kids. Boy, they were grand people, and courageous and stubborn, and guys that really had a conscience and a sense of responsibility, and wanted to fulfill it. They wanted to be guys that had no cowardice in their bones. They had fear; they weren't nutty gungho people. They were sensible people, and they had sense enough to be frightened. But they weren't going to lag, especially when we first started. But then day in and day out of combat, and the living conditions, began to eat at those guys. Being one of their leaders, and being a little older than they, I was more experienced, and I was able to observe them. I watched them go into a little bit less exuberance, and a little more tired, and a little thinner, and a little more haggard, and a little bit less exuberant.

C: After a month or two, or 3 months, say, we are into the second or third months, and the rate of loss had climbed. We were losing quite a few but not a prohibitive rate of loss, one that you could expect. But some of the good guys were beginning to go, and this was eating on the others. The younger kids were getting brought up to be flight commanders and were less experienced. All of those things were working on these people, who after all were human. They were human clay, and I began to see their exuberance and their--I don't know what the word is--but it began to erode a little bit, and their fervor was perhaps beginning to wrinkle on the edges, but still going. You'd notice that when you had everybody together for operations and briefing meetings, and they'd all be squatting on the ground or sitting on the ground in one of our caves down in there, and we'd be explaining the mission. Then you'd say, "All right now, so-and-so, you're going to take A flight, and get you three guys and make sure one of them is a 'new-y,' a guy that we can train." So then the volunteers varied. The guys were just about coming forward very quickly to get into this. They wanted into this immediate flight, and you had no trouble filling a flight. More guys wanted to go than there were aircraft, more than you wanted on the flight. Then you would notice a

little while later that it got so that you would have to designate which guys were going. I began to notice that. I began to know some of the guys were beginning to crack, but wouldn't allow themselves and would go, and it was beginning to get to them.

We had a couple of cases where boys momentarily--or I don't know, maybe permanently--lost the hold on themselves. Their minds would crack. I remember one boy, who wasn't the most capable pilot in the world, got shot down two or three times, but he got back, and he kept going. It kept getting to him, and he was getting sicker and sicker, and I could see it. So everybody recognized it. The operations people did, and they stopped him. They used him for close-in things, and they let him keep flying local, like when they knew an easy patrol, or fly the mail back, or something like that sort of thing, trying to help him through, because we admired him. He was a minister's son, and he had great pride, but not an awful lot of capability as a pilot. He was always getting into scrapes and didn't know how to get out, and he was always getting shot at. But he would go, and he'd get shot down, and he'd be the next guy to go, because this was his code. This was in him, it was in his heart, and he wasn't going

to let anybody down, let alone himself or his country. His upbringing just told him that as long as there was a duty to perform, he was going to do it. So we had a lot of those guys, and I saw a lot of them. Then you begin to feel in yourself a little bit of flagging of interest, and you have to jack yourself up and say, "Wait a minute. I'm leading these guys. You're not going to send them out unless you're going yourself." That sort of thing happens to leaders. Oftentimes they make a mistake by going where they shouldn't. They should send somebody, because they're the commander. They should be back using their brain rather than their brawn. But then you get into that position. Now, am I starting to use my brains purposely here so that I don't go out into that tough one I'm sending these guys out on? Well, then you'll have a tendency to think, "Well, by God, I'll show myself and them, too; I'm leading it." Then you have to watch your other leaders that they didn't start to do that. You begin to get a very, very fast course in human nature under great stress. You watch the stress work on the boys, and work on the boys. Then it becomes your duty to start telling somebody, "Hey, it's time, cut this out." I remember telling General Doolittle, because he asked me about the morale and the condition of our guys. I

remember saying to him that if you replace this squadron entirely, get the whole thing out and bring one of those new groups in here--not piece by piece. Many of these guys if you save them now, they'll be fighter pilots again somewhere else. They'll come back. But if you leave them in here much longer, they'll never fight again. You will get them out, and you'll get them back to hospitals or something, and they will be so wrung out that they won't be able to bring themselves back to being good leaders. Their minds, their capabilities, themselves--they might even be disgusted with themselves, or they might say, "Damn it, my body let me down," or "I let myself down." They wouldn't have the confidence, and they wouldn't have the spirit to be the leaders that we were needing to build the next outfits that were coming in. I remember saying to General Doolittle, "Gee, General, get them out now. Send somebody in here that knows this sort of thing, who will be able to judge this. I'm not a judge of what's going on, but I can see it. So let's get them all out." Well, he did; he sent a man in. The man was a major, and I don't believe he was a medico, but he was some kind of an expert at this sort of thing. He had been told to talk to me, and I talked to him. I saw him the next day, and I said, "All right, how are we going? You got

the list? Are you getting these people out that you are going to recommend?" He said, "Yes, I got a list, and Cochran, your name is number one." (laughter) He was a psychological something or other, and he was an expert on the thing. I laughed at him, because he said, "After I talked to you, I found out you're the worst one of all of them," (laughter) which wasn't quite true. I wasn't the healthiest person in the world at that time, and I did get out a little bit later. But we used to say to each other, "I know you're feeling lousy, and the best way to feel great is to get in an airplane and get over there and get in a fight, and you will be amazed how good you feel, because your old heart will get going, and your adrenalin will get going." What we were doing was hyping ourselves, I suppose, by going into combat to get all the old juices running, because we'd get so excited. And the fear of things would be working on you, and the adrenalin is there ready for you to fight, and all that sort of thing. We had been doing it so much, I suppose our hodies got into that habit and then needed it. It needed that kind of hyping, and all you had to do is go back in the dark and eat something in that cave and wait for tomorrow, and figure, "Well, tomorrow I got to go again." This got to eating on the guys. There was no diversion. We

used to laugh; the only diversion we had there, we would give a guy a day off. He'd say, "What do I want a day off for? All I can do is dig my house bigger." The French had some wine around there. There was a town, Feriana, down below us, and there was some wine available. We'd say to the guys, "Go drink some wine. Get half stiff and relax." They'd say they didn't want to. Now most of us didn't want to drink very much at all. This is another peculiarity. I don't think it's a peculiarity, it's a practicality. We didn't want to drink because we knew if we did, and we had a little bit of a hangover and we got in a fight the next day, we wouldn't be quite as sharp. We wanted the advantage of every capability we had, and we didn't want to dull it. And the kids wouldn't relax. There was only one way to get them to relax, and that was send them all the way back to Casablanca. Usually, after they got back there a month, the thing had progressed so that the squadron would change and they'd oftentimes be put into different outfits, or they'd get lost from the identity of their own unit, and they'd get into other units. So they sometime resisted going back, figuring that they'd never get back into their own unit, and you know that's a feeling of all soldiers. They always want to get back to their own unit.

(End Side 2, Reel 2)

H: Would you like to add anything further?

C: Well, I was recounting seeing ardor and exuberance fade a little bit, not as anxious to be a part, and then not quite reluctance but a little bit of the getting practical. Then is when the work is hard. Then is when you really get down to the hard work, and that's when the going is tough. But that's when the hard work is done, and you just do it. You just keep doing it, and then if you keep at it long enough, it will begin to tell on you, I don't care who you are. We are not superhuman beings, and some guys are able to take a little more than others, and it doesn't mean that they are any less courageous, or any more courageous, or more intelligent. Maybe they're just dumb. Maybe the more intelligent guy sees what's happening around him and can't help but say, "Well, this doesn't make much sense," and starts to react that way.

So, you see, we were seeing all kinds of reactions, and we were learning about ourselves. And we were beginning to learn just about how much a guy should take. I think in North Africa, in this phase of that

air war, we were asking the guys to take a little too much, and I'll repeat again why I think that, when I say too much. You may say, how much is too much? I think we should have known the point where the erosion would start, and you get a fellow out, get a diversion for him before it starts to eat away, starts to deteriorate his morale, and his ardor, and his exuberance; don't spoil it. You can take it up to a point. Now if you go far enough, you'll hurt him, damage him, and he does not come back the same fellow. It's hard to reconstruct him, if you will. I think we did that, but we did it because we had to. We didn't have anybody else in position, and we weren't quite ready. I think that outfit went a little too far on some of the men.

But, you know, you don't get to do the things you want to do in the war, you do the things you have to do. I know, at the time, we felt we had to do it, and we had to do it to ourselves as well as the people under us. I became conscious of it. It's one of the experiences that I wanted to express that I did learn at that time, just about how much you ought to take out of a guy? I say get him before his confidence in himself, and his character, starts to erode, because if you stay on a guy long enough, he'll begin to doubt himself. Am I

becoming uncourageous? If there a little cowardice in me? I'll tell you there's some in everybody; it's just different degrees. And you got to catch a guy before that happens to him, and then you got a good one. Then he can pass on his experiences to others and lead them, but he can't lead from a lack of confidence in himself if he's once cracked, somewhat. You might never know that he's cracked, but he has done it in his own heart, and he doesn't lose that kind of thing. It makes a mark.

H: Did you see any of your men actually crack under the strain?

C: Yes. They had to take some of them back who had their minds crack on them. Then we had a couple of unfortunate situations. We had one grand person who--we never knew--he must have started to doubt himself, and he saw his best friend get killed right over our airdrome one day, a guy whom we called "Horse." I forget his last name. He was a redheaded guy, a big man. This other fellow had been a school teacher, and they were fast friends and had their cave together; they lived together. And Horse tried to get out of an airplane at the last minute, and it was coming down rather fast. He did get

out. I don't know whether he hit the airplane or what. But anyway, when he got near the ground, the wind was rough and his parachute slammed him into the ground and killed him, and it was in sight of all of us. His best friend saw that happen. That night, I assigned Horse's flight to this other man and suggested that this friend take the next day off. We knew he was shook, He did take the day off, and he stayed in his dugout. Then he came out, and he did an odd thing. He went up to his airplane and said he was going to take it up. The crew chief said, "Sir, we thought you were off today, and it's assigned in a flight coming up in a half hour. It's assigned to another pilot." He said, "Oh, that's all right. I'll fix that." He took his own airplane up on his off day, and he took it right above the airport and just dove it right into the ground, right straight down. There, again, I have to feel that man cracked. It got to him, and he did himself in.

We had other fellows that showed evidence of not being very stable in the head, and we had to get them out. Then we had a couple of other kids, I think they would have gone on until they were killed. I had one kid that was shot down four times. I just had to get him out, because he was still going. But he was not capable.

C: He walked away from so many. I thought, "Well, it's going to come up." By the way, I've seen that kid within the year. He made himself known to me one time. But yes, we saw them get tired. I'll put it that way. They were tired mentally, and it's damn difficult to be brave when you are tired and sick, and worn down. It's difficult to be brave anytime. Believe me, there's an awful lot of baloney written about this sort of thing, and we tell each other how brave and how grand some people are, and how superior their characters are, and how strong, and all that sort of thing. But I don't know, it seems to me that it's damn difficult. It's difficult in the best of circumstances, and when things get old and tired, and you're tried, and you're tired mentally, it becomes quite a chore, and the longer you do it the more it's going to take out of you.

H: Well, didn't they have R&R flights?

C: Not at that time. No, we weren't that sophisticated in the air war to learn that, but we were learning it very fast. We knew the principles, and guys were talking about it. If you will remember, they began a program where if you had so many hours of combat, or so many flights, or so many of this, you would be sent

back, that sort of thing. They were beginning to understand. We understood the principle, but it had not quite come into being at this time that I'm speaking of, at this early time of the Northwest African campaign. We used to hear about those things and laugh about them, because they'd say, "Well, you get so many combat hours." So we'd say, "Yes, those bombardment guys, they get in their airplanes, and they fly from 200 miles behind us, and they fly about 2 or 3 hours before they get over the target. Then they turn around and they come back, and then they're out of the zone. Then they fly 2 more hours back home, and so they have got that many combat hours." Now you take a guy that's up here at Telepte in a P-40, he's in combat before he even gets in his airplane, and the minute he leaves the ground he's in trouble. He's in danger because somebody's liable to swoop down and grab him before he can get his wheels up. He is in a combat zone, and he's in jeopardy the minute he leaves his airdrome until the minute he comes back, and that's a traumatic experience, so to speak. And he goes 200 miles in and fights the hell out of somebody, or dive bombs something, or beats up some railroad yard, and then he comes flying back, and he hasn't got enough gas to get more than 2 hours. So then he goes again, and again. So we realized that

there's something about hours of missions you had to start getting. They used to come up and ask what we thought about that, and that would be our answer, that the minute one of our guys gets off the ground, from then on in it's the start of combat. Then we knew guys who were flying patrol upon the Mediterranean, back and forth, and they were getting combat hours. So I'm reminded of those things that we laughed at and kidded about, and criticized, and knowing that they were searching at that time for some method of finding out when a guy ought to be relieved. They later got orderly about this sort of thing. In other words, we had the system, and we had the theories, but they weren't yet in practice at this time. When this P-40 outfit was flying up in that area, we were just the pioneers. They were learning a lot of things, and we were learning a lot of things, learning something everyday. But not much of it, but I saw it. It's something to see and something to learn about, and know how to manage. This is part of war.

H: As a general question, what did you think of the German objectives in North Africa? Do you think that it was a very wise thing for them to become engaged in that area in the first place? Don't you think that they

would have been better off concentrating their forces in Europe itself?

C: Well, now you are asking me to make a judgment. This is after the fact. At the time, when you're snubbed up against an enemy and you're on that kind of a front, and it's you and him, we didn't know or think about strategic things like that. We didn't even know why the Germans were down there. All we knew was they were down. Then we realized that Rommel, in fact, was coming up the corridor and trying to get out. He was trying to come up through Tunisia and get out at Cape Bon and cross some way, get across to Sicily. He was trying to save his army. We knew the big picture, so to speak, of what our forces were attempting and how Patton and his western flank came up this Tunisian area, and Rommel knew that he had to hold from the mountains to the shore. He had to hold that corridor which is, probably, maybe a hundred miles wide. He had to hold those hills and keep us from getting him so he could run up through. He had to keep it open, and, on the other hand, Patton's job was to cut that off and to get in there and stop him. I knew the front was probably 100 to 200 miles long, maybe a little more. I knew that area, and it was probably 75 to 80 miles wide

and 100 miles long, and that is what you would be operating in. You'd be operating in a long state maybe about the size of California, a skinny California, and not as long. We knew that much. But as far as why the Germans had gone on over there in the first place, I didn't know, but I could see that we had to get them out of there before we could ever think of a second front in Europe.

Remember the Russians griped about our second front, and Churchill wanted to do other things. Churchill, it seems to me--I'm not quoting as though I'm an expert--but it seems to me that at one time he wanted to come up under the soft underbelly of Europe. He was intrigued with southern France and the Marseille area, and that sort of thing, and maybe this part of North Africa, this area that we were in, had to be taken before you could do that. There was no way of doing that as long as Rommel had an army in Africa. It was an odd place to be fighting the war, but you've got to remember this was a hell of a confrontation, and this is where Americans first met Germans--was in Africa. What the Afrika Korps thought they wanted over there, I suppose, was the domination of the Mediterranean.

C: If they had held it, we couldn't have gotten into that sea at all. It would have been a precarious place for the British and the American navies. So, again, it was the southern flank of Europe, the whole thing. I suppose that was their idea. I think now in hindsight, it would seem funny to wonder why Hitler went to that extent to put that big an army that far away. If he had had Rommel and that big Afrika Korps over where he was, he could have done a lot of damage somewhere; but he had himself spread too thin, I suppose, and too far away. You see, their supply line was so far away that we began to get at his supply line, and he had to start shortening it. He was shortening and shortening, and all of a sudden he was running, and we were still trying to stop his supplies. He was trying to get fuel, aviation fuel, and fuel for his tanks and his airplanes. It was coming in on submarines at night; they didn't dare come in in the open. They would load a submarine with fuel and bring it up to an out-of-the-way little port or cove and try to pump that stuff out into trucks to get fuel. We really had him cornered.

II: You hear so much, and I've read so much, about the prowess of the "Desert Fox" Rommel. How did you assess the man?

C: Well, I only know what I read. I knew that it was Rommel we were fighting, but, of course, that was just a word. When we saw him he was a running fox, so to speak. Still wily, still very capable, still capable of clouting the hell out of you. Still had some people with a lot of courage, fervor, esprit de corps. They weren't beat by any manner of means. The German pilots we used to shoot down and interrogate, and we listened to them talk, and they still had a lot of arrogance and a lot of fight left in them, even the youngsters. Boy, they had those people indoctrinated, and they were proud; they were proud people--and professionals. They thought of themselves as a group apart. Of course, the air force, the Luftwaffe, were the cream. But I can't judge. I've only read what a fox Rommel was and how he invented a lot of things, but I guess he was great, and he was a great leader, and, evidently, a fine man from what you read, and a dedicated man, and a good officer, and a good tank man. You had to respect him. But we beat him. I don't think he had all the advantages. I think his supply lines were too long, and I think when we hit him, he was on the run. We were hitting him from both ends, which was pretty damn good strategy. He nearly won the day against Montgomery over on the

eastern part of the desert. But they held out and started to pushing and pushing. Then this invasion in back of him, he had to start thinking. Then they said, "Let's get that out of there and try to save that army." And they didn't. They didn't save much of it.

H: You mentioned earlier about dispersing the aircraft at Telepte. Were you able to accomplish this well enough to avoid any damage by German aircraft?

C: Not any damage. We avoided a lot of damage, but, no, they'd get us. They'd get a couple damn near every raid. That would be the first thing they'd see as they would pop over the hill, and this is what they wanted. An aircraft gotten on the ground is just as good as one in the air, according to numbers. They would hit them and cripple them. There wasn't much else they could hit, because this was just a barren kind of field. We didn't stack anything together. We had our fuel spread all over the hills in 55-gallon drums. We never piled them, because then a guy could hit and blow them up immediately, and they'd love to do that. So we just took them out and would have them every 10 or 12 feet or so, just spread all over the field. Then when we

needed it, we'd go out and get some. By the way, there is a funnier side to that. We had 100 octane gasoline, and when the Germans were breaking through and were coming through at Kasserine, we had to get out of Telepte. We had to evacuate in a hurry and try to get everything we could out before the Germans would overrun it, and it looked like the line had broken in the hills, and that they were going to break through. If they broke through, they'd run right over us to the next stretch of hills 25 or 30 miles back. So we were ordered out, and we had to get ourselves all together and get everything we could and get out of there. As they left, they said, "Don't leave any fuel, because the Germans are destitute for fuel." We said, "How in the world are we going to get to it?" So the last thing we did as we took off, the guys would fire their guns at a few barrels of gasoline, but we had dispersed them so well that we couldn't destroy them ourselves. There was no way we could destroy them. You'd spend days trying to shoot them from the air. So we just had to leave them, and we felt it wasn't very smart to leave that fuel for them, because here would come the Messerschmitts and they would find all this fuel that they needed badly. Well, it turned out that we were back in the airdrome in about 8 days. Kasserine didn't

fall, and they didn't push through. They had come into our airdrome momentarily and took it over. But we went back, and here was the fuel still up in the hills. They weren't able to use it, by the way. They didn't get it because they couldn't use 100 octane gasoline. It would have burned their engines up. Because of their lack, they had designed their engines to run on very low octane fuel. Probably our cars wouldn't run on that fuel; but because their engines were built that way, they could run it. But they couldn't run on the very high stuff, the 100 octane gasoline that we used. It wouldn't have been immediately available to them for that use in their airplanes. But, yes, we dispersed everything all over the place so that you didn't give the attacker that target of opportunity so easily. You just dispersed everything, including the field.

H: Did you use camouflage to any extent?

C: We started to, but there wasn't anything to get under. So we didn't use it. The only camouflage we used was, we put clumps of the alpha grass on the top of our dug-down huts so that they looked like the terrain, and a guy coming over couldn't pick out our living quarters,

or our operations establishment, or anything like that. We did that little bit. Then I did try to put the P-39s, as I told you, under the olive trees to try and hide them. But there is just no way; it was more bother than it was worth.

H: You didn't paint the aircraft with camouflage?

C: They already were. They were desert painted, that kind of pinkish-brown crap. We went over with them that way. It was the P-40J or F. I can't remember the letter designation. Anyway, we had the Packard engine that was a Merlin, a Rolls Royce-designed, Packard-built engine with desert air scoops. This scoop was special because of the dust getting in them. As for the desert colors, actually, we felt that the Germans had better colors. They were harder for us to see. They had a kind of darkish-green thing, and they could get below us in the haze of the mountains, and they could go along there and you would know he was there, but you couldn't see them. They seemed to be better at that than us.

H: You mentioned during lunch about your affiliation with the Tuskegee 99th Group. Would you like to discuss that at this point?

C: I didn't know them as the Tuskegee Group at that time. That's what they are known as now, and I know that they went to Tuskegee, and that's where they got their training, but when they came to us they were the 99th Fighter Squadron. As Rommel was defeated and ran, and that Tunisia campaign came to an end, then there was a hiatus there in North Africa where we were getting ourselves ready to make the hop across into Sicily, and on up the Italian peninsula. So there was a lull then, and General Cannon sent me back to start giving combat training and combat orientation to groups that were coming in. Groups were coming from the states poorly trained; in fact, they were hardly trained. We felt that there was only one thing to do, and what we would do is take a commander, like me, who had had experience and put him right in the seat of group commander. He would just take over for the combat training end of the thing, and they would run themselves. But the group commander who had come overseas with the group would still run his group administratively. In that way, an experienced person would be put at the head of the group, and he would give them a concentrated period of combat training, change their formations to the formations we were using in actual combat, lecture them on

tactics and what to look for, what to avoid, and try to get their attitude ready. It would take time. Then we would find that they would be lacking in gunnery, and we set gunnery up to sharpen their gunnery capabilities. We found that a lot of the pilots didn't have any aerial gunnery. They had never shot their guns in the air, out of an air maneuver, and we didn't have any sleeves or targets to pull behind another airplane that could give them some aerial gunnery practice. But we did have a lot of pyramidal tents that we weren't using. So, actually, we used to tow a pyramidal tent. Just hook on one and tow it through the air, and let the kids shoot at it. Give them something to shoot at. But I tell you that to show you combat training shouldn't be done in the theater. You shouldn't wait and get your group in the theater, we kept saying. We said, "Don't send us these groups that don't have any good gunnery, that don't know the formations. We've had to bring this gasoline and ammunition all the way over here from the United States, for heaven's sake, in convoys being shot at all the way over, and it's stupid to have to use that gasoline, after they get over, to train them over here. For heaven's sake, train them back in the states." But we were caught, so we started a Northwest

African Training Command under General Arnold, and we started to teach bombardment and fighters over there. So we were finishing off what should have been done in the states, but you can see why. We needed the units over there, and we needed them so fast that they were not yet ready, but we were sending them anyhow and doing the best we could. So when we got them over there, we put a combat guy at the head of them and let him run them for awhile, until he got them into a very, very concentrated course in combat before they went into combat, went on up front.

So I had had a couple of groups that I had done that for, and we had a pretty good routine. Along came the 99th Squadron, and they were the least experienced of any that you would ever want to see. Their commanding officer, Ben Davis, a fine, fine gentleman, later became General Ben Davis, as you know. But their situation was such that their commanding officer had no more experience than that number six man back there on the tail end of the formation, because the training of colored pilots, black pilots we would say today, was a brand new thing. He was a brand new guy; there was no culture, really, behind them. He had not come up

through the old flying school. He had not been like I had been at Langley Field and started out as the tail-end Charlie, the last man. They had not been nurtured along by guys in the squadrons who knew the pitfalls, who taught you your gunnery, who talked to you in the bar, who lived with you at the bachelor officers' quarters, if you will, and talked about aerial gunnery, and talked about engines, and led you along so that you picked this up from the older guys. Then you became an older guy yourself, and then it was your responsibility to train younger guys. They didn't have any progression of education like that, that is natural and a very valuable thing. They all started at once, and somebody taught them to fly, and checked them out in these airplanes, and lo and behold, here they were. Naturally, you know you can realize the political overtones, and the great anxiety of the President, I imagine, and the administration, to get these young American blacks, who are now P-40 fighter pilots, into combat. And we said, "They are the least ready of any that we've ever seen," and there they were. They landed and, boy, they had the best equipment you ever saw in your life. They were better equipped than any outfit I ever saw overseas. They had brought better equipment than we did.

C: You see, they were a special thing, and they were being cared for by special thing, and in a way that was too bad. To my way of thinking, that was too bad. But there we were, and there was the situation. And there was quite a lot of discussion about it. I remember a discussion in which General Doolittle had to decide and General Cannon had to decide about what to do with these fellows. I was asked by General Cannon my opinion, what I thought ought to be done, and it seemed open and shut to me. It seemed so simple. I said, "Do with them the same way you do with any other kid that came over here in a P-40, any other American fighter pilot. Treat them as though they are replacements, and just put two of them in this experienced outfit, and put two of them in another experienced outfit. Send four of them to another experienced outfit, and let them come along just like we'd take any youngster, and introduce him into this combat business slowly, and let him get experience by going out with an experienced man. Let him fly wing with that man. Then get him out and let somebody watch for him. Let somebody watch his tail, and explain some things after he gets back on the ground." By the time we were through over there, anybody who had been in combat three or four times was an old man. You know, he was experienced.

C: But I said, "For heaven's sake, introduce them logically from the ground up, so to speak, and just get them out and put them right with all the rest of them. Don't make a special entity of them. Don't make them an oddity." Well, that didn't get very far, because what they were, they were a speciality, and that made them an oddity, and I don't say that unkindly. They were an odd element in the scheme of things.

We were ordered to go ahead with them, and they were to enter combat as a unit. So they said, "Well, somebody better teach them something," and the somebody was old big mouth! General Cannon was laughing, and I knew what was going to happen. I could read it as plain as day, and by that time, I was a creature of the environment. I was pretty sharp, I knew how to duck, and how to do various things, but I could tell one when it was coming, and here it came.

And General Cannon said to me, "Cochran, what do you think of our problem with the 99th?" So I knew what was heading up, and I said, "What problem?" He said, "You got it." (laughter) I had had some forewarning from guys on his staff, and I knew what they were thinking, and so I took them to an airdrome away from

Casablanca, and got us off by ourselves, as I had done with the Joker Squadron, and I just took them out and started training them.

I found that they were a delightful group of guys to be with; they were a lot of fun. I found out that they could fly formation beautifully. They could land an airplane with more expertise than any young pilots I ever saw. They were trained to the hilt. By the way, when I converted them to new formations, they caught on quicker than other squadrons. I noticed that. But they lacked aerial judgment. Physically, they could fly the airplane exceptionally well, but if they were to be criticized--and it wasn't their fault--they didn't know how to use it. They were lacking in such things as navigation. They didn't know how to get from here to there properly, and especially in a tough district where there isn't a lot of civilization. It's easy to fly from Buffalo to Cleveland, because you followed the damn lake, you know. You get things like that. But you get over there on one of those desert things, and get a little disoriented, and there aren't any rail lines to follow, and there aren't any highways to follow, and there aren't any towns to look down on and say,

"What's the name of that city?" So they would get lost. But, anyway, they went on in, and they did themselves proud, and I have always hoped that my time with them was somewhat of a help to them, of orienting them to combat and getting them ready, especially their attitudes. They were exceptionally eager. Man, if there was a group that ever wanted to prove themselves, they were it. And they would get embarrassed when one of their men would do something that any young, inexperienced pilot would do. They would say, "We are not supposed to do that; we can't afford to do that." Well, they were young, and they were inexperienced, and they were going to make the mistakes that young, inexperienced pilots made. They didn't want to make those mistakes, because they had been made special. I always kind of felt for them. I felt badly for them, because I think they would have done their cause, and proven their point, which I agreed, they should prove a point. I was all for that. I was all for them making it.

But I think they should have done it as American fighter pilots and worked up from the number six position in C Flight, up then to be flight leaders and flight commanders, and then they would have had

something. Now, of course, in this last war, that's what they did, and we have many, many great black guys, and you and I were speaking of one a little while ago, "Chappie" James. Every once in a while, I run into some of these men who now call themselves the Tuskegee Group, and they still have a lot of fight in them, and they have reason to be proud. Of course, the 99th was a squadron, and there weren't very many of them, and they were an oddball. What would you do? Would you make them a squadron in a group? That was the next best thing to do. They became attached then later to a group, and they went in. They had some successes, and they had some failures, and their inexperience did tell, but they got over it. Then there was a group, you know, that was later a black fighter group that fought in Italy, and they came along. They distinguished themselves quite well.

But, again, you look back on it as a great experience and a time to do some good, and I think the time was well spent. It kept me out of bars. (laughter)

H: When did you come back to the states? You were on an R&R or something for a period of time, I was reading.

C: Yes.

H: Then did you stay in the states, or did you go back to Africa again?

C: No, I was then sent to Burma.

H: Oh, it was directly over then.

C: Yes, at the end of the Tunisian campaign in about June of 1943. I was not well. I was pretty beat up. I wasn't debilitated or anything, but I was pretty fatigued. They judged that what I had was cumulative fatigue. I had burned myself out pretty well, and there was a requirement that General [Carl] Spaatz wanted to do, and many of us that had been there that long, and been in combat that much, were being sent back to get new outfits. At least I was to come back and get a new group, and then I was hoping to get a P-47 group and get into the "big war." You see, the African war is now over. Now we are getting ready to start the big war out of England--the "real war." I was in the real war in Africa; that was the hottest thing at that time. That was our main effort. But we knew that the coming thing was Europe, and Europe was already heating up and started,

and outfits had begun to go over to Europe, P-47 outfits. Now the logical progression was to take us combat-wise guys from Africa and get us up into England, and we would then advance in rank and in responsibility, and I wanted into the main go. I could tell that the main go was going to be the thing out of Europe, and we all wanted into that one. I thought I had a right to go having served this apprenticeship down there in Africa, that certainly it was logical that I should move on up into the big show. Of course, we still had Italy and Sicily to take care of, and much of the new stuff that was coming into Africa went into that, that we who had been the first people, the first wave so to speak, in Africa, and had been used up pretty good. We felt that we should come back, and I thought that was what was going to happen to me, to get back to the United States and get a new group, and get something that was going to England in P-47s. So I didn't feel real bad about leaving the North African Campaign, because there was going to be a long lull, quite a long lull, to get ready for the invasion of Sicily and Italy.

So I was being transferred home. General Cannon and General Spaatz said, "All right, you are going home. You are going back to the states, and we've got a job for

you. We have got to send someone back, and you are it." I said, "All right." We talked about this business of sending untrained, or not fully trained units, into a combat area. The inefficiency of it, the lack of wisdom of it, of sending units over there and using up very, very valuable supplies that had been sent over at great cost, when you should do that back at home. Also, the combat people didn't like the type of training that was going on in the States and wanted to have more of the combat idea put into the training of a pilot before he got out of the United States--more of the actual combat training he was going to get into in whatever theater he went into. So we wanted to express to the training people in the United States, General Arnold himself was the target, to get more combat people training the pilots who were going to come out to go in combat.

(End Side 1, Reel 3)

C: So General Spaatz and General Cannon were anxious to get right to the staff the idea that the training was inadequate, number one, and it wasn't of the proper type. They ought to change some of the lines that the training took, and to always avoid sending an untrained or an ill-trained outfit into the theater, and use up supplies

trying to train him, and use up all that time, that it's best done in the states. They felt strongly about this, and they wanted someone to get it in directly, and they knew that--well, it's a fact, they probably arranged that when I would get back I would be briefed in the war room, and I see you have a copy of that here. That I was to go back and explain this, and explain the reasons for this, and explain some of the difficulties that we were having in North Africa, what difficulties combat outfits were having getting their job done over there, firsthand. I remember one of the nicest things that ever happened to me in my life. I was coming home on the SS America, which was called the West Point. It was a troop ship that could go by itself, because it was fast enough and didn't have to zig or zag. It was fast enough so that it could come through the submarine zones without being touched, and it was capable of running by itself, because it was fast enough. Naturally, I wanted to fly home, and General Cannon said, "No, why don't you go home on this thing? I got you set on this thing;" and he said, "It will take you 8, 10 to 12 days, and you can get a nice long rest." That sounded pretty good, so I knew I was going to be questioned when I got back, and I knew they wanted me to get across our ideas of what the training ought to be, and how you ought to

train outfits before they leave, and some of the things we did over there to give them concentrated training, how we overcame our inabilities by giving them this fast course of combat training, and how it was done. We thought that ought to be done in the states. So I thought, "Well, I'll be briefed on this." So I waited until the last, and I met with General Cannon and General Spaatz. As a matter of fact, if memory serves me right, I don't know whether both of them came down to the ship or not; I know General Cannon did. It was there in the harbor at Casablanca that Spaatz said to me, "All right, Cochran, you're going home, and you are going to be questioned, and you're going to get a chance to tell our story. I want you to come right out with it. You tell them what we are going through over here, and you give it to them as straight as you can give it to them." I said, "All right, sir, I will." I waited and waited, and I said, "Now, what is it exactly that you want me to get across?" He said, "Well, hell, I'm not going to tell you. You've lived it! I'm not going to tell you what to say, you get over there and say it!" Then it dawned on me what he wanted me to do, and what they wanted me to do. I took it very seriously, because I felt that, boy, if they have got that kind of trust in me, I'd better pay off, and I'd better, by God, give

it straight from the shoulder and get the message across in no uncertain terms or I wouldn't be fulfilling their trust in me. As I say, it was one of the nicest things that ever happened to me, because here was the commanding general of the whole caboodle over there saying, "I'm not going to tell you what to say, you just get over there and tell them. Tell them the way you lived it, and the way you knew it."

So I was assigned an officer to go with me. That was Jimmy Sheehan, the writer. He was an intelligence officer--James Sheehan. He wrote Not Peace But a Sword, and that sort of thing. He was an Air Force intelligence officer, and he kind of shepherded me into the Pentagon. Boy, before I knew it, there I was in the war room, and I knew that I had General Spaatz and General Cannon looking over my shoulder. So I said, "I'd better tell them how it is," and I let them have it. I remember being quite nervous at the beginning of this thing. This was quite an experience. Here I was in the war room of the Air Corps, and here was the whole staff sitting there plus many, many more. The room was full. It was jammed full. I was to speak my piece.

C: By the way, there is another wonderful American thing. Here I am a guy, a youngster--you know, I was 33 years old--fresh out of the combat zone, and here are these people in the Air Force that just said, "Get up there and go." They didn't know what I was going to say, they didn't know how I was going to say it, and they didn't know whether I could do it or not. But Spaatz had set it up, and he said, "You'd better listen to what we have got to say from over here, and this guy is going to say it." That was the beauty of that Air Force; that's how it got along so well. There was no great protocol, nothing. There I was, stood up there, and the man said, "Talk."

At first, I was quite nervous. I was so nervous that I told them, "Please don't be nervous because I'm nervous. I'll get over this. Don't feel badly for me." I could see them sitting there looking. I was shaking. I said, "I'll get over this in a few seconds. Don't be embarrassed for me." (laughter) But I had to do something to get myself into it. Finally, I got going, and I was allowed to say exactly what I felt. They questioned me, and I was allowed to give answers. I knew that I was just as free to say anything I wanted to. I imagine a lot of it was maybe quite narrow. When you get in a

combat zone and you get in your own situation, especially if you are a person like me, you get enthused on one subject. You get rather narrow. I didn't know an awful lot about the big picture, so to speak, at that time. I only knew my own little area, but I wanted to say it, and they wanted to listen. Some good came out of it. I know it did. I know that I didn't make myself terribly popular criticizing the P-39, but I explained why we didn't think it was an airplane for that area and why we didn't think it was a good airplane. The man who backed the P-39 and got it going was in the room, and he was a procurement guy. I forget his name; he was a general, and he was just about as close to me as the other ones. I knew that he was the procurement guy, the top procurement guy in the Air Force, and I saw him sit up pretty stiffly when I said that we didn't consider the P-39 a capable airplane, that it was a little bit miscast. I didn't fear saying that, because I had already said it to General Doolittle, and General Cannon knew how we felt about it. So that was one of the things I had to come up with. It was a difficult role, but it was one that, by golly, I had to do.

So then one of the things I had told them was how we did it in the training command over there, how we took

a combat person who had experience and put him right in the top seat of any group and let him run it for awhile. That was the quickest way to indoctrinate new pilots and to get them into the combat idea, and to at least let them hear some experiences so they could adjust themselves to first entering into combat and get them over the new period. Then they begin to pick up ideas on their own.

So we said that one of the best ways if we were having trouble training here in the United States, we felt that rather than build great big schools to combat train like they were doing down in Florida, pull some guys who now had experience. We had experience in China, we had experience in Africa, and we were beginning to develop a group of combat leaders who could teach, and I said, "I'll give you some examples: Grab Johnny Alison out of China. Grab "Tex" Hill who was in the AVG and is now in the Air Force over there. Grab Hubert Zemke out of Europe. Grab Art Salisbury who went through the whole campaign over in the eastern desert. Grab all of those guys, and the best use you can make of them is to bring them back here and let them try to transfuse, if you will, their experiences to all these new groups that are going out. One month with a guy like that, living

with them, is a heck of a lot better than people trying to train out of a book or a manual that has never seen combat. You've got a difficulty if you got a man up teaching combat that has never been in combat. But you have to do it. However, if you get a guy who has been in combat and comes home and starts teaching it, those kids are going to listen and they'll learn so much faster." So I said, "Now this is what we designed for training in Africa. This is what General Cannon had us doing in the training command that we set up over there, and that's what General Spaatz approved of and it worked very well. We think you ought to do it here." I said, "I could name you 25 guys that will do you more good if you make sure a group never leaves this United States without first being trained by one of these guys." We were staging an awful lot of groups at that time. They were all over the country. There were probably 20 to 25 groups getting ready to go but had never even seen a person that had been in combat.

So we said, "Put one of those guys in there, and it will do some good. He will sharpen them up." They said, "That's a good idea." So after a short leave, where I had to go home and hide (laughter), the bond drive people were after me, and General Arnold was trying to

hide me, or helping me hide. I went home and got a cottage out on the lake, and I just wanted to rest. I was to have some rest. Well, I never got it, because they found out where I was, the newspapers did. By this time, I had gained too much notoriety, and between that and the comic strip thing, it was getting to be a burden, and I didn't want to be in the hero business. I wanted rest, and then I wanted back into England. So I got an opportunity to find my way into England. I was sent back to the First Air Force at Mitchel with my idea on how to train these groups that were staging, because they had about five groups staging. They had them up in Connecticut, and they had them in Rhode Island, and they had them down in Pennsylvania, and I believe in Maryland. I went into the First Air Force, and they said, "Okay, go. You've got carte blanche." I think I went to Rhode Island first, and I went with that group, and I just lived there with those kids. I was the first person that they had ever seen or talked to that had ever been in combat, and here they were P-47 guys, and they were getting ready to go.

I found that they had great misconceptions about their airplane, and I found out that they were doing a lot of peculiar things, and they had gotten attitudes that

didn't make and didn't jell, and I had a fine time of just sitting with those guys. I got to know their wives; they were there. I drank beer with them at night. I just lived right with them, and I just kept talking to them and talking to them, and then going up with them, taking them up one at a time, two at a time, and making them fight each other, and fight the winner, and that sort of thing. The old way, hand-to-hand, take the kid's hand, tell him what he's doing wrong, and tell him if he ever does that in combat he won't last one day. He won't last half a mission if he gets that way. Just get them going and get them going, and the kids would eat it up. They just were so anxious to learn something, and eager to go, and eager to fight, and wanted to know. I wanted to tell them I could feel their eagerness, and I wanted it to pay off.

So I had that job. Then I went down to Philadelphia. Now, these were P-47s. In Philadelphia, I took over another group there, started work with them. Then I went back to the Commanding Officer of the Air Force. I said, "General, there's a misconception in all of these groups. I hear it back from England that the P-47 will only fight at high altitude. These kids are being told, and believe, that they won't ever fight

down near the ground, or they won't fight below 12,000 feet, because they've got that wonderful supercharger, and that their airplane isn't really a good combat airplane." I said, "Now, I'm changing their ideas. These kids have never taken any aerial combat with each other. They're not making turns. They're not doing it right; they're not turning tight. They're not learning the maneuvers of defense and offense," and I said, "It's hard for me to tell them that they are wrong about their airplane. It's hard for me to tell the Air Force and you, if you've got a misconception about the airplane. But I know that General William Kepner has gotten back the word that the P-47 is not going to be used on the ground." I said, "General, any airplane with eight 50-caliber guns in it is going to be used on the ground, and I find that the kids tell me that because the nose is so round and so big, that this airplane can't be used on the ground." I said, "That is bad, and I've given these kids their first ground gunnery. You've got five or six groups spread up and down this Air Force of yours where the guys have never shot their guns at the ground. I think this is wrong." I said, "The trouble is I can't prove it, because I haven't done it. But having fought a P-40, I know what this P-47 can be used for, and it's going to be used in aerial combat

from ground up, you wait and see. It will be used on the ground; it will be used in a ground support function. So let me go to Europe. I know General Kepner, he used to be my old commander. I know General Francis H.7 Griswold, who comes from Erie, Pennsylvania; he is the operations officer of that P-47 outfit you got over there. I know Zemke, who is commanding it, because he was in my class; and Hubert Zemke is a hell of a good friend of mind." I said, "Hub will take me right into his outfit, let me get in there, and study with those guys." This is when the P-47 and the American forces were being introduced into the air war over there. I said, "Let me into Europe, and I can learn it. Then I can come back here and really train these people." He said, "Okay, you got a job." I had that order. Now, you can see how I worked my way around to get into the big show into England. I was dying to get over there with Hub Zemke, Butch Griswold, and General Kepner who had been my group commander at Langley, and they had the job. They had the job, the big one, and that's where I wanted. I wanted that show. So now I was getting a chance to go over there, and I was all set. I was going to go to England, work with that outfit, learn strategy, learn formations, figure out what we were going to have to do in Europe, and come back

here then, by God, and teach it. Well, I got disrupted, because I got a telegram to report to the Chief of the Air Force's office in Washington, DC. I thought, "My God, now what have I done?" (laughter) I didn't know what I had done. I didn't know what I was getting into. I was brought down and that was when I first heard that they were looking for a commander to build an outfit and take it to Burma. If ever I was going to shoot myself, it was then, because I just couldn't see it. I just couldn't stomach it. I rebelled so strongly against that thing, I probably made a damn fool of myself, but I no more wanted to go to Burma than anything. I just couldn't accept the idea at all. I told General Hoyt Vandenberg who was the one who had sent for me. General Vandenberg was then General Arnold's Chief of Staff, and General Vandenberg, you see, had been in Africa. He was Jimmy Doolittle's Chief of Staff. Doolittle had the Twelfth, and then General Cannon was under them, and I was down in the group. It was that outfit that I was in over in Africa and had been doing the combat in. Of course, I had met them all. As a matter of fact, at one time General Doolittle had decorated me, put one of the decorations on, I forget which one, in his office. I think it was when I was promoted to lieutenant colonel. Anyway, I was in Algiers preparing

this training program that we were going to go into then after I had come out from combat. I went and reported to General Doolittle's headquarters in Algiers, and they were outlining what they wanted done, and why I was going back to Casablanca. There weren't any lieutenant colonel leaves anywhere, of course. You didn't have supplies like that. There were no PXs in North Africa yet, and although I had been promoted, I was still wearing the major's leaves, which didn't make much difference. But Doolittle happened to have an old pair of his and he gave them to me. So that was kind of fun. Then they were aware of my combat experience, and when the requirement came up for the type of guy that General Arnold said he wanted to send to Burma to support Wingate and to support the effort in taking back Burma, Vandenberg lit on my name right away and said, "Get him in." The deal was that they were to bring in five guys. General Arnold set the requirements, and said, "This is the kind of guy we want, and anybody in the staff that knows anyone, get around and bring in some guys, and I'll pick the man. You weed them out, and bring in five candidates." That was why I was called down; I was one of the candidates. I screamed like a stuck hog right off the bat when I heard what they had in mind. General Vandenberg briefed me, and I said,

"Why are you doing this to me?" He said, "Well, this is a marvelous opportunity for you, and you are just the guy. As a matter of fact, I've recommended you to General Arnold, but he's going to choose." But he said, "I think that's what you should do. You fit exactly what has to be done over there. They need somebody that has a lot of innovative ideas and all that sort of thing, and you popped into my head." He said, "It's going to be up to General Arnold." I said, "Can't you get me out of it?" Then I told him the job I had. I said, "General, I got a shot, and I'm going to England." I told him what I felt about the P-47, and I thought there were misconceptions. I wanted to go over and prove it, and I said, "Gee, I got the orders, and I'm ready to go." He said, "Well, I got orders, too, and I have to do what I have to do, and you've got to talk to General Arnold." I said, "All right, I'll talk to him, but I'll get out of it." I said, "You don't mind if I get out of it, do you?" He said, "No, I don't blame you." So I figured, what the hell, I can get out of anything. So I was set up to go before General Arnold, which I did, and he started to talk to me. Before we got very far, I told him I wanted no part of it. He kind of had a "where-do-you-come-off-telling-me-what-to-do" attitude, but I wasn't crass and I knew my place. But I also knew how

to speak my piece and get across to him what I wanted to do. I knew that he had heard my war room speech, and question-and-answer thing, and I knew he knew what I had done. I knew that I dared say some things right flat out, and there again is one of those wonderful things about the American way. Here was General Arnold, the chief of the whole doggone thing, and as far as I was concerned, he was right next to God. Because, my goodness, General Hap Arnold was the grandest thing that ever came along, and the rankingest person I ever would get to see. But I knew from his reputation, and I knew from the way he spoke, that it was perfectly all right for me to speak my mind. I thought this was my last-ditch chance, so I told him I didn't want to go. I didn't want to be a candidate for the job, and I was sure there were other people who would want this thing and would do a better job because they wanted it. I said, "I don't want any part of it," and he said, "Well, you've got to tell me some reasons why since you're standing there like that." He said, "Where do you come off telling me all this sort of thing?" I said, "Well, I feel that I just wouldn't be doing the right thing if I didn't come out with it." He said, "All right, you come out with it." So I said, "General, I have been in Africa, as you know. I worked hard, and I studied hard.

C: I believe that right now I have more combat experience than any fighter pilot in your Air Force. I'm going to be brash enough to tell you that I think I know more about the practical side of fighter aviation than anybody in the Air Force. I've done it the hard way, and it's an attribute to the Air Force, and here you are sending me over to an alley fight"--I think this is the word I used--"some doggone offshoot, side-alley fight over in some jungle in Burma that doesn't mean a damn thing. The big show is in England, and I've got this job ready to go over there, and I think I can contribute a hell of a lot more with what I know and have been studying for 7 years." I said, "I want to do it, and I want to fulfill it, because I think it's my destiny, and I think it's my life." I was at the point then, you know, like in the movies where you reach up and tear off your insignia and slam it, that old bit. I was getting a little out of hand. I think I got a little far out, because he got a little irked with me. He said, "I don't know what kind of an Air Force office I'm running here when guys come in and tell me that they are not going to do something." I said, "No." He said, "I understand." But I said, "I have to get it out. You would think less of me if I didn't tell you exactly how I feel. I'm a fighter pilot from start to finish, and I want to

continue. I think I ought to be allowed to, because I think it's in the best interest." He said he would decide, and all that kind of thing, in a kindly way. He said, "That's enough for now. I'll see you later." I said, "By the way, there's one guy that I have learned about. I'm not supposed to know who the other five are, but I ran into a guy in the Pentagon yesterday and I know he is here for the same thing. That's the guy you ought to take, he is a grand person and that's Johnny Alison." Here Johnny Alison is my best friend, and I'm pushing it on him. (laughter) I said, "Johnny Alison is from that area. He was in China. He is that area-oriented, he is a fine guy, and he will do the job." General Arnold said, "You get out of here."

So I got out. I didn't say anything to Johnny, but I saw him afterward. I was there the next day when he came out. We walked down the hall together, and he was as close to crying as any tough little fighter pilot I ever saw in my life. He was just terribly discouraged, and he had refused it, too. But he was afraid that he was going to get it. I told him that I told Arnold to give it to him. (laughter) I said, "Well, we are in the same boat." I said, "Johnny, I'm not going to go. I don't give a damn what he thinks is necessary,

goddamnit, I'm not going to go. I don't care what the hell happens to me." We were down; and he was so down, and he was so mad. I went back to General Vandenberg. I said, "Jesus, this is an injustice, General." I tried to get him to intercede. Oh, I was pulling all that stuff, and Van said, "Hey, you guys, you smart-asses, do you think Arnold is going to pick you? He probably doesn't want any part of you." I said, "Oh God, I hope so. I hope he hates me. I hope he gets so mad, he banishes me to Europe." He said, "Well, he's got three or four other guys to talk to." So I said, "Oh boy, it will be one of them. It will be great!" I knew one other guy, and there were three of us, and one guy was Charlie Bond. He had been with the American Volunteer Group, the AVG. That was the Flying Tigers. Well, we waited on pins and needles. I knew I had gone as far as I dared go. I did my job, and the next thing was just absolute mutiny, for heaven's sake.

So I was called in. They said, "General Arnold wants to see you again." I went in that room, and he was sitting there, boy, and he was as stern as hell. I thought, "Oh hoy, you don't monkey with this man anymore." He stood up from that chair behind that desk, and he looked at me, and he said, "Well, I made my

decision, and you are going." All right, that was the time to show what's in you. I just looked at him, and I said, "Okay, where and when?" He stopped, and he started to laugh, and he said, "Now, that's better." I told him later, "Boy, you don't know how close you came to a movie scene where guys are resigning and telling you everything." But he said, "You are going." I said, "Okay, where and when?" He said, "That will come later. I want to get that other monkey in here." I said, "Who?" He said, "That Alison is going with you." (laughter) So that's how we got assigned to the 1st Air Commando Task Force. The 1st Air Commando Task Force was to be designed by us to support the long-range penetration efforts of one General [Orde C.] Wingate. Wingate was the great eccentric British soldier, the general who had distinguished himself many places and had led raids into Burma the year before, and he had designed this form of invasion called long-range penetration. He would effect long-range forays into enemy territory by using mules and letting the jungle hide him. He was using mules as transport and the jungle as his protection, and they would get in and disrupt the enemy and take over whole territories. He called it "long-range penetration." He felt that if he had some air support, it would make him more

effective. So we were told by General Arnold to start studying General Wingate--try to find out all we could about him, what he stood for, what his ideas were, what he planned to do, and how we were going to support him.

Now, the original idea was support with light airplanes, because Wingate had brought this up with Churchill, General Arnold, and Lord Louis Mountbatten at the Quebec meeting between Roosevelt and Churchill. At that meeting, the plan to take back Burma was agreed upon. Lord Mountbatten was there, and he was to go on out there and be in charge, and General Arnold promised him air support for Wingate's forces, because they flew him in to the meeting, and Churchill introduced him and said, "We are going to take back Burma, and here is the man. Wingate is going to do it." So General Arnold and Lord Louis had gotten together, and Arnold said, "Now, how can I help?" Wingate said, "Well, if you could pull out my wounded. When we get on one of these things and I get a man wounded, we can't carry him because he becomes a burden. We have to prop him up against a tree and give him a gun or let him stay there and give him money and stuff, hoping that the natives would take care of him. But our attrition rate is terrible. When a man gets wounded, his chances with this kind of warfare aren't

very great. That's one of the drawbacks of commanding this kind of a thing, and making it successful, because soon you can't get replacements and you can't get your wounded out." So he said, "Is there any way light airplanes could do that?" He thought there were enough clearings in the jungle that they could make, or find, that they could get their wounded out. Arnold said, "All right, we'll do that. We'll study that." So that's how the idea got started. The commando name got started because Lord Louis had been the chief of the commandos in England, who used to make the raids over on the coast and that sort of thing. The tough guerrilla-type people who were trained for very, very rough duty. Quick strikes in and out, and that sort of thing. He called that "commando work," and General Arnold transferred that word in kind of deference to Lord Louis, that these were to be "air commandos." That would be the name of the effort, and it was highly secret. This was the thing we were assigned. We said, "Well, what does the guy do?" Then they explained some of the long-range penetration to us, from what they understood of it, and so we started to think. So about 2 days later, I said, "Well, somebody's got to go and talk to that nut." We had all been told that he was quite eccentric and that he was a very fervent fellow and quite a character. So, I said, "The

best way we can learn about what he plans to do is to go and talk to him." So it was decided that I would have to go, because Johnny was getting married. So I said, "All right, I'll go to Europe." So I went over, and I talked to Wingate. I reported to Lord Louis. I was told to do that, and then I got with Wingate. As we often say, we took an immediate dislike to each other on first impression. I saw a very intense, opinionated guy that I could hardly understand, because he was so British and he talked so fast. I always say, "If there is anyone I hate, it's another opinionated person." I took a dislike to him at first. His ideas, that first brush, seemed to be a little wild and rather boyish, amateur, if you will, and I found out that he knew a little bit about airplanes and tried to indicate that he knew quite a bit. Of course, that didn't do anything for my professional pride, but I picked up some valuable information in talking to him, and talking and talking. I asked him over and over again how he thought we could help him and what he did when he got out there. Why would he do all these long-range penetration things? Then I began to realize that what he was doing on the ground was what we did in the air, and how we vectored aircraft, and how we sent them out and followed them and brought them back. He was trying to do this on the

ground, and this is just about all he was doing. He had this fancy name for it. He would send out a column of 700 or 1,000 men with their mules and their guns that they were capable of carrying, their ammunition, the whole self-contained unit, and it would go out into the jungles for months. They would end up a couple 100 miles away; it would take them so long to go through the jungle. But then they'd get to their objective, and they'd blow a bridge, or they would set up roadblocks, and they'd command an area, and the Japs would come in and try to get them out and that sort of thing. They'd disappear then back into the jungle. Then they would radio back for air drops and that sort of thing. It seemed rather simple to me. I met a couple of guys that were going to be with him and had been with him in his former campaigns, and I got a pretty good working knowledge about what he did and what was going to be required, and how we could help him. I also spent some rather valuable time with Lord Louis. He and I hit it off immediately as good friends, I think. We are still good friends, and we took to each other. He was very, very appreciative, and he showed his appreciation of what General Arnold had done, fulfilled, on what he said he would do. He was so pleased with General Arnold's willingness to help, especially to help him.

C: It kind of rubbed off on me. He was so pleased that we were going forward with this thing, and there I was. I was the embodiment of what was going to go forward and the fulfillment of their planning. I suppose I was a symbol to him, but he treated me just grandly. I stayed at his house, and he just couldn't have been kinder.

Then I came back, and I got stalled in Iceland. I think I was in Iceland or Greenland, I can't remember where, but the weather was so bad that everybody was stalled. The trans-Atlantic airplanes that were going back and forth were all jammed up there. I was in a club or something--a big, big room there just waiting--and I heard there was to be a briefing. I said, "What's the briefing about?" They said, "Well, General Arnold is on the base. He is hung up, and he is coming from England." I said, "He has been in England?" They said, "Yes." I had only seen him maybe 5 or 6 days before when he assigned me this job. So I said, "I'll go to the briefing." They said, "We are going to brief the General about what's going on up here." I said, "Fine, I got nothing else to do, I'll listen to it." Bernt Balchen, do you remember that name? He was to give the briefing. He was the grand old guy of the

Arctic, you know. So I went in there and was sitting there, and I saw General Arnold across the room. I had nothing to talk with him about, and he had a lot of people around him. He kept looking over at me. I thought, "He's looking at me and thinking it can't be," you know. He kept looking across the room. Finally, he sent an officer over who said, "General Arnold wants you to come over." I said, "All right." I went over, he looked at me, and he said, "Cochran, what are you doing here?" I said, "Well, General, I'm in the same boat you're in; I'm stuck. We had to learn something about what Wingate does, and the quickest way for me to know what that man is thinking about and what he is planning, somebody has got to talk to the guy before we do a lot of planning that is no good, and before he gets a lot of grandiose ideas of what we are going to have. So I went over and saw him." He said, "You have been to England?" I said, "Yes sir, I was in England. I left a day or so after you assigned me." He said, "That's great. That's fine. It's all right. You're stuck here, huh?" He said, "I was in England, too." I said, "Yes, I went over." He said, "It's too bad you didn't get to see Mountbatten. I would have wanted you to see him, but he is in the hospital." I said, "Yes, General, I know; I took him." He said, "What do

you mean you took him?" I said, "I was staying at his house, and you know what's wrong with him, don't you?" He said, "No, I just know he is in the hospital." I said, "When he was playing polo one time, he hurt his hand right in here, and these cords are starting to shorten on him and he can't straighten up these fingers. They cut in there to let it out. It's nothing very serious, but he had to go in the hospital and have it done. So I took him down to the hospital." He said, "What do you mean you took him?" I said, "He had to go to the hospital, and I had been staying at his house, and he said, 'Cochran, you will need a car while you are here,' so I took him to the hospital in his car. He let me have his car for the rest of the time I was there." Arnold looked at me; he said, "Okay," and laughed. He said, "You'll do," or something like that, you know. So he said, "You need a ride?" I said, "No, I got the next ride out. I'm gone." I was giving him the idea, "I don't want to be stuck with you; you'll take forever." So I got on and got away, and that's how we got started on the idea of building this Task Force.

(End Side 2, Reel 3)

C: After talking to Wingate and to Lord Louis Mountbatten, I began to form a different concept of how this effort would be supported by air capability. I came home and talked it over with Johnny Alison, and we began to form some ideas of how best an air capability could be used in this long-range penetration-type of fighting, jungle combat, jungle warfare, if you will. As we studied it more and more, our natures came to the fore; we began to want to support him with combat action. We said that he not only needed to get his wounded out but that when he got in place, they could point out targets on the ground. He could use ground-air support; he could use bombardment; he could use fighters; he could have a lot of direct military action brought to bear after he got into an area.

So we began to expand on Wingate's plans. The more we thought of it, the more we built and built. Then we figured that we could turn this thing around and make it partially a doggone good air combat effort and really be of great assistance to these ground troops. We could be their artillery, we could be their supply, and we could be their air combat forces. So, really unconsciously, what we were doing was building a whole small region of warfare where we had ground troops, artillery, infantry,

air-ground support, fighter support, and bombardment support, plus finding a way to fly them into their area and get them in rather than have them spend months on the ground walking. The bare bones of those ideas started to form in our minds as we were building this thing. Every time we thought of a new thing, we'd kick it around and say, "Why don't we learn about that technique and see what it's about." Both of us, from separate experiences, ran on to the idea of gliders. So then we went to the people in the Pentagon who were glider men, and who were pushing gliders, and said, "Now, what can you do in this situation?" Then we began to learn that you towed gliders with aircraft, and they could cut loose and land in outlandish places. That intrigued us. Then we learned that there was such a thing in the Air Force as a reel that you could put in an airplane that would give the plane the capability to snatch a glider off the ground by flying over it and grabbing on to it and pulling it into the air.

We just searched out all these things and read them into our plan. And as we built and built, our plans became more and more complicated and grandiose. So we, in a laughing kind of way or in a half-serious kind of way, said, "What we will do is design this thing. It will

be so big and so ambitious that General Arnold will get mad and kick us out. Then we won't have to go." We kept building and building, and although we were kind of half kidding, we were serious about what we were doing. We had to figure what aircraft we wanted, what we wanted them for, how many pilots we needed, how many mechanics we needed, and how much ammunition you needed, because there wasn't any animal like this in the Air Force zoo. We were inventing a new one. There was no precedent. This is an air commando task force that is going to support ground jungle troops who penetrate behind enemy lines, and there just wasn't anything on the books that was anything like us, and also it was very secret. None of this was let out at all.

We were called Project Nine, and nobody really knew what we were doing. I think they could have guessed when we started ordering jungle shoes and that sort of thing. But, anyway, it was Project 9, and the one was supposed to know other than the staff, John, and myself, exactly what we were up to. None of our people knew exactly where we were going. They could guess it was going to be warm, and that's about all.

C: We had to plan on supplying ourselves. We were to be superimposed as a task force on an already beleaguered region, being China, Burma, India. They didn't have any supplies; they were destitute out there. The big effort was going on in Africa and Europe, and they were not getting all the things they needed. Then this task force was to be superimposed on that, and it was realized by the Air Force and by General Arnold's staff that we couldn't go out and just be sent to them, and say, "Take care of them." So we had to plan to take much of our own supplies. We even took, for instance, our own cigarettes and our own powdered milk. Different people advised us about what we ought to have and what should be sent, and then they got into a problem of the bottoms [aircraft carriers] to carry it over there on, because they were all full. They decided to dismantle our aircraft, rebuild them, crate them, deck-load them, and that sort of thing. They were all good sized problems that we were helped with by logistics and staff people at the Pentagon. But, in the meantime, we were designing our own equipment, even down to what kind of radios, what radio nets we would need, how many operators, and so forth. We were given the right to ask for any guy we knew in the world that would fulfill a job that we needed. For instance, we needed a top Signal Corps guy,

or top guy that knew aircraft radio and ground radio, and knew how to set up base stations, and could set up a whole network, because, you see, the British had nothing of that sort.

They were going into Burma. They were rather primitive ground people, and we would need rather elaborate radio communications setups, so we would have to take our own. There weren't any over in that theater. So we had to design the system, and we decided how many. So we were allowed to bring in from anywhere-- if we knew that man's name, we'd send for him. We knew them through our time in the Air Force. We'd say, "Oh boy, if we only had so-and-so." We'd send his name down, and lo and behold, he would come in. They would bring them from China or anywhere. We had great powers and we didn't overdo it, but we tended to (laughter). We gathered this whole thing together, and then it was time to present the idea, and present what we had thought up, to General Arnold. It was to come through General Vandenberg, to him and the staff; and we thought, "Oh boy, here is where we are really going to get it." We had really laid out a grandiose scheme. We were just going to haul out wounded with

liaison airplanes, little L-5s, and we expanded that to not only a few L-5s, we had a couple hundred of them. We had a whole group of them. We now wanted gliders, transports, DC-3s, P-51s or better fighters, and B-25s. We really built ourselves an air force, and we thought, "Boy, he's going to throw us out of the office." But we knew we had designed something pretty doggone good, and we knew it could do the job, and it was going to do a job that no one had ever seen or tried before, but it would work.

So we went in, and we thought we were really going to get something. General Arnold, as you have probably heard, always insisted that his staff not give him long things to read. He didn't have time to assimilate a whole bunch of junk. He said, "That's what you people are for--the details." And if you gave General Arnold anything that was more than a couple of paragraphs long, he would fire it back at you, I'm told. We shortened it up, and it was a pretty good report. Everybody sat in the room, and he sat there and he read it, and he kept reading. He would read along, and I was sitting there thinking, "Oh boy, here it comes." He just looked over at Vandenberg, and he said, "Van, does this thing make sense?" Vandenberg said, "Yes, it's a very, very

ingenious plan." General Arnold took the papers and put his initials on it, slammed it down, and said, "All right, do it." I know he sensed what we had done. I kind of remember a little bit of a sly look, that he looked over at the two of us, and he said, "All right, do it!" We went from there and, boy, the cooperation we got was just astounding, because the effort became important, and the people wanted to get it done, and we got great, great support. We got nearly everything that we asked for, or that we put in for, except one thing, and I'll tell you a little funny anecdote. We got everything but four helicopters. Now, the Air Force didn't have any helicopters. There were two experimental models, and I think they were at Dayton, and then the one, two, three, four, five, and six articles that were to come out of production were already asked for, and here we were asking for four; we were asking for the four of the only six that were coming available, and word came down that we couldn't have them. We went to General Arnold, and we said, "Well now, you said we were going to have them, and we think we can really use helicopters in that jungle situation. We've studied them, we know their capabilities, and those things will really do some things that airplanes can't do. We have some ideas on the support

of Wingate's troops, and if you ever want proof of an airplane, and you want to learn about this piece of aircraft, here is a proving ground. We don't want to do just proving, we can use them." He said he would try.

There was a committee of Air Force, Navy, I forget what the committee was called, but it was the highest place you could go in this land during the war. It was here where all industrial effort was coordinated so that people didn't go off half-cocked and start using wrong materials for wrong things, and using up materials for not a strategic reason, trying to use our limited supplies for their best use. This got all the way up to that thing, and General Arnold said to us, "I'm sorry I couldn't get that for you." He said, "Now that's the only thing I haven't done for you. I said I would back you, and now you've got everything but that." I said, "No, General, there is one other thing." He said, "What other thing?" I said, "They won't let us have Clinton Gatey." He said, "Who is Clinton Gatey?" Well, Clint Gatey was in civilian life an aeronautical engineer. Clint had come into the Air Force and he was the chief of the modification section of the Air Force. He was very, very busy modifying aircraft

before they went into combat. You know as an airplane comes out at first, you will find out then that it needs modification. He was in charge of this, and he was a very, very valuable man. He wanted so desperately to get into combat and to get overseas with us, and we felt that we needed somebody who was exceptionally innovative. We were going to have all kinds of peculiar uses for aircraft, and we thought if we could get Clint as our guy to head up our whole maintenance-engineering function, to take care of these aircraft in the jungle, to practically rebuild them if we had to, because-- again, we were going to have to be on our own--we needed talent, and this was a talented person. We said, "We think it's right that we ask for Clint Gatey." Well, the word came down: "Clint Gatey is too important where he is; you can't have him." Gee, I forget who was G-4 at the time who was the head of procurement; he headed the whole supply thing for the Air Force on General Arnold's staff. Who would that have been? I'll think of it later. I can see him as plain as day. But, anyway, General Arnold reached over to his box and he pressed down the button for his G-4. He said, "Why can't I have Clint Gatey?" (laughter) At the other end, there was a lot of mouthing and muttering, and he said, "Well, General, I didn't know you wanted him."

C: General Arnold said, "Cochran is here, and he said that they want Clint Gatey for that project of theirs, and you won't give him to them." He said, "Well, I didn't know you wanted him." So we got Clint Gatey, and he went over. When I left over there, when I came back, he took over command from me. He was killed in a P 51 over there at that time. But we got Clint. So the General said, "All right, I got you everything. Now I did what I promised you guys, but there is no way you can get those helicopters. I just can't do it, because the Navy is demanding one, the British are demanding one, and the Coast Guard is to get one, and then Wright Field is going to get something like that." He said, "They are all taken; there aren't any."

As you can see, a helicopter was a brand-new animal. There weren't any. There weren't any helicopter pilots in the Air Force. I think there was one, and he was the guy that was head of the project. So we let it go at that. We said, "Well, we fizzled on that one. We aren't going to have helicopters." But Johnny Alison had known Harry Hopkins. Now, if you didn't live through World War II as an adult, you don't know who Harry Hopkins was, but he was about as powerful a person as you'd ever

want to see, next to the President. Harry Hopkins was President Roosevelt's right hand, and he not only was his right hand in some things, he was his everything. Harry Hopkins was a very quiet, kind, nice individual who was powerful as hell, and he could get things done. Johnny had become close to him as a friend and acquaintance in Russia. John was trying desperately to get out of Russia. Johnny had been lent to Russia to put together and test fly, and then train on, P-40s, and Johnny and Hubert Zemke got that job. They were over in Russia doing that thing when the war broke out. Then when the war broke out, they kept John over there as air attache in the embassy, and Alison was trying his damndest to get out of that doggone place and get into combat in China. There he ran into Mr. Averell Harriman who was then our Ambassador to Russia, and he ran into Mr. Harry Hopkins who was over there visiting and lend-leasing, and all that sort of thing--big deal.

So Johnny and Hopkins became acquainted, and I think they had a kind of a rapport. So John was in Washington and Mr. Hopkins was in Washington, and Mr. Hopkins heard about it, and he said, "Johnny, come over and visit me." He said, "Well, I'm coming over, Mr. Hopkins." So he came over. I think he had dinner with

him or something. But he spent some time with Mr. Hopkins, and they kicked around old times, how they used to run around Russia kind of crazy-like, and they had a good old time. Then he asked Johnny what he was doing and what he was up to. Hopkins had heard, of course, about this arrangement and that we were going to support Wingate in this effort of taking back northern Burma. He asked him how he was coming along and if there was anything he could do? It snapped into Johnny's mind-- he said, "Well, they won't give us these helicopters." Hopkins said, "What do you mean?" He said, "There are going to be four, and we think we can use those helicopters better than anybody in the world. We won't be monkeying around with them. We'll have them in combat, and we'll really use them." So Johnny got back, and he told me about telling Hopkins about the helicopters. We didn't hear anything further, and (laughter) then General Arnold at the next meeting got me and said, "How did you get those helicopters?" It dawned on me then, and I said, "Well, General, you just have to know the right people!" Johnny and I have often laughed and laughed about that. Harry Hopkins. It was that funny and that simple. When General Arnold couldn't get the airplanes, we got them through Harry Hopkins. Low and behold, we were the first users of helicopters in combat,

and used them in the jungle. We didn't use them as-- no tricks, you know, just for using them. Serious business.

H: Were they effective?

C: No, those were so terribly underpowered. They were effective for what we used them for. We pulled out and documented the saving of 18 lives that we wouldn't have gotten out in any other manner. You just couldn't get them out any other way. We saved some kids that wouldn't have gotten out any other way. They were woefully underpowered. If you got a pilot in them, that was about their capable load. Then you would add another person. And a couple of times we were able to get two out at a time by using the stretcher on the sling on the side. There was a way to put a stretcher on hangers, like on the outside of the helicopter, and we were able to use that. We actually made good use of them, and we did save some lives with them, and we did prove that they were quite a capable machine. When we came back and wrote our many, many reports we had to write, I remember that one of them was that the helicopter, a proper one, well-built, would do anything that the right airplane would do, and more. If you

don't need speed, and you do need an awful lot of short-landing kind of thing, and that sort of thing, it just heats a light aircraft for that kind of work. Of course, the Vietnam war has shown that it is an effective weapon, although I think sometime they have been misused. I think in a limited situation, they are the best article. We so said when we came home, and probably advanced the helicopter a great deal more if those four would have been held here. I'm sure they got busy and built some more rather quickly, but we got articles two, three, four, and five, or whatever it was, through the help of John's friend, Harry Hopkins, and much to the amusement, I imagine, and dismay of General Arnold.

But now that we had designed it and General Arnold had put his initials on it, and fooled us, and said, "Go forward," then we had our work cut out for us, to amass all of these supplies and get them ready, and get out there and get in place, and coordinate getting the ships and getting our airplanes loaded. They were deck-loaded, as I said, and then we had to have the replacements. We had to figure replacements because, again, I remind you that we were a superimposition on a theater; we weren't a part of any organized effort. We were a thing apart, because we were a task force and everything had to be

taken from scratch. There was no table of organization, for instance. If you had a fighter group, you knew what a fighter group was. You knew what it needed and how much gas a day it needed, and how many bolts and nuts were needed, and how many pairs of pants you needed, and how many shoes of what size. They had that all. You just said, "fighter group," and the thing would spit out the plan. When you said, "Air Commando Task Force" with everything from light planes, gliders, and DC-3s, transport airplanes, UC-64, a little transport airplane, and P-51 fighters, and the whole conglomerate, the system would spit back, "don't know, cancel." "Tilt." So we had to build it. I say we built it, we just kept showing our plans, and there were people who were capable of this sort of thing. It was their job to tell us what we needed and all that sort of thing, and ship it over there and get it there, and get us in place. So after the design, then we were about ready, and then we had some training to do, and then we had to gather our people, and again we were allowed to gather anyone we wanted, even down to getting Clint Gatey. We brought in people whom we knew. We knew their capabilities, we knew their specific talents. This would be officers and pilots as well as enlisted men. We knew sergeants, we knew master sergeants that were extremely capable at

maintenance, and at gunnery, and those things, and at repair of radios, and we sought these people out. We remembered them from the outfits we had been in, and we gathered those folks from all over the world and brought them in. Then after we would get them in, we would tell them as much as we were allowed to tell them, and then ask them if they wanted it, and told them they didn't have to go if they didn't want to. We warned them it would be a dangerous mission, and that it would be a difficult one. We didn't con them; they were allowed to volunteer. So everybody of the original 500-odd people we had that we went over with, the original core of the task force, were all volunteers.

Each person was required to be able to do three things: sometime we had to stretch it a little bit to get the third thing, like if you could play a guitar or a harmonica, that qualified for the third thing. But the other thing, maybe he might be a gunnery sergeant who also had spent some time maybe in office work somewhere, where he had been in an office in a squadron or something like that. We searched for people with double talent so that we could double up. We didn't need a number of men. We were told by General Arnold to streamline and not to take along a bunch of staff, and to get rid of

the things that weren't absolutely necessary, none of the amenities, the smallest amount of paperwork that you possibly could get away with, and that sort of thing. That's what we did. So everybody had to do his job and more.

Nearly all of our pilots that we took had already been overseas at least once and had some combat. That was kind of difficult to do, but we found guys that were close. We didn't take any one inexperienced with us. Now we picked up some after we got over. But it was an unique outfit, and probably nothing like it ever before or since was formed. Then having designed it, gotten it all set and got it shipped over, then we started over to start to run it.

I went over first. John remained back here still building and gathering personnel. We had had to train glider pilots. We found some guys that had some training; we had to fulfill their training. We found glider pilots that had never had any night training. We had to train pilots and mechanics on the reel that would snatch gliders. We found out that there was such a new thing as a rocket that had never been used, and we said, "Oh boy, what a powerful thing, and what a

capability that would be to have on our P-51s if we could get them." We found that there was a design and that there were blueprints. The whole thing had been designed but never had been built. It had been tested and approved, but they had never built any. We were allowed to have the design, and we had them made. We had the brackets made to hold the rocket launcher for the P-51 in a machine shop in Dayton, Ohio, that was recommended to us by Wright Field, and we got that done. We had to do several extraneous things like that that were not usually done by military combat leaders. Then, as you can see, this thing became ours. You began to have a possessive feeling about this. Then all the personnel felt they were a little bit set apart. For instance, when we went overseas, everybody went priority, high priority, because we had to get there all at once. There was no dribbling. You can't go by sea. So we had the highest priority, and we had sergeants bumping generals on the way over. Naturally, everybody would wonder, "Who in the world are these people?" We would just say "Project 9," and we would get nearly what we wanted. We were getting spoiled. But I went over first with a small group, and we then went forward. Having studied more and more and more, we then started to study with Wingate who was over there in place. We began to

learn where he was going to set out from, knew the geography, and where the railheads were, and all that sort of thing. So with their advice, we went forward and looked over some air strips that the British had built in paddy fields. They knocked down the paddies, and they were just long level grass places, pretty well done, pretty well drained. We took two of these over. These were to be our two bases. Then we moved in and got in place by, I believe our target date was February 15th, and I think I sent a cable to General Arnold on that day and told him that the first combat mission had gone out from our base, and we were in place from then on in. The combat mission was Colonel Arvid Olsen and myself. We went out with two P-51s with our guns loaded. We went over stooging around in Burma and shot up a few likely looking targets and came back, and that was the first mission. But we did get in place, and you can tell that it took a lot of doing. India is not the greatest place to find transportation. But we did get in place and we did go forward with the Burma campaign, and it was a success.

II: General Arnold seemed to exercise very tight control over the entire air commando operation. Is this true?

C: Yes, it was a special task force. It was his effort, and he was going to see it through. Now, there were several reasons for that. Task forces sent out by headquarters in Washington were not popular. I think we were called "9," because there might have been eight before us of these special projects. They weren't popular, because they always came on a theater that was already in short supply. Then here comes an unplanned for thing, people who come in and say, "Well, we are going to do this, and just this, and nothing else, and we're special." Most task forces, up to that time, failed. Most of them got out and never really got to do what they were sent out to do, because they had a habit of disintegrating when they would get into the area into which they were inserted, and upon which they were superimposed, and in which they were going to work, and they never worked. I think in this one, General Arnold said to Mountbatten and Wingate that we would do this, and this one is going to work. By the way, boy, he indoctrinated me with that. It was going to work. That's all there was to it.

I'll have to tell you later here . . . ; well, I'll tell you now. Maybe here is an anecdote, the kind that we were speaking of. I sensed the political

overtones that were present in this whole thing, in this plan. The American policy was to keep China open. Roosevelt wanted to keep China open. He had Claire Chennault over in there with an air force, such as it was. At that time, it wasn't very large because you couldn't supply it very well. But we wanted to keep that line open. Now you see, Burma was the barrier to a good air route or land route into China from India. The Japs had taken Burma to be a barrier in between India, the supply area, and China. So they took northern Burma, and that's what forced us to go up and fly the Hump. You've heard of flying the Hump so much. It became a part of the effort. They had to fly the Hump because they didn't dare to fly over Burma, because the Japs were in Burma and they had airdromes in there.

Now, how do you relieve that situation? Take back northern Burma. How are you going to do it? Well, here is this guy Wingate with long-range penetration; he's going to do it. He's going to go in there and get behind the Japanese lines, collapse their front, and make them come back down. Is he going to be able to do that? Well, if you give him air support, he

may be able to do it. That, in a nutshell, is what we were up to. Taking back northern Burma would make the Hump unnecessary. You could fly over the lower land of Burma into China.

Now, every gallon of gasoline that got into China had to come over the Hump in terrible weather, and by a very difficult effort, and it wasn't satisfactory, but it was the only thing we had. Now Roosevelt and the American policy wanted to keep China open. The British weren't interested. They wanted to keep Singapore open. At the meeting in Quebec, however, it was decided that we would take back northern Burma and keep China open. The British said they would agree, and here is the guy to do it. They weren't too happy about it, but here they were going to do it.

Now, where does that put us? They want Singapore. They want their chestnuts taken out of the fire, too. So this isn't exactly accurate. It would be a violation of history, but it's a feeling I had, in a sense, and it's not important. But what was going to happen was this Wingate, a Britisher and a British effort, was going to keep China open for the Americans. Someway or the other, the Americans were going to have to help the

British get back Singapore, which we didn't have much interest in. And that is probably a capsule account of some of the political aspects of this activity. In other words, American participation in the effort was called for, and American participation with the British was the best thing to be called for, and it was to be fulfilled through the use of air support. That's why we dared build the task force that we built and the size of it, and the expanded capability of it above the ability to bring out wounded. That's why we sensed that we were being sent. So the last day I was to meet with General Arnold and go over and get my final instructions-- none of this was written, you see, because it was this secret. General Arnold called me in. I told him I was ready and what we were up to, where I would be, where Alison would be. He said, "All right." Those blue eyes, boy, they had me, and that finger. He said, "All right, you know what I want you to do, don't you?" I said, "Yes sir." He said, "What?" So I said, "You want us to steal that show and make that as much an American effort as possible. You want that to be an American effort, and that's what we are going to do." He said, "Do it!" Man, that finger came up, and I'm telling you I don't think I would have ever gone home--I wanted to come home in a box before I faced that guy if I didn't get it

done. He had a very, very close interest in this, and he watched it, and he watched our every move. When we were doing things he didn't like, we heard about it.

As I say, he had that interest. There was a political interest that we be successful, and there was a political interest that we be a big part of it to take back Burma, that the air effort be an acceptable part of that undertaking. So I sensed that. I knew that there was more on us than just going over there and supporting this nut Wingate. I say that in a lovable way. So this was his [Arnold's] interest, and he had the experience of having task forces start out and fizzle. We were told about those that fizzled, and we were pretty darn well sure that we would never hear the end of it if we fizzled. Yes, he did have a great interest, a close interest in this.

(End Side 1, Reel 4)

H: I understand that there was some effort by the British to amalgamate the air commando units with the existing air tactical organizations as they then existed, and that General Arnold resisted this quite strongly. Are you familiar with that?

C: Yes, I'm very familiar with it. As I have been saying here, and let me repeat, when a task force is superimposed upon a theater, it is not a very popular visit, and we were not that popular. Also, when it starts to do its work, and when we started to do our work to support Wingate's troops directly, we would be about our own business. We would have to do things quickly. Our lines of communications were direct right from us to Wingate's forces. It was designed that way. And when it got working, it would mean that that's the way it would be done. We were an effort within an effort. We were a specialized effort within the effort as a whole.

Sometimes I can agree that it was disruptive. They wouldn't quite know exactly what we were doing. We couldn't tell them what we were going to be doing tomorrow morning nor could we tell them what we were going to be doing in the afternoon, because in this kind of hot, immediate situation, we would have to react, and we kept ourselves that alert. We didn't need the difficulty of going through a set of headquarters--or you might say a set that might mean more than one or two, or three--to have someone always approving what we were going to do, or should we do it in light of what they were doing?

C: So they were having to put up with us. Our attitude was, "We have been sent to do this job, and since you know that we're having to do this job, and some of the requirements of it, maybe you should let us do it. Even though it does bother you, you should find a way to put up with that so we can get this done." Now, that sounds a little bit--it doesn't come out right, but that's about the way it ended up in some minds. Most of the folks--the commanding general realized what we had to do. General Stratemeyer [George B. T.], who was the United States Air Corps person in charge, he understood what we had to do. But we stepped on some toes; and in getting our job done, we were probably at times a little brusque, and at times independent. I think it was the best way to do our job, and we did insist on our independence.

Now, naturally, the British Air Force and the other Air Force people--well, there was an Air Force establishment there, the Tenth in India. We were rather remote. We were much farther advanced from their base activity. We were way up front, and we were physically removed from them; therefore, we weren't that much of a headache to them and they to us, but their sense of order and organization was somewhat violated in that we would do these

independent actions. They wouldn't quite know what we were up to, and that didn't sit very well with the command. So, as I told you before, it always happens that a task force begins to be diluted. It begins to be fragmented when it gets into the theater in which it's going to operate, because it is a strange body. It's an irritant, if you will, and the body wants to eject it or assimilate it, one or the other, because it's there and it's disrupting things. "It's not orderly, it isn't our way, and we just can't have that." So, there is that tendency.

Now that started to operate on us, and I began to be questioned more and more about what we were doing, why we did that, why we didn't inform them of what we were going to do, why we were doing it, and that sort of thing. Naturally, I was an Air Force officer and I had to live within the rules of an organization. I understood that. On the other hand, I had to get the job done, too. I began to sense that there was a movement afoot to end this situation by bringing us under the wing of one or the other of the existing formal commands, that they would operate us, and that the request for air operations would come through them. At least, they could come through me, but they would

have to be approved so that everyone would know what we were doing up there. I can imagine that maybe the British air were being questioned, "What are those fellows doing?" Well, when you are questioned by a command above you, maybe home command, maybe England was, maybe London was asking those chappies out there, "Just what are you folks about?" They said, "Oh, we don't know." You see, in a way you can't have things like that. They just don't work. So I can imagine some of that was going on. I also know that there was kind of an ill feeling--I think that's about as strong as I ought to say it. There was some ill feeling between Wingate's forces and the regular forces. Now he, too, was a special force superimposed on an established area. He, too, was unpopular, and he was doing some rugged, rugged fighting. This is tough work. This is the hardest work in the world. Jungle fighting is the meanest, lowest kind of fighting that a human being can get himself caught up in. It's hard. It's hard on the men. He was doing it, and he was doing something that it could be said they should have been doing all along. Here he was a special force brought in because "You folks have been over here all this time, and you've been sitting; you've done nothing." There was a little bit of that in our forces also. India wasn't a very

active area, and they were low on supplies. They were low on everything, and they were kind of a stepchild. Then here comes a task force that starts doing things just frantically, we will say, very, very industriously with an awful lot of purpose and a great resolve. Here, have been those poor guys sitting over there not having an awful lot to do, being in a place they don't want to be in, and that sort of thing. So, there wasn't any resentment, but maybe there was a little bit of jealousy that we were getting to accomplish things that they hadn't even been allowed to accomplish, and, golly, they had been over there but nobody ever let them do anything. So, there was some of that, too. We weren't the most popular people in the area, yet we had to get the job done.

Now, I can tell you an anecdote. We weren't popular to begin with, but when we got there, we had some excellent equipment, and it was new. It was brought from the states--at least, it was rebuilt. Some of the first things that arrived were some of our liaison airplanes. We got them together and got them forward. Now, these were L-5s and L-1s with an excellent short-field, small-field--just dreamed up airports, hacked out airports--capability. They could get in and out of

places other aircraft couldn't, and we had the guys that could do it.

Now Merrill's Marauders were also in the area and were to be brought into this. They were first to be brought over to be put into Wingate's command. They were going to be the fourth brigade, so to speak. There were to be three British units and an American unit. When the American unit got over there, it never joined the British because Stilwell wouldn't have it. Stilwell started out on his own and used them to try to break down through where he was building the Lido Road. They also were in another action over there. As you remember, Merrill's Marauders got beat up pretty badly, and they suffered. The jungle got them, and the Japs got them. It was a valiant effort, but I think it would be fair to judge it, that it was a limited success operation and it showed what we were willing to try to do. But it wasn't a smashing success. Those fellows took an awful beating. But when they first started in, in one of their early contacts with the enemy, they had a lot of guys hurt. They said, "Well, all right, that Project 9, that's Cochran's outfit. He has got some L-1s and L-5s, we'll just send him down here and he can start working for us." I said, "No." I mean it was incumbent upon me to say,

"No, I can't do that." They said, "What the hell, here you're American Air Force guys, and here our American guys are in there suffering, and you're withholding a capability! You've got the capability." I said, "As I know my instructions, I am sent here as a project to support Wingate's penetration into Burma. That is my job, and I'm going to do it. Now if I started using my airplanes and start losing them down here, and I send you a squadron of those to help down here, and then you want them somewhere else, by the time Wingate gets in position and I am needed there, I won't have the aircraft." I could see the starting of the split-off, and this is what I was warned against. So I said, "No way." I went back to the rule that I was a one-purpose outfit, and that I was to hold myself and my capability together until the time it was to be used, and I wasn't to be diverted. Now, certainly, those kids needed it. Hell, I wanted to do it as badly as anybody, but I also didn't want to break the orders that had been given to me, as far as I could see it. If I had had orders out of General Arnold's office to divert and go and do that job that I wasn't sent over to do, I'd have done it. But I was told to do as I was told. General Stratemyer backed me. He said, "That's very true. Cochran is right, and he doesn't have to do that."

C: Everyone then understood when we explained it except, of course, the guys in the American jungle outfits never had it explained to them, and they didn't feel too happy toward us. They felt we should have dropped the British and gone to them. I felt that I was to do what I was told to do, so that's how that came out. So, there was an unpopularity from that area, but it stems from that same peculiarity when you're inserted into an already established organization and you become a thing special. They wanted to get rid of you. They wanted to assimilate it. So there were many attempts to assimilate us and make us a part of the grand design, the order for the theater. And heretofore, many of them, as I said, had failed, because when you get remote, and you get out under an area commander, he runs his area, and Washington doesn't often come back at him and say, "Hey you, we told you to do so-and-so." He's liable to come back to them and say, "You sent me out here to run this area, and I am running it." You can see when a supreme commander gets an area like that, he's the power. When you get out into his area, he is the power. (laughter) You are on his area, and it's hard to overcome him.

I'll tell you later how we overcame it. But to answer your question--yes, there was a tendency always to try

to take away our autonomy and bring it into the formal command and have it run that way. That would have ended our special task force status and made us just another unit in the air command. It would have been cumbersome. I know we wouldn't have been as effective as you can when you are a specialist and you are living right next door with the guy that you are working with. If you remove it, something is lost. Also, something is gained. I understand order, and it isn't entirely true that the thing would have collapsed, but it wouldn't have been that effective, because we had set up such a close association with these Chindits with the ground troops, and we knew the man that was talking to us on the ground. He would be an RAF person, an airman who was directing our air activities. We trusted that airman, and we knew his voice, and we knew the commanders. We knew the people we were above. We just had a very, very close working team going. We worked hard on it, and it was working like a charm. We felt to lose that was a serious disruption of the fulfillment of our task and what we were sent for, so we resisted.

Now, let me go back to my last meeting with General Arnold when he had me explain to him what I thought he wanted us to do. He gave me a letter, and this

shows you what a forward-thinking, farsighted person he was, and what a cagey man he was. He gave me a letter. He instructed me again about watching out for the diversion that would probably happen, but I wasn't to allow it to happen. It was my job to keep that unit together and do the job I was sent out for. "No matter what, that's your job, and you do it."

This letter that he gave me was to Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, and Mountbatten's nickname was "Dicky." Here is this great big, courageous, handsome hero, but his nickname was Dicky, and Arnold used the nickname. He said, "Dear Dicky." Then in a very concise way, he said to Lord Mountbatten, "When the air commands get out there, they are to do certain things." He listed four things, very, very straightforward, and the idea was, "They will retain their autonomy. They will not be absorbed into any other of the commands. They will have one task and one task only, and they are a fast-in, fast-out outfit. They are not built to last very long. They are going to work for 6 months, and we'll see what happens." He outlined that in no uncertain terms. He gave me a copy of that letter. He said, "Now, you carry this. You keep this in case you need it, and those are your instructions." So no one else saw that letter. I

carried that in my own personal stuff, because, after all, it was a personal letter to "Dear Dicky," and I realized that maybe there was a little bit of ill manners going on here, and I wasn't to throw that around or let anybody see that, because he didn't have to tell me. But I knew he didn't want that broadcast. So that was one thing.

Then, I also had an order from him saying that none of our supplies were to be used by anyone else. You see, you'd send all those supplies over to a hungry theater, and all this beautiful new stuff, and they would grab it. They would take everything you got as it would come in the ports. They would steal it from you. An unalerted task force could lose their identity before they even got in place, because their supplies would be used by people who said, "My God, we haven't seen any of those for 2 years. I think we need those," and they would take them. That happened in armies, as everyone knows. But, anyway, they didn't dare take our stuff, and I had a letter signed by General Arnold with a countersignature down on the bottom of it saying the same thing, and it was signed George C. Marshall, General of the whole kaboodle. So I not only had that to keep us straight and keep our equipment out of the hands of the hungry,

but I had the "Dear Dicky" letter that said no one is going to assimilate that outfit after it gets in. It is going to do its own job, one, and that's all. As I said, that finger of General Arnold's (laughter) was so emphatic that I wouldn't have wanted to go home if I didn't get that done. So I not only had the courage of my convictions, I also was backed by a very wise commander that knew this probably would happen to me. We didn't realize it. We walked in and thought everybody would be our friends, and that we were going to do this special thing and everything, but we weren't wise to the ways. But he was, and he foresaw it, and therefore he armed me with the letters. So when this pressure to bring us into the fold and to get rid of the special status arose more and more, finally one day, I got word that Lord Louie was going to visit. He was coming in, and he was bringing quite a staff with him.

So in they came, way up to our forward base, and Louie had been there before. He kind of had a special feeling for the air commandos, because he had been in on the planning and been in on the birth, and "commando," we knew, was his favorite word and were one of his favorite groups over there. He came and visited us, and that's how we struck up our relationship.

C: Lord Louie came in this day, and he was on a tour of bases. He had quite a few folks with him, staff people. They all spilled out of the airplane, and we all greeted and everything. We were ready for him, as ready as you could be up in that jungle airport. The amenities were not what he would be used to, but he liked that sort of thing. He liked to see the guys that were doing the work. He wanted them to know that he appreciated them, and he expressed it many, many times, and he expressed it by being there. Of course, to our guys, he was a kind of a character. You know, he was the famous Lord Louie and, of course, they had fun calling him "Louie the Lord." They knew he had a special liking for us, and they knew the story, and they were rather proud to be a little bit special in his eyes, and he became one of our guys' favorite characters. He got ahold of me and he said, "Cochran, can we get somewhere where we can talk privately? I don't want anyone else to be with us." He said, "Perhaps a car." I said, "Sure, we'll do that. We'll get a jeep and go down to the end of the runway." He said, "That will be good." He said, "Do you have a driver you can trust?" I said, "I think so," and I motioned over at a guy. I said, "Get the jeep, Joe, and bring it over here and come on with us." Then I said, "Lord Louie, this is my

brother," and it was my brother, Joe, who as I told you was a liaison pilot in the air commando outfit. He drove the jeep, and Lord Louie and I sat in the back. Lord Louie said, "I don't like this, but I've got to tell you that my staff has been after me, and they have very strong and compelling arguments of why you should be brought into the formal organization and be run through the regular chain of command, and through the Tenth Air Force command, through the tactical air part." He said, "They have many reasons that are plausible, and before I make up my mind, I thought it was fair that I talk to you." He said, "They have good reasons, and you probably are aware of some of them." I said, "Yes, I am, and I am aware of the effort. I've been worrying about this; I felt it was coming." He said, "All right, I want to hear, though, what you have to say about this. I want you to be as open as you possibly can with me. I want you to tell me everything you can. You can tell me anything you want." So, here I was. I'm talking to the Supreme Commander. He was the Eisenhower of that theater. So I told him that, number one, I felt that he was misinformed and that there were some people on his staff that were capable of misinforming him, and I gave him a few examples. I said, "That stuff gets down to us, and I think that they are doing you a disservice when they

advise you that way." I said, "Now, that's my basic attitude." I told him how we wanted to work closely, and how closely we had to work, and how well it was working, and that he knew it was working well. I said, "I don't want to stop something that's a success and start another one. I will admit we bother other people, but I would think until we get through with this task, that they can put up with us, and I'll ask them to put up with us rather than change the whole doggone thing just because we are a bother. I hope that you can see it that way." Then I said, "Now, I'm going to have to do something that's a little impolite. But when I left General Arnold, he warned me that this was going to happen to me, and I didn't understand what he was saying at the time. But now I know. He forewarned me, and he put me on my guard against this." I said, "Lord Louie, you and I know the plans that there are three more air commando units to come over into this area that you have asked for. You've explained the plans to me, and Wingate has told me that they are going to come, and they are going to be modeled after this one. When this season of fighting is over, I will bet you that if I go back to Washington and say, 'General Arnold, I didn't get my job done because they came in, and over everything I could do, they just took that outfit, broke it up, put

the fighters over here, put the transports over there, put the bombers back where they belonged, and just dissolved the whole doggone thing,' I'll tell you that I would almost bet that if that happens to me, you'll never see another air commando come into this area, let alone three. I would think that General Arnold would say, 'If that's the way they want to play it, no way.' I can't speak for him, and I don't have a right. But I do have this, and this is where the impoliteness comes in. You are going to have to pardon me, but I have this letter that General Arnold gave me, and I would like for you to read number three in paragraph 2." I handed it to him. He looked at it, and here was the "Dear Dicky" letter, and there in no uncertain terms, it said: "You will not . . . that outfit will retain its autonomy." I said, "Lord Louie, that's the order I have been working on. Those are my orders, and now you're going to have to do something pretty doggone drastic to get me to accept being dissolved. That's all there is to it." I said, "Now, I've got to tell you one more thing. When General Arnold sent me out here, he set up with George Marshall not only the right, or the capability, but the order that I was to communicate by cable with him direct." Now, this very, very seldom happened. I didn't have to go through the Army

chain of command. My cables didn't have to go through "Vinegar" Joe's headquarters, then up through the Air Force headquarters, then through the bridge, and then the whole command, as anybody else's cable would have to. Commanders in the field don't send cables directly back to the Chief of the Air Force without going through their own chain of command, and then through the Army chain of command, and the theater chain of command. I said, "Now, I've used this very seldom, but what you are forcing me to do is to go right back with you to the headquarters"--in New Delhi or Calcutta, wherever it was-- "and I'll have to send a cable directly to General Arnold and tell him what's occurring." Mountbatten said, "Hey, you've lifted the whole thing off my back, and I'm so tickled. I can go back with this and tell those guys to hell with it." Now, we came that close. I had to pull all the stops, but isn't it marvelous that Arnold just about knew that was going to happen to me? (laughter) He forearmed me, and, boy, forearmed is forewarned, and I could lay that on to Mountbatten. It so tickled Mountbatten. He was relieved. He didn't want to do it, but his staff was after him so much that he just had to listen to them. I could understand that, and there was more of that talk. That ended that right then and there. It was the end of that. It's funny. I told

General Arnold later that I had to use the "Dear Dicky" letter, that I came awful close to being ruined. I said, "I pulled the 'Dear Dicky' letter on him, and that ended it."

H: Would you characterize General Arnold as being a real innovator, and a type of person that would advocate an unconventional way of doing things?

C: Oh yes, this was his delight. He was always looking for new tactics, I think, and this is just a kind of "let's dream a little better, let's just suppose." But I think that General Arnold was a captive of the War Office. He was a captive of his own office there in the Pentagon. He, being the type of man he was, wanted to be out there doing it. He wanted to be with the guys. He identified so with his combat pilots, and with his leaders and commanders, and he inspired them. But a younger General Arnold would have wanted to be out there doing things. It probably griped him that here were all these guys out there getting to do all these fabulous feats of air warfare, and he had to sit back and be the administrator-planner. So, there was a lot of the innovator in him, and he wanted to be in on the action. He was an action guy, and he wanted

to be in on the action. I wouldn't be surprised that the 1st Air Commando Task Force was an expression of that. He saw an opportunity, and he made a deal, and he said, "Now, I'm going to see that fulfilled, because it's mine."

I know he felt that the idea of global warfare could be run from the Pentagon. This was his idea, and it was actually a fact. As I say, he was an action guy. He wanted action, and I think perhaps this kind of task force, and this effort, this new type of warfare that he could be a part of and get going, was really an expression of his wanting to be in on the action. It was innovative. It was new, and it had not been done. I have a copy of the campaign over there sent to me from Mountbatten, and Mountbatten wrote on the inside flyleaf a little thing to me. In it he credits me with-- Oh, I forget his wording--but changing jungle warfare significantly with the use of air power. This is what Arnold did in sending us out there. It was a whole new military design of the support of jungle troops, the worst kind of warfare with air capabilities. Yes, he was innovative.

H: Tell me, did you have any regrets accepting that assignment as you initially had in the beginning?

C: I cannot call it regrets, but I never liked it. I always felt that I was slighted some way. At the time we were out there, I hated it. I didn't want to be there, because I knew the big things were going on in Europe. Then lo and behold, right in the middle of our effort out there, General Eisenhower had asked if one of us people who had now done a glider invasion . . . You see, we invaded Burma with gliders, and it was the air invasion of Burma. Now, we had the experience and he wanted some of that experience. He asked Lord Louie if he wouldn't send him an officer-advisor to help plan the glider invasion of Europe. They were getting ready for D-day. Mountbatten got ahold of me and said, "Now who, other than yourself, are you going to send?" They wouldn't hear of me going. I was going to say, "I'm the best guy for that," because I wanted out. I wanted into Europe and so did Johnny Alison. So we decided that John would go, and Mountbatten said that that was fine. They felt that I had better stay, and I had to. I had to fulfill that role. I couldn't run off, but I was tempted. But I never liked what I was doing. It was hard for me, as I remember it. I had to really work at it to get the

job done, because there was no enthusiasm in my soul. I just was not enthusiastic for the job. Although, golly, what a big thing it has been in my life, and a big hunk of it was my association with General Arnold. This is priceless. It is a fine thing in your life if you know you have been assigned a tough job by a person you admire, and then fulfilling it for him, getting it done. Let's face it, that's a hell of a part of life, the satisfaction of doing something well. That's something you can keep. You don't have to spread it around, or talk about it, or act arrogant about it, but it's something you can hold in your heart, and you say, "I got it done. I like what I did there. I feel good about it." That is a great reward. I've been rewarded greatly for the bit of inconvenience I was caused by not being able to do as I wanted to do. I guess that's the old thing. You don't get to do always what you want to do. Who knows how the others would have turned out.

H: Well, tell me, did General Arnold ever renege on his command, "To hell with the paperwork. Go out and fight"?

C: No, never did. He never batted an eye, and I know that we caused him trouble at times, little troubles. I know that maybe he was criticized for some of the things we

did, but he never let us know about it, never expressed it. He backed us every inch of the way, and the closest he ever came to a remonstrance for the lack of paperwork, he had told me that I was to keep in touch with him and to cable him directly. I was reluctant to use that authority. I was conscious of our being guests, so to speak, in another area. I felt that we were not to overdo that special status, and I was reluctant to use the authority to send cables to him directly and not through my superior officers in the Air Force, and the Army, over there in India. It was a little bit of "you mind your manners." I had enough military training to know that you didn't go out of the chain of command, and that you did conduct yourself properly the way you were supposed to, and this seemed a little bit much, and I didn't do it. Then one day, I got a cable from General Arnold, and it said, "You were instructed to cable me directly on your progress. Where is your first cable?" So there was a little bit of a dig in that, and that was about the time I did send the direct cable and said we were in place, and that the first mission had been accomplished, and we were on target. I didn't tell them what we had to do to get there, but it took some doing.

C: Later, I sent another cable that I figured would please him. It was an inside thing for just the two of us. Two days after the invasion, and now that I knew we had planted the troops in there and they were in place, and that we in fact had pulled a great surprise on the Japanese, and that we had planted a good strong brigade right there in their guts in Burma behind their lines, and we were in place to support them, and we had two working airports in behind their lines, protected so they couldn't get at us, and we could go in and out of there at night, bring supplies in and bring wounded out, and so forth, and it was actually going according to plan, I sent him a cablegram. I said, "The aerial invasion of Burma was strictly an air show." I picked the words so that he and I would know that last thing when he said, "What are you supposed to do?" I said, "You want us to steal that show. You want the American involvement to be quite sizeable, an important part of it." It had to be, politically. So I told him the invasion of Burma was strictly an air show. I didn't send many cables, and he didn't require me to, but he did bring me up on where my first one was.

H: Did General Arnold's orders to return specialists to the United States in each phase of air commando operations

hamper your ability to operate with your existing units? In other words, you were supposed to send so many back for training purposes?

C: No.

H: It didn't hamper your operations in any way?

C: No, and then you see the rainy season came upon us, and the season was ended. Then we sent a lot back. We sent a whole slug. I sent back most of the people who had completed their second tour of overseas duty. When we formed the outfit, we were only to be short-lived. We thought we were operating only 6 months, and we had supplies for 6 months, and that was it, up and out. But after the success of this type of unit, they decided to build some more. They left a 1st Air Commando [Force] there under Clint Gatey, and we sent back several people who could build the next two air commandos. I think three air commandos were built, or four, and I know only one new one, the 2nd Air Commando, I believe, went back to India. Then, I think two maybe were sent to the southwest Pacific and were--I don't believe ever used as units. I think they were assimilated into the whole.

(End Side 2, Reel 4)

H: Colonel Cochran, would you like to resume talking this morning about starting your operations in India?

C: All right, fine. Now, we've got in India. As I was saying, you remember, I went on ahead for several reasons, one of which was to prepare for the incoming material, the airplanes, and the supplies. They had to be put someplace. We had to arrange for a facility in which we could put aircraft and gliders together. We had P-51s. As you remember, I said they were sent over deck-loaded in crates, so we had the job of putting those together, test-flying them, and getting them ready for combat, which was no small chore. Then we had gliders in crates that had to be assembled and test-flown and towed on up-country. We had all the liaison aircraft to put together. Then we were going to fly the C-47s on over. All those arrangements had to be made. If you've ever been in Karachi, you've seen the very large balloon hangar that was built years and years ago when the Navy had a project of flying a dirigible around the world. In order to accommodate that great airship at various spots, Karachi being one, they had to build large hangars. If you came into Karachi and looked up, you'd think,

"What is Akron, Ohio, doing here?" because there was a very, very good sized balloon hangar, as we called it. It was a dirigible port sitting on the air base in Karachi, India. So this was made available to us, and we set up a production line there for aircraft, to assemble them there in Karachi. Those arrangements had to be made. Also, my other main purpose was to get with Wingate, who was already in New Delhi, and start to get to know him better, and to know his plans more specifically, and to start planning directly with him. When I arrived there, I found a very sick Wingate, a man who was just out of the hospital and who was very, very ill, so ill that it almost scotched our project right then and there. It seemed that this special Project 9, being what other people laughingly called "Tragedy 9," was destined for many barriers. It seemed that things were just getting in our way to stop us. I remember feeling that if Wingate didn't pull out of this illness that he was in, if he weren't to be there, all our efforts were going to go for naught. We would just be assimilated into the theater, and that would be the end of Project 9, because he was the key.

But he was a hardy devil. He kept improving and improving, then came back to work, and we started the plan.

C: That early association with him there where we were working together was a time for building mutual respect, and we got to work much, much better together, and it wasn't difficult. Folks have asked me if it was difficult to work with him, because Wingate had never been truly successful working with anyone. He was such an individualist, and I think there were many people who felt that I was having a very difficult time because his reputation was that he was a difficult person. Actually, I think what made it a little easier, a little more simple for me, is that I understood that it was my job to work with him. I remember saying and thinking, "Well, it doesn't matter whether he is difficult or not, or whether this is going to be hard for me or difficult or anything." I'm pretty sure my attitude was, that's the job and there is no other, and that the only alternative is to say, "I'm not going to do this," and walk away. Then, of course, I knew--and everybody knew--I wasn't going to do that. So I approached it as, "This is what I must get done." So that made it a lot easier, and also I was not incapable of handling his brashness. It kind of amused me. Also, I know that he began to feel an affection toward me, and I'll have to say that it was mutual. We began to like working together, and I know that there was a mutual respect, and I know that he began

to believe the things that I was telling him that we could do. I think at first, for instance, when I said we took a kind of dislike to each other in England when we first met, I thought that some of the things that he was talking about were a little bit wild, a little bit crazy, and I thought that he simplified things a little bit too much. He didn't really realize, he didn't know enough about the airplane and air work, and air warfare, to be making the conclusions that he was drawing of what they could do, and what they couldn't do. He had been telling me at the time what he thought aircraft could do, and I thought that he was a little bit impractical. I suppose there was some professional, I won't say jealousy, but my judgment was a little bit different than his, and I felt I knew more about it than he did, and I didn't want to be told these things, because I knew them to be inaccurate. So I think we got first impressions of each other. He also thought that I was bragging on some of the things that I said we could and would do. We used to laugh and say, "Wingate isn't going to believe this," because he has never had anything like this. He never really had the power or the authority from his own service, from his own army, that he got from the United States Army Air Corps. You've got to realize this wasn't my authority, and this wasn't my largesse. I

wasn't saying that "I'm going to get you this, and I'm going to get you that." I didn't have to say that sort of thing, because you've got to remember that General Arnold had said this was going to be done, and the whole Air Corps, the staff and everybody, had let it be known that they were behind us, and that they had approved what we said we were going to do. It was all approved by them, so I was passing on that authority. I had to wave the American flag behind me. I had our country's military authority backing me, and I didn't have to brag. We were there; we knew what we had coming. We knew about what we were going to do. By the way, it's amazing how well we were trained, how well we were supplied, and supported. We followed just about everything that we thought we were going to do. Many of the things that even we thought were a little audacious, and maybe a little ambitious, turned out to be feasible, workable plans that we put into action, that were rather innovative, and in some instances did establish new ways of doing air support of ground people, especially in the jungle. I'm certain that the British officers, Wingate and his staff, maybe this was a little bit too much for them. It was kind of hard for them to believe that they were going to luck into this kind of support. I don't believe I ever got that across, until finally we were

in position and proved to them that "here we are, and let's go," and they saw it with their own eyes.

The British at that time were equipment poor. They were just rundown. Their efforts in Europe had just about cashed them in. As you know, a great amount of their supplies they were getting from us on lend-lease. They didn't have the industrial capacity to keep themselves up. They had lost so much. And by the time you would get to a British outfit out in India, and a special task force to boot, they were destitute--they didn't have the supplies. They had been living this way for so many years that they just didn't realize they were going to really be supplied and supported from the air by an American outfit that had what it needed, and had what it said it was going to get. It was hard for them to really believe. They would kind of always look at us and say, "Are you sure you can do that? Are you sure you are going to do that?" Another thing, at first I don't believe they thought I had that kind of authority. I can understand that, because I know when I first went to England, they pictured the person that was going to come over there to make the plans and be the air support officer in charge that General Arnold had promised Lord Louie that he would get, that he would supply for him.

C: I'm certain that they had a different type of fellow in mind than I was. You have to remember that I was a young looking person, even at age 33. As I look at pictures now, it amazes me how young I looked; and I can see the effect and we knew it at the time. We kidded about it. Johnny Alison would kid about it, and my other officers would laugh about what Wingate and Lord Louie thought when I showed up. They didn't know or understand any of the selection, and they didn't know a great deal about me, or why I was there, and that sort of thing. I can imagine that my physical appearance had an impact, and Wingate's physical appearance had an impact on me.

Let's talk about Wingate now, and I'm going back. When I saw him in India again, and saw him after he had been in the hospital, he looked terrible. He looked atrocious. He frightened me. He looked like death warmed over. When I first saw him, I noticed some things about him that I later found were just peculiarities of his physical being and his character. You know Wingate was a terribly opinionated man. He was extremely eccentric. Many folks felt that he was a little bit on the edge of being a mystic. I had been told that, and I heard all this stuff, and I read it. People used to say he was

mystic, or he was a mystic. I'm not sure I ever knew what they meant or what it is now. I have pictures of gurus and oriental people who are mystics, something like witches or spooks, or something. Of course, I knew what a mystic was, but I had never run across a mystic. People say, "Well, is he a mystic?" I say, "I don't know. He is a mystery to me in some of the ways he thinks, but all I can say is that he's odd. He's not your normal run of fellow, I'll tell you that." Of course, already he had a reputation for being everything from a nut to a mystic, a fanatic. He was on the edge of all those things, and yet he was a brilliant man that wars spawn. Wars don't look for shrinking violets and the bookkeeper type of Sunday-go-to-meeting fellow. Wars require audacious people, and they require people with tremendous egos, whether it comes out as a Patton who had an honest ego. Patton just let his ego hang out there all over the place, and he flaunted it. But you cannot suppose that dear General Omar Bradley didn't have a tremendous ego, but he controlled it, and he showed you that he knew how to control his ego. He gave the rather pleasant, comfortable, outward aspect of being the old-shoe type fellow who was easy to get along with, and who deferred to your comforts, and who made you feel comfortable to be with him. I'm almost taking two

extremes there between Patton and General Omar Bradley. But I'm certain that General Omar Bradley had a monumental ego, or he wouldn't have been able to effect his personality and his will and leadership on other people. He just did it in a different way.

But to get back. The war brought out what Orde Wingate was, and that is, that he was a fervent, dedicated, single-purpose man who was going to impose his will or else, and he didn't much care whether he was obnoxious. And he was. He didn't care whose feelings he hurt. And he did. If he saw something, and he believed it was the truth, he would come out with it, no matter whether it hurt anybody or not. Now, in our society, you don't do that and have good manners, and Orde Wingate didn't have good manners. He didn't care about manners. He was the eccentric-type of person that's going to get this single purpose of theirs done; and come what may, they don't want to care about these little things of hurting anybody's feelings, or even considering being wrong. Wingate didn't ever consider that anything he was doing was going to be wrong, or anything, he was just going to do it. If it didn't work out, so what? Who cares? Why doesn't somebody else do better if they think they can? So he was a forceful person, but not a

mystic, not a mumbling person with out-of-this-world concepts. He just was a very, very eccentric person, and his whole being, even his physical being, his movements, were not ordinary. I think you know, and it's been written about many times, that at one phase in General Wingate's career, he in great depression and in great disappointment after his work with the Ethiopians in the Ethiopian war against Italy, it was one of his strong opinions, and it was his conviction, that if Great Britain didn't come down there and take over the Ethiopian situation and keep the Italians from just taking over Ethiopia in that war, that that was the start of World War II, or another World War. He was convinced, and he wrote it and said it, and was screaming from the housetops that the war was starting here, and if Great Britain didn't stop it right then and there and take over the protection of Ethiopia, that they were wrong. So, here was Orde Wingate, the soldier, preaching to the Parliament and preaching to the British Government that they were wrong. He was forceful about it. He minced no words, and he told them. He told everybody, and he would come to England to rail at the Government. They got so sick of him, they again sent him back out. But in between time, they got him out of Ethiopia. They banished him and got him out of there,

I think it was to Cairo. It was there that he was in his depression and in the traumatic thing that he was going through personally. He attempted to take his life by slashing his throat with a razor, I'm told. I think it was a razor, but I know he slashed his throat. Of course, he did not die. He was found and patched up. Then, his attitude toward that seemed to be, "Well, so that's that. I didn't make it, and I guess I'm supposed to carry on my work, as I believe it." So he continued in the gadfly business, and he got well. But it left him with a scarred throat, of course. It may have changed his voice. His voice was a little bit tight. Folks thought they detected a difficulty in his speech and all that sort of thing. Having not known him before, I never knew how he spoke before he did the deed. But I know that afterward, his voice was a little tight like that /imitating Wingate's speech/, not exactly that, but there was a little effort, a slight effort to speak. But if you saw him and knew him, then you would think, "Well, that's just the way the man speaks, and he's kind of an odd duck anyway." Physically, his head is set a little bit oddly, and that's the way he's made. You've known people that are built that way. They just are a little neck-tight, and they tend to hold their head in a peculiar way as if they had a stiff neck. I think

that physical impairment that came from that injury gave him a bearing of his head, a way of holding his head, that again attributed a little bit to his oddity, and it was the reason he grew a beard, I'm pretty sure. He had a beard, and the beard, of course, hid the scars on his neck. I don't know whether he was conscious of the scars or not. When I first saw him, he did not have a beard; he was clean-shaven. But the next time I saw him, he had a beard. They said that he always grew a beard when he went into combat, and many of his officers did, which seemed to be a British thing. Some of our kids did it, anticipating jungle combat. The thinking was, if you had a beard and you got slashed on the face, your face would heal quicker, and that you had some protection of your face and your throat. This was the talk. I don't know whether our guys ever believed it or not. I think they just wanted to grow beards for fun, or kind of a braggadocio thing of being a jungle fighter. And who has time to shave in the jungle? So you let your beard grow. But Wingate had a beard that he combed constantly and parted. It was one of his nervous preoccupations, that while you would be speaking, he would drag out a comb and start combing his beard, which would be a little bit distracting to some folks. (laughter) I got so every time he'd do it,

I'd just smile at him and laugh, and he and I knew it was a joke between us. But he stroked his beard all the time as he talked and thought. It was a nervous kind of thing. Although nowadays beards are prevalent, in those days a beard was an oddity, and why wouldn't this odd stick grow a beard? (laughter) It fell right in with the character. But anyway, speaking of the way he held his head, I always thought, and I still remember that I thought, that this is where his piercing eyes the people spoke of came from. Now, his eyes were deep-set, and they were blue. He would train them on you as he spoke. I think because there was a slight restriction in the front part of his neck, when he moved his head he didn't do it normally as we do, and he just glanced over by moving his head above his shoulders. He would move the whole upper part of his body, and there would be a shoulder movement with it as he turned. As you know, a body accentuation like that, we call it body language now. If you just turn your head over and glance and say something to someone, that's one thing. But if you move your whole shoulder, and straighten up and move over, and give them a shot of those eyes, what you're saying is rather accentuated, and that would give the appearance of an attempt to dominate with the eyes, and it would tend to make the eye-part of the

communication a little more piercing and a little stronger, so he was known as having a hell of a set of piercing eyes. He did. He used his eyes in that manner, which again lent a little bit to the arrogance if you didn't like it, and a little bit of dominance if you allowed yourself to be dominated by this attitude, this seeming attitude. Now, that lent a lot to, again, the mystic-type fellow, and a man that is on the edge of being such a dedicated person that you slop over into fanaticism. As you know, folks that are right on edge, about ready to blow, do get a piercing look, I suppose. We've been taught that. I think actors do it in order to get the thought over to you that this character they're portraying is just about to blow his stack, and that's why this terrible intensity in the eyes. Well, he did it even when he was calm. So that, again, gave him the reputation of being a little different, if not right on the edge of flying off the handle, and he could fly off the handle! Believe me, he had a temper. He could rage, oftentimes for a purpose. He knew what he was doing; he got his way, as you can see. Believe me, he got his way, and this is the way he did it.

C: I think unconsciously, I understood all this stuff, and, again, it was my job to work with the guy. It wasn't my job to decide whether he knew what he was doing or not, but he convinced me that he certainly was a dedicated person, and I was fully convinced that he could do what he said he was going to do. I got to learn that he, in fact, did have Churchill's backing and he did have General Slim's /Sir William Joseph/ backing. General Slim was the head of all the British armies over there--a grand, grand person.

I could see in the meetings and in the association that, in fact, Wingate, too, had the authority of his Government, and despite all the harassment, or despite all the tendencies for the theaters in which we were in to slow us up and to try to discredit what we were going to try to do, or try to tell us that we couldn't do it, or discourage us, or try to stop us, I felt that with the kind of authority that had been granted us, we were going to go ahead and get this thing done. We were beginning to solidify our ideas of how we were going to do it. I remember it became clearer and clearer to me of how to get the job done and how to improve on the ideas, and listening to his plans and realizing what we were going to have to do, brought forth whole new ideas. We did

not, for instance, go over there knowing that we were really going to plan and perform an aerial invasion 150 miles behind Japanese lines. We knew we were going to transport troops behind the lines, and that's why we asked for the gliders. That's why we had prepared ourselves with airplanes that would snatch gliders off the ground, that would, in fact, tow two loaded gliders-- the C-47s that we had. That's why we brought troop carrier people, and that's why we brought glider pilots, and did have, I think, 100 gliders. I forget now what the first complement was.

When I got over there and realized that it was feasible to invade with the troops and place them in there and save them a month's travel through the jungle, and do the original landing in an 8-hour period, and then build strips that C-47s and other aircraft could land on inside there, we began to ask Wingate if he could protect such a landing strip after we got the first people in there. After we built the strip, could he protect it and hold off the Japanese until we could get the remainder of the troops in? He said, certainly he could, that the jungle would be our friend, and he knew enough about jungle warfare to know that he could protect that thing until we could solidify what he called a stronghold.

C: We started to invent a whole new kind of invasion, and I realized that this was to be our big role, and this would be a great, great advancement of that kind of warfare. You see, his plan was to start the people out from these back bases and start them walking into the jungle. That was his long-range penetration, and they would be whole brigades of people. A brigade probably having 6, 7, or 8,000 people as he had it built, they with their mules, and the largest gun they could carry, a cannon broke down, and packed on a mule. They had to take most of their food with them and everything they were going to live on in the jungle. Then they would start through the jungle, and it would take them a month to go the distance to get into position to start harrassing the enemy from inside his own territory, cutting his lines of communication, commanding the river, commanding the rails, commanding every road, and being able to fight off the Japanese right in there. When things got too hot, they would move and use the jungle again as their protection.

Now, it was his plan to walk them in there. We brought the gliders thinking we would take small parties in to do certain jobs, guerrilla-type affairs, landing maybe 50 people, or even 10, to blow a bridge or to take a

road or that sort of thing. Then leave them in there and supply these parties--in other words, foraging parties. Then when we realized, really, what we ought to do is not have them walk in there, and wear themselves out, but plant them in there, put them in there, and let them move from the strongholds that they would build, and the strongholds would include an aerial strip in which we could fly in and out of every night. Then if we owned the air and we had air superiority over the Japanese, then we could come in there at will in the daytime, which is finally what we did.

But that expansion of our plans, and the perfecting of it, happened after I got over there and started my association with Wingate, the character, and working that closely together and convincing him, yes, we could do this. We weren't just talking, and we were going to get this kind of equipment. His attitude was, "All right, I'll believe you." I had explained to him the authority I had, and he realized that it was just too good to be true for most of his men. As I got to know them better, they began to realize that I wasn't just a swashbuckling, braggadocio American Yank, that sort of thing, that we truly had it. As he saw the equipment start in and we showed him the list of what we had, he became a believer.

C: Then when he really was convinced that he was going to get all this, he started to take over. I know he had ideas, and he suddenly found that he was going to have all this marvelous equipment and this capability. His mind just took off.

I know that he planned to just start running the whole thing. It was planned that it was going to be his, and he was going to manage it, and he was going to run it. I think he was going to kind of usurp the authority of this Yank who was a fine fellow and had a lot of nice stuff that he was going to use. But of course I was aware of that, too. We were aware, so I think there were a couple of egos here that got along pretty well. I knew I had a job to do, so I did it. Every once in awhile he would get out of line, and we would have to get him back. We used all manner of things from just plain out-and-out confrontation, and telling him he was getting out of line, or that he was overstepping his authority, as far as we could see it, to just being a little cuter than he was, and all of those things. You can guess at the associations that went on between a British egomaniac and a rather opinionated young American. But we formed a good working team, and in it was a great deal of mutual respect, or you could see

that it couldn't be done. One of the things that helped us was that it was us against all those members. We were not well accepted, as I told you, over there. Our ideas sounded a little scatterbrainish. The conventional armies, especially the British conventional army, didn't think very highly of our plans. They were not terribly cooperative, and although his own officers in his command loved him, the British conventional army did not like General Wingate. Period. He was not a popular fellow at all, and he had trouble getting cooperation therefore. Some folks even went as far as to hate him. That was understandable, because he was so terribly forthright, and so terribly domineering, that folks just didn't like him. Period. That got in his way. Many ranking British officers didn't like him, and therefore his project was unpopular. Yet, there it was, and he did have the Prime Minister's authority. Nobody was going to stop that, but they didn't have to cheer for him. And they didn't. So we suffered from that. Now that was not true of our Air Force attitude toward us. General Stratemeyer and his whole staff, knowing our job and understanding what I was ordered to do, were most cooperative and helped us a great deal. Now the American Army, the ground forces, General Stilwell's forces, not so. They didn't much care for us. They tried to take us over. They tried to take over our supplies. They said, "After all, they

were there first, and they were pretty poor. They were destitute, and who the hell are you Johnny-come-latelies to come over here and bring into the theater stuff and then say that's ours? The hell with that. It goes into the pot, and we all separate it." Of course, I had General Marshall's orders and General Arnold's orders that that would not happen, and so did General Stilwell have those same orders, but he ignored them. Vinegar Joe ran his area, and he didn't think much of the Pentagon anyhow, I don't think. I think he was senior enough and long time enough in this Army that nobody is going to tell him how to run his place. I think, there again, we had another character (laughter) on our hands. He, again, was an opinionated, old-timey guy, and he was going to do things his way, and that was the way it was going to be done. That's all there was to it. He was, at best, difficult. He was difficult for us. He never really hampered us, but he didn't go out of his way to help, and his people took up some of the same attitude. He wasn't about to impede us in any way, but we could tell he didn't think much of our project, and he didn't think much of Wingate either. He countermanded some of the plans, for instance, and he wasn't terribly popular with the whole project because, at the time, there were to be three brigades of

British soldiers. There were all kinds of soldiers: Southwest African, Queen's Own, Irish troops, Scotch troops. There were Black Watch people. We just ran the gamut of British units that were represented in these brigades. There were all kinds of fellows-- black, yellow. We had Gurkhas, the little fellows from Nepal. We had some Indians. We had black South Africans, the Senegalese-type fellow; the big fellow with the moon face and the laughing attitude. They were a lot of fun. Their full American vocabulary was, "Hey Joe," and that was about the extent of it. We used to yell that at them, and they would yell it back. But really, a conglomerate of the British forces.

But to get back to Stilwell's people, they didn't think a great deal of us. We had some run-ins; not so with the Air Force. The Air Force were our friends, our backers, and our promoters, and they helped us in every way. The best thing they did was let us do our job. They let us go ahead and do it on our own. They didn't interfere. They didn't attempt to impose ideas on us. They listened. General Stratemeyer was informed fully of what we were doing. He had the great quality of saying, "All right, you guys have been sent here to do something, and you know what you are going to do. I'm not going to tell

you what to do. I'm going to watch you, and if I see you making a terrible blunder, it will be up to me to try to stop it or correct it. But as long as you keep going, that's your job, and I'm going to help you get it done." He did just that. He stood off and let us do it. He was our patron, and he was a joy to work for and with. Of course, down the ranks, some of the folks thought we were out of hand sometimes, and perhaps we were. In order to try to get a special thing done sometimes, you go overboard with your enthusiasm, and I'm certain that we did it. I am certain that some of our guys were a little bit arrogant with their power and maybe showed a little bit too much urgency and stepped on some toes, but things like that happen. They didn't deter us, and I don't think anybody was terribly hurt. Sometime, we had some nasty things said about us. We were capable of saying them back; so, all in all, in our haste, as I say, maybe we were a little bit cantankerous, but we got it done. We did feel special. Let's face it, we were special and we built ourselves to be special. We were going to do a rather audacious thing, so that kind of got in the spirit of our unit, and we became rather audacious. You can't be audacious and not look like it and not sound like it, so I think that maybe sometime we were a little bit boring or overbearing.

C: But be that as it may, we knew what we were about to do, and maybe it helped us do it. Maybe you have to psyche yourself that way to get these crazy things done, and we were probably unconsciously a bit apprehensive about this new kind of thing we were going to do, and maybe we overcame the apprehension by being a little bit outwardly, sometime "braggadocious." That didn't sit very well. I pity us if we had failed. (laughter) If our project hadn't gone over and hadn't been as successful as it was, I imagine that we would have a great large egg on our face. So luckily, we were successful and success of that kind usually covers up a lot of that sort of thing. But woe be to us had we not been as successful as we were.

So now we were planning with Wingate and forming a closer union, and we're getting along in our ideas. We're beginning to spark ideas in each other, recounting and explaining our air capability and what our airplanes would be able to do, and what we would want to do. Would spark ideas of how, therefore, the ground forces could be deployed and employed, and with this kind of capability. For instance, "You mean to say you will have rockets that you can fire from the air that would blow up a ship, or that would seriously impair a

locomotive, or that would burn buildings and burn supplies, that would pin down artillery?" "Yes, we have such articles." They were exceptionally accurate, and they were exceptionally powerful when they hit. "Yes, they are a new weapon, and yes, they are relatively simple. Yes, we, lo and behold, are going to have such a weapon."

(End Side 1, Reel 5)

C: As I say, our association became one where we began to realize the capability of the other. The air began to realize the capability of the ground, and what their project was, and what their aims were, and what they were about, and what they were going to do. We saw that more clearly; therefore, knowing what their plans were and what their capabilities were, and how they could inflict trauma on the enemy, we began to match what they could do with our air capability, and see how we could improve their effectiveness by the use of air. Conversely, they began to learn what we could do, and what we were capable of doing, then they could see how that would enhance their capabilities on the ground and even expand their power and their effectiveness. So I guess what I'm saying is, we began to form a good working team.

C: As we worked, these things became apparent to us, and, naturally, it sparked our imagination, and we got enthusiastically into the game and started to plan things that we were actually able to effect later. They were orderly, they were well-thought out, and we were in no sense people who just put ourselves in place and then looked for opportunities to inflict wounds on the enemy. We actually did a lot of planning ahead of time, and I think that's why we were more successful. We planned thoroughly about what we were capable of doing, and what we were going to do. We didn't overmatch ourselves. We didn't overextend our capabilities. We kept ourselves within bounds, even though many of the things were new and were a bit audacious. They might have looked audacious, but like many things that are well planned, they might look audacious, but they are pretty doggone well-thought out. We used to say, "If you know your way in, and you especially know your way out, you're far ahead of the game. If you don't know your way out, don't go in." I feel that way about almost everything. I used to preach it in strafing. If you're going to shoot up somebody on the ground and strafe on the ground, you'd better, by golly, know or plan against the ground fire that's down in there, and know how to get in, but especially know how to get out without getting

hit. If you don't plan that, you're going to be the going-away shot in skeet if you pull up and just make a target there, a sitting duck target, for some ground fire. Well, that's the way a lot of guys got it, because they didn't plan their way out. If you can't plan the way out, then don't go in. If you can't plan your way out and you don't see it, don't go in. So, this was the same with us. We were going to do a very audacious set of things, inventing things, in jungle warfare. Yes, it was audacious; but yes, also, it was well-planned, and we knew how to get in and out. We went over it and over it and practiced it; and then when we did it, it didn't surprise us that it came off so well. We had troubles. We had problems that I'll speak of later that we didn't plan on. We made errors, some of them rather serious errors, but we were planned well enough that despite the errors, we were successful, because we were able to keep going and keep going. Any military engagement, or any military plan, is always fraught with unexpected difficulty, and your errors stand out like a sore thumb. But if your plan is good enough and it has the momentum, it will keep going. You will get it done with some adjustment and with some quick thinking, some adaptability, that you have read into your plan. It will work, and the aerial invasion

was the biggest plan we had. All the others were tactical plans. They were general in nature; they worked within a framework of capability, and general planning, and then they were specific things. But the aerial invasion was quite an undertaking, and it was a big project. It was well-planned and was the one big thing of that campaign. Then the rest was just the fulfillment of that one big project. The plan, of course, was to get those men in there behind the lines. We ended up putting in some 17,000 British soldiers with all their supplies, including their small guns, their cannon, small artillery, their mules to carry their things, their radio equipment, and their ammunition. We put them in there, and then they ran their long penetration columns from a base right in the enemy's heartland. This certainly was a very, very formidable force for the Japanese to the north to reckon with, because there we were down between them and their supplies, and there was Wingate sitting on their supply lines in the jungle. They would have to march the many, many weeks to even get to them, and that is the time we saved Wingate from marching by flying him in. The general plan was to land gliders first with the advanced party with the invasion groups, and they would go in at night. They landed with gliders, and the gliders contained small bulldozers and engineering equipment. We

had, by the way, acquired an airborne engineer unit when we got over there. We had all their equipment. They had scrapers, dozers, and the tools. We put them in the gliders and landed that force. This was the attack force that would go in and land on the strip, spread out, and protect the perimeters; and then the engineers would start scraping off the land and making us a landing strip. They'd do that all day, and then the next night we'd land a C-47 on that strip. That's what we did. That's what Broadway was, and that's what Picadilly was, and Chowinghee. The British named these places after famous streets. After awhile, after the Japanese realized that we were there and had implanted an airbase and had a stronghold right in their territory, they had to come in and try to get it out. Naturally, there was hand-to-hand fighting to protect those bases, to protect those strongholds. They knew how to fight; they knew how to jungle fight--both sides did. Many a time, we would land airplanes in there and the Japs would be right on the end of the strips. There would be a gun or two or so, a party of Japanese, down at the end that the British hadn't been able to get out of there. You would be taking an airplane off, and a man would come up to you and say, "Hey, Colonel, when you go out, don't turn left," because you usually do,

"turn right, because if you turn left, they'll get you. They're over in there, so make a right turn and be sure to get off as quickly as you can." It was that close. It was that kind of warfare that we planned, and it didn't surprise them at all. It surprised our guys, but we got so used to it that it became a way of life. At night, you didn't sleep too well, because you knew that there were crawly things running around, and that there were Japs who could crawl right into your place and throw grenades and start shooting up the place--and that happened. They would come right in on our bases. As an example. One night we had a DC-3 run a little too long on the strip, and in trying to turn around, he got stuck. He was down at the end of the strip. I forget what he had a load of, but he and his crew got out. They started to walk back to get help, to get a dozer or something, to help give him a yank and get him out of there. They hadn't walked very far until their whole airplane blew up. So the enemy was that close. When they left it, the enemy sneaked in and planted a few explosives in the airplane and just let her blow. As I say, oddly enough, we got used to that. It didn't seem to be anything terribly exceptional. We knew they were there, and so what? We knew there was a shot that they weren't going to get us, and that the British troops

could hold them off, and we could still keep bringing our people in, and bringing supplies in, airplane after airplane after airplane. At night, we would land on those things, in and out, in and out, in and out--busiest airport in the world, probably, at that time, really. I forget how many sorties we would bring in there at night, but it was phenomenal. Maybe a couple of hundred. We worked it all with lights and radio, and we just had a marvelous control tower that brought everybody in by number. Everybody got on line and came in, and then we would come back and load up again and go on back in. We were just like a bunch of little ants flying in and out of there. That air corridor was a very, very busy lane at that time.

As I say, we got 17,000 men and their mules, even some oxen--they had oxen that did heavy work and pulled heavy loads--we brought them in. We had a capability of even flying the mules; we flew mules in gliders. I remember that we had to test all that ahead of time. We didn't know whether a British mule would go into a glider or not, and whether he would ride or not. We had all manner of schemes dreamed up of how we were going to have to do it. So we had all kinds of bamboo cages built to put them in. We loaded them that way so they couldn't kick

the C-47 apart. How were these animals going to ride? We had no experience at such things.

The British mule is a typical army mule. He's a big fellow. He was quite a handy animal to have around. He sure could carry his weight. He was rather reluctant, as most mules are, but he was a fine animal, and they depended a great deal on him. He was their mobility in the jungle. The poor fellows had to be "de-brayed"--the mules. Going along in the jungle, and you'd be within a hundred yards of the enemy, and the enemy wouldn't quite know exactly where you were, he might guess you were in the area. He would have a column, and you would have a column, and you had mules. If the mule brayed or hee-hawed, he would give you away.

These soldiers were trained to even strap all their military utensils and everything so they didn't clank. Those columns, 700 of them, maybe 500 of them, could sneak through the jungle undetected, because they were so quiet, and they were trained. They didn't speak; they didn't make noises. So here, if you had a mule that would give you away, you had to do something about it. So they performed, as we called it, a "brayectomy" on the poor fellow, and he couldn't speak. So here, we had these

brutes, these mute mules, and we had to transport them in there. We had to put them in gliders and in aircraft, and we didn't know how they were going to take to that sort of thing. We knew something of the nature of the mule, and (laughter) we were a little apprehensive. So, we had all manner of wild schemes of how we were going to do this. To make a long story short, we drew these up and we started to test them. Actually, we did search the outfit to find any farm boy that had any experience, or knew anything, about mules. We found a couple of our guys that had mules on the farm, and one of these kids, not from his experience, but just from his plain, practical mind, set us all on our ear. We attacked the problem as though it were something that you would have to sit down and start from square one and design something. Boy, we attacked it as though it were just one of these terrible, insurmountable things. This kid just cut that all out and said, "Why don't we just try walking them in and see what they do?" Lo and behold, that's what we did, and the mule took to it just like they take to everything else. It didn't concern them one bit. It amazed us, this wisdom of this youngster, after all our planning, that the simplest thing was, "Well, why don't you ask the mule, really?" So we asked the mule, and we asked him to go in the glider. He walked in the

glider and he stood in there. So then we said, "What are you going to do?" Then we did take some precautions. We had a mule tender to go along that knew mules. He had a ready revolver to clunk the guy between the eyes if he started tearing the glider apart. He wasn't necessary at all. He wasn't required. The mules took off and enjoyed the ride, landed, and did nothing. As the guys in the glider said, "Why, they even banked on the turn." When they banked the glider, the old mule would lean, and heck, he knew what he was doing. He knew all about flying. So we had no trouble with that. But, as I say, we got 17,000 men in there--their ammunition; their guns; and their transportation, the mules. Then we kept them in there.

H: I understand that your initial landing at Broadway was met with quite a few accidents, landing in the dark, and a number of gliders were cracked up, and some of the equipment was ruined.

C: Yes. That was one of the mistakes. What had happened is that we had two clearings in the jungle that were natural clearings that we had picked--I had picked them--and had pictures of them, and had topographical studies made of them, and had them mapped and pretty well-planned.

C: We were to go into Picadilly and Broadway; these were the names. The way our timing was set, we were going to take a C-47 with two gliders off every minute and a half. We had our lines strung, and we had rehearsed our performance. At the word "go," the first airplane was to roll. We had them all lined up, and we had an excellent system where the airplane would come into its take off position and stop, and its gliders would be rolled in behind it, the tow lines hooked up, the signals given, and off he went. We were getting one of those off every minute and a half.

We had them spaced so that the first one would go to Picadilly, the next one would go to Broadway; the next one would go to Picadilly, the next one would go to Broadway. They were to keep their speed constant, and they were to arrive somewhat in the same order. They were to go around and get in the pattern, and land down with a system of lights that we had, coupled with the rate of descent in the airplane at 100 miles an hour, so that when the glider pilot saw his cutoff light, which was a vertical light from the ground over which the airplane flew him, he cut his ropes, his tow lines. He then held his glider at 80 miles an hour. If he held the glider at 80 miles an hour with his spoilers down

and his flaps down, and he held it at 80 miles an hour, he would land in the landing area and then he was to roll and pull to the right, roll and pull to the left, and pull to the right and get out of the landing area. We had to supply this kind of a landing system for the glider pilots, because we found that we could not just have them come over the airport and cut and then make their own way in, gliding in at night. That wouldn't have worked. They would have been all over the place, and we had to have some order.

So we devised a landing approach channel set as to altitude and speed so that by distance, altitude, and speed we'd know just about where he was going to land. Now, as it turned out, the one landing area was taken away from us. We had stayed away from those areas meticulously, because the British insisted upon it. The British sense of secrecy, we always felt, was a little overdone, but we did vow that we would not keep going over those landing zones, because they were afraid that the enemy would catch on, and that when we landed, in fact, the worst that we planned for would happen--that would be that the original landing party, going in to take the landing strips, would be ambushed, and that the Japs, having guessed our plan, would then, in fact,

just wipe us out, because the landing party, as you could guess, would be at quite a disadvantage. They would be outnumbered. They didn't have the guns. They didn't have the ability to overcome that kind of an ambush, although we planned, and we had quite a force that was going to land and spread out, and they knew their business. They even were planning to battle for that, if, in fact, there was an ambush. But if you could avoid the ambush, it was wise, of course, to do it. Therefore, the rule was, that once the places were picked, photographed, studied, and decided upon, we would not keep flying over there. Now, I did fly by them several times on other missions. We worked it so that if we were over there on a fighter mission, we'd kind of come by close and glance. But we did not draw attention to them. We stayed away from them. That began to eat on me and my people, knowing we were going in there. We were the ones going in with the gliders. It was just not prudent to go and take another good look at those places. So we held off, and held off, and we held off. Then, I finally said, "All right, I've got to break this secrecy bit, and we do have to take a look at that thing. So what we will do is send a couple of bombers over, and we'll bomb near there as though we are on a bombing mission. Then we'll happen to come

over the two spots, coming back with our aerial cameras and aerial photographers, and we'll take good pictures of those things in the morning of the night we are going to invade." So, we did that, and here we were staging that morning, getting everything in place, and all the commanders were there. The British area commander, General Slim, was there. General Stratemyer was there. The head of the British air forces, whose name I can't remember-- he was an air marshal--Sir John Baldwin was there, and their staffs. We were set to go. The word was go, and we were getting ready. As soon as the dusk came, we were to start. Any last-minute decisions to be made, the officers involved were there. They just stood back, and let us go ahead with our work. Well, our aerial reconnaissance photo-taking mission came back, went up, and blew up their pictures immediately, fixed them, developed them, and then blew them up so we could see them. While they were still in the wet bath, or whatever they're in, Charles Russhon, who had taken the pictures, began to see something on the one landing area. He looked closer, and they were obstructions. So he rushed down to where we were on Lalaghat and called me over and said, "Hey boss, you've got to look! They've caught on to us." He opened up this large thing that was probably about a 3 by 3; it was a blown-up picture.

C: There on our landing strip were huge logs that had been drug across it that looked to us like obstructions that you would put down so that gliders, or nothing else, could land there, and, they, in fact, had guessed our purpose, that there was one place we weren't going to make it. So then you had to deduce that here, lo and behold, was the other one, Broadway, which was clean and had no obstructions at all. Now you had to surmise, at least, and judge the probability, that since they had blocked the one and not the other, they might want you coming into that one to ambush you. This was a probability that had to be decided. Also, it had to be decided, was this a coincidence or was it purposeful? We had to judge that it was purposeful, that they were on to our plan, and that they had taken the necessary steps. You put yourself in the enemy commander's position, and he says, "Well, that place is capable of accepting a glider force landing in it, so why don't I be smart and just fix it so that nothing can land in there. I'll get that done, and then I'll do the other one." All of these things had to be quickly assessed, and naturally it was a time of excruciating concentration and decision-making. I don't remember feeling it was a burden. I remember feeling it was a responsibility that had to be discharged, and there we were. Okay now, here

you are, and you planned this whole thing. Now what do you do?

My decision, and I had to make it, although I realized that had my superiors felt that I was way wrong, I was sure enough going to be vetoed. I mean General Stratemeyer wasn't going to stand there and let me make the blunder of all times. I appreciated that. However, he also wasn't going to make my decision for me. I was going to make the original decision, and then I would suspect that he would have used veto power. Certainly, he had a right; he was the commanding general of all Air Forces in the area. Then his duty would have come to the fore: "Do I allow this?" Naturally, he had a burden, but the immediate burden was supposedly my decision. I say supposedly because, actually, the decision was taken away from me. It became Wingate's decision; it became a British decision because they were the guys that were going to go in and get chewed up, if there was any chewing up to be done. They were the ones that were putting themselves in dire jeopardy if, in fact, the enemy was planning an ambush. Although some of the glider pilots and the leaders of our air part of this action would be there and would be in jeopardy, really, the people that were going to take it, and had

to make the decision whether they were going in or not, were those ground people. They were Wingate's people. If they decided they were going in, and they were going to battle for that landing strip, there was just no doubt. We couldn't say, "No, we won't take you in." You see, the play was taken away from me in reality. My decision had to be--and there really wasn't even any thought of this--my decision would have had to be, "All right, we planned this whole thing, and we've told you that we would transport you in there and put you in place to get your job done. Now you say, 'Okay, let's go,' even in adversity," I wasn't going to say, "No, we are not going to take you." It wasn't my place to make that decision. If the invading forces say, "Let's go on ahead," the transporters of the invading force don't say, "No, I won't take you." So, really, I've been credited in some writings and in some minds of making that tough decision. Actually, as I say, the play was taken away from me. It was kind of a conclusion, a foregone conclusion, when the British said, "No, we're going in." I actually got our glider men together, and got our force together after that, explained what had happen, and what we were going to do about it, and, in fact, we weren't going into two places. We weren't going to have that luxury. We were going to have to

adapt ourselves a little bit; we were adaptable enough to change our plans. We were going into one place. We were all going into there, and we were going to keep pouring them in, and pouring them in, and pouring them in, until the British said, "Stop." We were going to put our force on the ground, and we were going to build that air strip. We were going to go forward, and we were going to accommodate the situation by just going into one place rather than have the luxury of going into two. We were going to have to time ourselves so that we didn't jam up on each other, and the fellows who had been briefed to go into Picadilly were now going to be re-briefed, and "You are going into the same kind of landing situation, and all you have got to do is follow what you have been trained to do. Follow the landing system, get in the pattern, trust your tow pilot, and trust the tow plane. He's going to put you, glider pilot, in the position, and when you hit the light, you cut and you're set, and you go on in." Well, I remember now, and I have read it since, there was a reporter there that recorded the words, but I actually did say to our people that our decision was easy; really, there was none, that if those British soldiers had that kind of guts, and that kind of heart, that they were going forward and going in there, it was up to us to take them in. It

was that simple. That's the way that was resolved, and we took them in.

Now, in the actual landing, not everything went well. There were two errors made. One was that we went in without lights, and our glider pilots were focusing on the exhaust flares of the DC-3. The DC-3s were night-protected, but the blue flare of their exhaust underneath the nacelle of the engine was discernible to a glider pilot, to someone that close. We had trained ourselves to fly on those lights. So we flew low-tow in order to look up and have the orientation of those lights for our glider pilots. It's kind of a weird thing to be towed in a glider out there in the night and not have all the perspectives that you would like to have. Now, running lights give it to you. We turned our running lights off because of the seeming logic to us that we didn't want the Japs picking us off as we flew this corridor in behind their lines into their territory. So we went in lights out. We had practiced that, and it had worked. It had seemed to be a proper procedure. Now, low-tow, understand, not high-two; that would be the gliders are being towed below the tow aircraft, not above it, which is normal. The gliders got overloaded, which we knew was going to happen, but we didn't realize the degree.

C: We limited them, and said, "Limit yourself to X number of pounds"--I think it was something like 4,000 pounds-- "and no more. That's the limit that we can tow." After that, the glider becomes not a good flying machine; it wasn't a good one to begin with, and if you overload it, it won't work. It will be dragged through the air rather than glided through the air. So, we practiced this, and we knew every piece of equipment, and every person, and everything that was going into each glider. Each glider was assigned its load and its personnel. They were brought up to the zone, and right up to the loading area, in excellent, meticulous order. The British are superb at this sort of thing, and we had practiced it over, and over, and over again. We actually practiced everyone of those complements that were going in with their equipment, and they would stand back, and then on signal, they would trot forward and learn how to get in to that airplane and strap themselves in and go. We had that down to a science.

I was satisfied that they knew what they were doing, and we took for granted that they would be very, very strict about their loading. We knew they would tend to overload, just as the way we would tend to overload. You tell a soldier he's going into possible combat, and he

isn't going to take his ration of bullets around his waist, or slung as a bandolier around his shoulders, the way they wear it, he is going to take two if he can get ahold of them, or three, and he unconsciously is building up his own weight. You get eight or nine guys in there with their equipment, and they say, "Oh, I'll just take this one more thing." We found that in their fear that they weren't going to get enough in, the British troops, with the knowledge, I'm sure, of their commanders, overloaded those gliders saying, "Well, these Air Force guys want everything the best, and they have limited us. We have seen overloaded gliders, and we've overloaded them ourselves before, and we'll do that."

So, that wasn't a critical mistake, but it was a mistake. It was a coincidence. You know how coincidences have a habit of getting together on you and causing not the coincidence but sometimes catastrophe? You can't out-guess a coincidence. You can plan on every doggone one you can think of and, lo and behold, they will pop upon you, and they'll start getting together and making not isolated coincidences, but a string of them will now get you and cause you difficulty. This was one of them. We could have gotten away with the overloading, but that

came up, and we had planned that this was the full moon. We actually timed this for the full moon. We had hoped for no cloud cover because at this time of the year in India-Burma, the skies are clear, very clear, and the moon is very, very bright. So, we had a bright moon. We had had one the night before, and we said, "Oh boy, it's going to hold." I had flown the pattern the night before in the dark in the DC-3. I wanted to test, I wanted to try, and then we were maneuvering, and we sent a couple of us in different airplanes to see if we could discern anything we hadn't planned on. I noticed that the moon was very bright. I noticed also that a haze came up and that it was kind of silver in the night. But it was most bright. It didn't occur to me that this was going to cause a bad visibility situation for the glider pilot. So there it was, and I didn't see it. The other pilot didn't see it. We just knew there was a very bright night and thought we were lucky. So the next night, we were helped. Now we started out at dusk. We started out from our end, the safe end, in light. Our first trips, the first tows, went off early, and they were well into enemy territory as darkness overtook them, because we realized that they were the surprise, and nobody was going to see this later. But as this train of airplanes were coming over, and over, and over

enemy territory, somebody was going to guess that something was occurring. We were hoping that they would think we were bombardment. As a matter of fact, we ran some bombardment missions in various places, just dropped bombs on targets that we knew to distract them, take their attention away, and they'd say, "Well, those are those bombers," and they'd go on home. We wanted the night to cover us, but we wanted the moon to guide us, and it did us a trick. The haze came up and it was a very, very silvery atmosphere, and it was hard for the glider pilot to see the tow plane in, and it was hard for him to see the exhaust flares. Now had it been dead dark, he would have seen the exhaust flares plainly in pitch black, but in this lighted situation with that peculiar visibility, it became difficult for him to pick those things up.

Now we've got an overloaded glider that tends to go down and overrun the tow plane underneath it. The glider would have the tendency to overrun. Now, if he's got his two fixed flares, and he's got good visibility, and he can see the airplane in front, and he's oriented, he can see that he is coming too close and getting too low, and he can bring himself back up and hold his position. But some of the fellows overran, and finding

themselves in an overrun position, their line would become slack. Then when they took up the slack to make it taut again, they would snap it, and we had several occasions of that. Pilots were radioing back that they had lost their tow, and we were getting information from other glider pilots that this was occurring to them. Before we decided exactly what it was, several tows had broken and the gliders were going down in enemy territory in the dark.

I forget how many, but I think about eight of them broke their tow. We suddenly realized what was happening, and we sent the word to everybody, "Turn on your landing lights and fly high-tow." That overcame it, because in high-tow the glider pilot would not have the tendency to overrun his towship because he is above it, you see, and all he had to do is pull his nose up a little bit and he will come back down. It's easier to manage and hold his position and not overrun, and keep his tow line taut in the high-tow position with the lights on, that he can see, and he's well oriented. That cured it. We had no more breaking of tows. But until we learned that, we lost some. To be expected? Well, no. I can't say that. I can say that these things happen to you, but you can't say, "Well, that happens in the best of

families," and toss it off. I say, and said at the time, it was an error; it was an error on my part. I felt it deeply, we all felt it. We overcame it, we were well trained enough, and we knew our business well enough to overcome it quickly. But that was the first error. Now remember, there were coincidences there, the overloading of the glider, and now you could get away with that as long as everything else was equal and as long as everything else worked all right, you could get away with the overloading. But then given the visibility difficulty, and the tendency to overrun the tow plane, you've got another element, and they get together and do you in. That happened. Many of those people who landed in the gliders, by the way, in enemy territory made it. They were skillful enough to get down, and skillful enough, many of them, to march out. As much as a month later, they were able to be hidden by the natives and able to hide themselves, and were jungle-wise enough to get themselves out. Many of them were killed, of course. I think this is the point, we will say, in this invasion of that night. We'll have to go back somewhere else and get the numbers because they escape me, but they are astounding, but we put in, I believe, upward of 500 people that night, and we lost 28 known dead. Some were captured and some walked out. But in

the glider accidents, I'm pretty sure I'm correct, we had 28 fatalities. We had a lot of casualties but none that you couldn't handle.

Now the next difficulty and the next error was that now we were going to put the whole effort that had been split--the plans had been split between two airdromes--we were going to put them into one and make it go. We felt that we would need the double force if, in fact, the enemy was on to us and was going to ambush us, so we felt we had better go in with the whole thing, the stronger force.

(End Side 2, Reel 5)

C: We had designed a system for landing the gliders made up of an arrangement of lights. It was the first team that would land, and the first glider landed free; they landed on their own. Then there were jeeps in those gliders, and there were trained people who ran out, got the jeeps, and took off to the ends of the strips, that we were going to use for landing, to define them, and to place the lights where the gliders were to touch down, and also beat it back and set up the cut-off light back of the landing strip, and the

light was placed a number of feet behind; it would define the point at which the glider pilot would cut himself free of his tow plane. Then proceed straight ahead, to glide, and if he did it as I have described before, at 80 miles an hour, and just held that 80 miles an hour, he would land right smack on a predefined spot, and he was to roll forward and pull to the right and get out of the way.

Johnny Alison was the first glider in. He knew the area, and he landed properly and rolled over to his stop. The next glider that came in, I believe, was Bill Taylor. He was the head of the glider contingent, and he rolled on in. Those two gliders had the teams in them to set up the landing light system.

Here is another mistake. I'm pretty sure Taylor had briefed himself on Picadilly, but he knew both because he trained the people going into both places. But now he's on Broadway. He is on a different air field. He is not going into the one he had planned to go into. He is on the other one, and he is the commander, and he is the leader. The system is part his design. He sent his team off, and they got disoriented in the dark in the jeeps. They drove back and they set the lights in

an area that they had every right to believe would be a good area, but lo and behold, it was an area where large ruts in the surface of the ground had been gouged by elephants dragging large teak logs across that area. There had been some logging of teak in that area at sometime or another, and elephants had drug large teak logs across that terrain. The grass had grown up and covered that. Our aerial photography that we studied didn't pick that up. What I had seen from the air was land on which we could land. I was satisfied, and we were all satisfied, that it was rough, but it was good terrain on which to land gliders.

The area that we had designed to put the lights on was clear. The area that Johnny Alison and our first gliders landed on was good ground. But the lights were set up to point--the system landed the glider in another direction a bit off. A clearing, yes, and probably the largest part of the clearing to accept this number of gliders coming in and get out of the way for the next guy coming in would have been fine. But the ruts were there, and the ruts started to damage the landing gears of the gliders and stopped them and they didn't roll. Then the next glider coming in into the same area would land and start rolling and see a glider in front of him. Some of

the pilots actually hopped gliders in front of them. They still had enough speed to pull back on their sticks and get over. But they started to collide on the ground. Seeing that, the men on the ground started to run to change the lights. Many of them got missed by gliders that were coming in, because here they came. Our plan was working, and it was hard to stop the flow of the gliders. It was just impossible to stop them. They were in line, and they were coming in, and they were coming in properly. They were coming over the lights. Everybody was doing their job, but when they got on the ground, there wasn't a place for them to roll away from because the ruts were stopping our roll-away capability. We couldn't clear the landing strip. So they frantically started to move the lights over and changed the landing strip. Now there was another adaptability, wonderful guys on the ground just killing themselves, running into physical exhaustion, changing those lights, because they knew if we could change the lights we could change the direction of landing. That's what they did, and that did make it possible to get them in, but many of them cracked up. Finally, it just got too much. It got so that they couldn't handle it on the ground, and a flare was fired to stop the incoming. We were listening to pilots on the air, and we did bring

a few of the last tows back. But we got the main force in, with difficulty, yes; with some accidents, yes. I don't remember that anybody was killed because of the glider accidents, but we certainly messed up a lot of gliders, which was to be expected. The deaths, a couple of them, were glider pilots who, getting in a tough position on their landing procedure, doubted their tow plane and didn't follow the procedure and cut free, and tried to come in free and landed up short in the trees. That was one accident.

That was one of those things where a pilot gets himself into a situation and feels that he'd better go on his own and not follow the procedure, and not understanding what is happening to him exactly, and not trusting the procedure, or something. You can't guess what the pilot was confronted with. He chose to go on his own, and fell short. That was one of the worst accidents. A couple of the others, yes, were glider accidents where they ran off, or they didn't land properly. But although you just feel terrible about the accidents that do happen, all in all, you can't say it was minor, and yet, statistically, it was a minor part of the action, because we did get 90 percent, or 87 percent, I think. We were judged at 85 percent to 87 percent effective in the glider

operation in a glider-invasion situation, and that had never happened. If you remember, the only one that had ever been tried before was the invasion in Sicily, and that compared to our work was a debacle. They had many, many unforeseen things happen to them and that, I don't think, could be even classed as much of a success. They weren't effective, and they didn't have a good rating. Ours was good, and considering the errors in judgment I made, because after all, I was responsible. I was the guy that should have seen them, and I was the commander. It comes down to, those things got by me. Some of our thoroughly practiced well-laid plans of mice and men did go a little awry, and some of them went slightly awry, but notice that it was not to the extent that we weren't able to grab it, adapt to it, and change it. I think that's the way that sort of thing should be judged. As a matter of fact, I'm satisfied now later in life that we met the adversity, and we had planned and trained ourselves well enough that we could accommodate to it, and overcome it, and get our job done. We did that very thing.

Now, they got in there, and right away before the dawn came up, they were hacking away at that place to make a proper landing strip for C-47s. Now when the flare went

off, that was a signal that something dire had occurred. We had set signals, and the red flare, as the saying went, was buried very deeply in a British major's pocket. And as we would speak of this flare, the flare was to be shot, and everybody knew that a catastrophe was happening on the ground. We figured that, in fact, the Japanese were there, and that the whole thing was off, and that we were to send no more in. The mission was to be scrubbed right at that point.

I remember that British officer. He was a delightful young fellow, and I'm sure he was a Scotchman. We had a lot of fun with him because he said, "I'm the fellow with the flare, and it's in a very deep pocket." So, lo and behold, when Johnny and the guys on the ground started to get more gliders and more accidents than they could possibly handle, and they couldn't move the lights anymore, they were just getting surfeited with equipment coming in, they felt they had to stop it. They couldn't get their radios set up. The radio that they planned on--we had doubles--we had backups for everything in case one is damaged and lost, and, lo and behold, we lost one some way or other entirely, and we smashed the other one. So even our backup was gone, and they couldn't get it working. Our radio people were

in there, and we were anxiously awaiting their first communication which was to be almost immediate. We were to know what was going on, on the ground, right away. They couldn't communicate. Their radios were out, another thing you don't foresee. You plan the contingency, and even the contingency blows. So there you are! So they thought it best to stop it, so they sent up the red flare. Now the red flare meant catastrophe. Then they did get a radio working, and we heard the words "Soya Link," and "Soya Link" meant catastrophe. "Pork sausage" meant everything is going smoothly and well. We got the word, finally, when they got a set up, we got the code word Soya Link. The British used that because they thought the worst thing in the world was the American sausage that they had in their rations. It was made out of soy beans, and it was called Soya Link. The British, being connoisseurs of good pork sausage, thought that this was an atrocity. They thought to try to make sausage out of soy beans was just about the end, so the worst word they could think of was Soya Link. We got the word Soya Link, and that meant to us back at the base that all hell had broken loose, and that, in fact, they were battling for their lives. We read the worst into it.

C: So we went through a couple of bad, bad hours in the night. We brought back the tows. We were in contact with those pilots, turned them around when the red flare went off, and brought back some. But our main effort was in there. My guys and their guys were in there. I had to consider that they were lost. Now, what do you do? I will admit that it was my tendency at the time to say to Wingate, "All right, let's go with the next wave. Let's get everything we've got. Do you think this would be possible? Get everything we've got, get them in there, and the gliders we got, get them down on that ground, and win that battle in there and try to get our people out." Naturally, that was one thing to do, but it wasn't the sensible thing to do. But it was something you had to consider. Wingate, said, "No." I remember him lecturing me, and he was fond of quoting. He quoted the Bible constantly, and he quoted other great sayings, and the one of them was, the gist of it was, you never tried to snatch victory from obvious defeat. We were beside ourselves. I was sunk. I thought that all my plans had really, really gone awry, and now the whole thing comes down. I had lost it; I hadn't done my job. So we waited anxiously, and I could wait no longer. I got ahold of a pilot by the name of Radovich who was a gutsy guy, and I said, "Rad, we want

a pilot to take an L-1" Now, an L-1 was practically a free balloon. The L-1 was a liaison airplane, good-sized thing, and it would take off very slowly and landed very slowly--very rugged and very safe. They had good radios in them. We beefed up that radio, and I said, "Rad, go in on the tree tops, alone, as soon as it's light. You go in and find that place. You land on that thing, pick yourself a good landing. You know it, we briefed you. You land, and you will be the communication, that airplane. You try to get to our guys, and get them to get over to you and tell us what the hell is going on in there." So, in effect, the quickest available way to get a radio in there that could talk to us, we got in. Rad got in there, and then we were overjoyed to learn that not only were they in there, but they were already working on the strip, and the reason they had sent up the red flare was to say, "Hey, cut it out. Quit sending them in here. We've got too many. We can't handle any more gliders. They are cracking each other up, and we've got all we need in here. The advanced people have gotten in, and the engineers are in here," because they were the first. "They are in here with their stuff. The combat teams have fanned out in the perimeter, and they've got the place secure, and everything is running great. This is

all we needed was the word, and all we needed was the radio." Then pretty soon they were able to patch up their radio that they had on the ground and got it working. We had a trailer that was a complete radio sending station. We had two of them, and between the two, they were able to get one going. We were so overjoyed that we went ahead with the plan. By that night, they said, "Send in three DC-3s, and here is what we want in those DC-3s." What they wanted was stuff to make the airdrome better, the landing strip better. Some of the lights had been lost or something like that. They had the lights all set up, and they put the lights on, and over went our first C-47s loaded and landed. Johnny always kidded me. He said, "We asked for three, and Cochran sent 12." (laughter) So we sent the first 12, and we said, "How about that?" They said, "Wait a little while, and then start them some more." Pretty soon we were in business.

Every night after that we started pouring them in, and pouring them in, and pouring them in. Then the next night, we decided to hurry up the plan for another landing to the south which was called Chowringhee. We were flexible enough to mount that invasion the following night rather than wait, and in we went with the force

into Chowringhee. Then that was the one that I think the first glider in was Jack Coogan. Do you remember Jackie Coogan, the kid movie star? Jackie Coogan was the great, great movie star as a child, and here he is now a glider pilot, and he's an air commando. He was in the assault force of the landing at Chowringhee, which was a repeat of our action into Broadway.

Now as we went forth, of course, we kept pouring more, and more, and more people in there, and more firepower, more mules, more everything, and their column started to go out and get in place. They started to cut the roads and build more air strips. They would build more of what they called the strongholds, and they placed themselves in a strategic position so the Japs couldn't get by them. Then the Japs would come in and try to root them out. We would have three and four different battles going at these different places, strategic situations, at various times, and they'd always build an air strip right alongside it. We'd bring in replacements, and take out the wounded. We'd bring in supplies, we'd bring in ammunition, guns. We learned how to knock down pretty good-sized guns, then weld parts of them back together, and build them back together to give them a better firepower to answer the Japanese who had brought

up pretty good-sized artillery. The Japs even brought up tanks to try to root them out of their emplacements where they were cutting off their military supply lanes. Then we came with our fighters and B-25s. You see, we had a squadron and a half, or two squadrons almost, of B-25s that we had acquired after we got over there. Because they had 75mm cannons in their nose. They were the B-25Hs, and they had a cannon in the nose, and we could use them. We actually put fighter pilots in them at first and then trained these other pilots, and they would strafe with those B-25 airplanes. They would use those guns just as though they were .50 calibers. They could get two, and sometimes three, shots in their diving run, and they were firing cannon that supplied Wingate's ground forces with another piece of artillery. We would go over them and stay over them hour after hour after hour, and the Japanese then didn't dare fire a gun because we would see the flare of their guns, and then we would go down and shoot them apart. We became very, very effective, really close support of those folks that were pinned down in there and fighting darn near on all sides of them. But it was amazing what those people could do. The Britisher is a terrific soldier when he is defending. They did some deeds that were just astounding to watch, and the guts of those people. They'd

get pounded all night with artillery coming in, and in, and in. Then in the morning we'd be over them, and that would give them time because the Japs wouldn't fire while we were up there looking for them. Then we'd go down and try to knock them out of there. We'd knock out their forward position of artillery guns when we would find them.

The British on the ground would spot them for us with smoke bombs, and they'd fire smoke bombs over and say, "Okay, now there is the bracket." Then our guys would find the gun and come down, get in line, and just pound the hell out of the Japanese ground things. It was quite a war, and it was a tough one. Then our L-5s who now would be stationed, you understand, in behind Japanese lines at these various air strips. We called them bush pilots, but these were our liaison guys, and they were all enlisted pilots. We had 150 of them. We had a whole group. We had four squadrons of them, and they were run, of course, I think by three or four officers. The rest were enlisted men and, boy, they were the best soldiers you ever wanted to see in your life. They were dedicated, and they were good. They lived behind Japanese lines in that tough situation, because you're liable to be hopped by Japanese anytime.

Of course, they were protected. You tried to keep them away, but that threat was always there. Here you are living behind Japanese lines and flying airplanes in and out of the strips, and they would collect the wounded at the immediate site, come into the big bases of Chowringhee or Broadway, off-load, and go back with a replacement and some ammunition, and bring out another wounded, and just keep on doing that. Then the wounded would be collected. Then when the DC-3s came in at night with supplies or personnel or equipment, the wounded would go into the DC-3s, and that very night they would be back and taken from our bases to hospitals back in the rear.

So Wingate's first request was more than adequately supplied, because we had a wonderful system of evacuation of wounded. They not only didn't lie in the jungle anymore to die and have to be left to die, they were the best cared for guys in the business, and we got them out. They would get out the same day, and they'd be in hospitals. You know that we saved many, many-- well, thousands of lives. This was the work, the very necessary and very proud work, of those liaison guys, and they were very proud of themselves. By the way, they were the beloved of the British soldier. I

remember when I would go in, and if I went in in a liaison airplane--if you were going in in an airplane, you had a load to take in, and you had a load to take out. I remember bringing one kid whose leg was all shot up. They loaded him in my airplane, and I got him out. I've never seen such appreciation from that boy. He just thought I was the grandest thing he ever saw in his life. There were many instances where the kids on stretchers that were pretty well shot up would kiss the hands of the pilot after they brought them in, because they were so appreciative of what we were doing. We were mighty popular, by the way, with the British ground forces. We not only amazed them, but they were mighty proud to be associated with us, and a great camaraderie was set up between the forces. We admired each other. Our air guys admired the guts of those people on the ground, and didn't want any part of it. (laughter) You're aware, I'm sure, of an airman's idea of ground warfare. He thinks it's pretty stupid, albeit necessary, but we recognized the tough things that these people were doing and willing to do. We answered it in kind. It was an inspiration to our men, I'm sure, because they were always conscious of how much tougher those men had it, and we were ready and willing to do almost anything to help them and to make their jobs better and easier,

and I'm sure we did it. But the regular war went on then for months after we got those people in there. Then the job was to keep them in, to keep supplying them with firepower from the air, to become their air artillery, to become their supply line, to become their evacuation, their liaison, dreaming up new things. We began to spot targets that were in the jungle that they couldn't find, supply depots for instance, and we found that we had a capability that has since been used in recent wars of sending an L-5 spotter over with a knowledgeable ground person, one of their people, in the seat and search out in the jungle the target. Then fly right over it and spot it with smoke, and then have the fighters and the B-25s come in and just beat it up because some of their places were well camouflaged. But the area was known, but you couldn't find them from the air because the jungle cover was so complete. But getting down low, if you knew the general vicinity and you had a person there who knew the terrain and knew where it was, you could mark it. Then you could go down and do a real good job once it's marked. We found that to be quite effective. We even found our liaison guys wanting to put small bombs on L-5s. They started to do that. That didn't seem to be very effective, but they wanted to get right into the act. They could get right down low

on the deck and find targets that we couldn't see higher up, and they dropped some small bombs on them. Everybody got into that act. But now, having them in place, the ground warfare started. The Japanese came down and tried to get them out. We had such places, as I remember, one was called White City, and that was quite a sizeable stronghold. What it was, it was on high ground and it commanded the main road that was supplying the Japanese forces, you see, which were to the north facing Stilwell, up where Stilwell had built the Lido Road and was trying to come down from the north. The Japanese were up there holding him off. We were down south of them actually behind that front. So then the supply routes to that front were to the south on down toward Mandalay, and we were planted right in between their supply and their frontlines. Naturally, in order to keep that thing going in the north, they had to get us out of there. They didn't get us out of there. They stayed--I say us--they didn't get Wingate's forces out of there, and they stayed until the rainy season. Then we pulled them out, or they started to march back.

Now long about here, we ought to say that, naturally, our association with Wingate flourished. We had some

run-ins, one that has been written about rather often. Every book that's written about that campaign over there, and just about everyone that's been written about Wingate by British authors, talk about one of our altercations, or our confrontations. I don't know if it's ever been clear, and I don't much care, but what had happened was Wingate, of course, among other things, you can guess, was extremely ambitious. Now his efforts have paid off, and I would liken him a little bit, in a fond way, in a friendly way, I would liken him into the situation that caused Churchill to say of Montgomery, that he was "indomitable in defeat and insufferable in success," or something of that sort. I'm paraphrasing. Well, now we have the opinionated strong-willed Wingate who now can say to his detractors, "What the hell do you think of that?" He was wearing his success typically, and he wanted more of it. Having proven a point, and having proven his genius, he wants to now expand it and use it as a stepping stone and say, "Now listen to me, and I'll take back this whole damn place for you. We have shown you how to do it now. Let's get going, really expand this, and run those Japanese out of here, and expand this on into China. I've shown you how to do it. Let's go."

C: I know that was in his plans, because he used to talk to me about what we would do now that we had a good start. Now all we have to do is conclude it, and his plans were rather large. They made sense. But in his anxiety to prove his point, and to expand his authority and his capability, he wanted to bring in the RAF. It rankled him, it just aggravated him no end that he did not have the RAF support. There was not one RAF airplane in our doing. You see, that to a British commander who had to live in the British army and wanted to become a leader of British troops, naturally he would be aggravated that he didn't have the cooperation of his own air branch. They were there. They were to the north of us. It wasn't much. We never thought much of it, but there was a base of fighter airplanes to the north. I think the kindest thing I could say was that they were lackadaisical. They weren't conscious of any great war going on. As a matter of fact, the whole Indian army was the same way. The Indian army was large, but it didn't involve itself in this war at all. Isn't that amazing? Here they were. You know, the Japanese actually got into India. They got very close to our base at Hailakandi, and we were issued orders by the British Army of how to form a "Kitchener Box." Can you imagine a modern airman being told that if his airdrome

was overrun, to train your soldier to form Kitchener Boxes, and how to fight off the enemy? Why, we just laughed and said, "Kitchener Box, my eye. Why if those guys get that close, hey man, we got airplanes. We're mobile as hell, and we're going to load our stuff in the airplanes and get the hell out of here. We're not going to expose ourselves to any invasion of Japanese. If they come closer, you better, by God, tell us; and if you can't defend our airdromes, we're getting the hell out of them, because we're not going to form any Kitchener Boxes." Naturally, we had a good laugh over these orders. It seemed as though they were fighting the Boer War over again, and they thought that we ought to stand and fight. That was not in our plan, I can tell you. Our plan was to get our valuable, valuable equipment the hell out of there and get back so we could fight from another position and get our job done.

Now, Wingate wanted to expand his success and build on it. In his anxiety to get the cooperation of the RAF-- and I'm pretty certain this was his motivation. I can understand it, but I can't condone it. I never have.

C: He, unbeknownst to us, made a plan in which the RAF could bring in Spitfires and land them at Broadway and work out of there as a base, as a close up, more support for him. He wanted to bring the British Air Force into it. I didn't want airplanes on that base, because all you are going to do--now we had a good situation. We were being able to hold it, and we were able to hold off the Japanese Air Force. We were fighting them all the time. We were making excursions into their territory, and they staged some aircraft, brought them forward to root us out of there, and start an air war. Our vigilance paid off, and one of our flights, in always keeping a good eye on their airdromes that were there that didn't have any equipment on them, was suddenly populated with a hell of a lot of aircraft that had been sent up to start battling us. We hit them the day they landed, and they weren't well emplaced, and we burned them out on the ground. We just had a field day, and we burned everything on the ground. I don't know how many of those airplanes we got, but it was well over 50, 60, 80. I don't know; I forget now. But we burned them out before they even got emplaced, and we were catching them before they could come in and get us. So we were carrying on an aerial warfare and, really, we were supplying, or trying to effect, air

superiority over our battle area. This we knew we must do. But we knew the Japs were coming in, and they had hit us in there. A couple of them got brave enough to get in our pattern at night and shoot down a couple of our C-47s that were coming in. They'd see the exhaust flares at night and sneak upon them and hit them. We had been told that the Japs wouldn't fight at night. They were not capable. They didn't have that capability, but they had some brave ones that would attempt it and try to do it. They were sending raids in against us, and the worst thing to do would be plant fighters on that field in the daytime and have the Japs see them and come in there and try to get them on the ground. You're just waving a red flag at a bull. That's all there is to it. Another airman has got to come in and get them out of there.

Well, he did it, and lo and behold, there they were. And don't you know the Japs came in and got them and just about wiped them out. They got one guy who was just taking off. They got one on the ground. They had to come in and beat that place up, and those airplanes drew them. It was just like drawing flies, and this incensed me probably more so than anything ever had in my life. I felt that Wingate had betrayed me, and it

was a betrayal of trust. I just couldn't imagine that man doing that to us after all we had done for, and with, him. I thought about Wingate, "the mutual trust that we have had with each other, and the things we have been through together, and criticism that we've taken in your behalf, and in our behalf, now you come along and do a thing like that." So I said, "There's only one thing to do." I said, "Johnny, let's go. Let's get in an airplane," and I took--I forget what member of my staff--but the appropriate members. I went to his headquarters and said, "I want a meeting. There is going to be a confrontation, and I would like whomever you wish on your staff to be there, because we're going to have this out." My temper got the best of me, I'm afraid, but I'm not sorry, because I think the situation required it. I had to be forceful with this forceful man, and I just let him have it.

I told him that Johnny Alison and I hadn't been sent over there to support him because we were shrinking violets or because we were babes in the woods. I said to him, and I remember the words very vividly, because I was reminded of them so often since then, I can't forget them. But I told him if he wanted to double-deal and wanted to start that, he would find that we

were masters at double-dealing. We would come in with the phoniest deck he ever saw in his life. I said, "You do that anymore and we're off you. We're capable of doing it, and I'm capable of doing it." I got all through my tirade, and I said, "You betrayed us. You did a thing you shouldn't have done, and you double-dealt us. You undercut us." He looked me straight in the eye and said, "I did, didn't I?" That just about cut me off. Naturally, I was fuming, and I imagine my language wasn't good. I learned later that the office was not soundproof. It was in some kind of peculiar hangar as I remember it, a drying hangar of some sort, tea maybe, or something. The walls had ears, and I was told later that his whole staff and all the soldiers and everybody in the place heard my tirade. I'm afraid some of them copied it down, and I was accused later of having very bad manners. By those who didn't know the seriousness of it, I can see that I did sound like an arrogant Yank. But whether here nor there, we had certainly a little bit of a different relationship after that, but a good one, still a solid one, because we had it out. Wingate was man enough to sit right on the spot, and he sat down and brought in a man, and he used one of his peculiar archaic words. He said to the man who had a poised pad and pencil, "Take a screed to the Prime

Minister of Great Britain." Then he started out and said to the Prime Minister, to Lord Louis Mountbatten, to General Slim, to General Marshall, to General Arnold, and he went all down the list. He said, "I want this to go to them," and he read off a very concise signal of admission that he had done it, that he had been wrong, and that he wished he hadn't done it, and he apologized. Now whether that ever got to the Prime Minister, or whether it ever got to Lord Louie, or whether it ever got to General Arnold, I don't know, but it sure was a good show. (laughter) He put on a good one, and it satisfied me, and I stormed out a little bit placated. I got those Spitfires the hell off that landing strip.

Now I must make a confession. We had been planning to put our P-51s on that strip, but we were going to fly them in late in the evening so the Japs wouldn't see them during the night, load them with bombs, and then do close support in the early morning, and fly on back to the bases, and stay out in the daytime so they would not be seen.

(End Side 1, Reel 6)

Now my anger in this situation, I'll have to admit, was fired a bit by another, I'll call it a disappointment. We had planned to put our P-51s onto those strips, but to hide them. We would hide them by darkness. We would land them at dusk, and then they'd stay there and be fueled and loaded with bombs and ammunition which we had stashed in there for this purpose. We had built up a supply to service the fighter aircraft. We would bring, say, four or six in at a time, and they'd stay there at night. Then they'd take off in the early morning to be over these targets. With their full fuel tanks, they would be able to stay over the target maybe an hour longer. It would just extend the capability of our aircraft. It would be just like doubling our force over the point at which they could be effective, because they wouldn't have to fly the 150 miles in, and then do their job, and then fly the 150 miles back carrying their load. We would bring them in, top them off, fuel them up, load them, then they could stay over the target until the very last minute, and then go on home. We had worked hard on this plan and built it properly. We had all the communication situation set up so that the penetration groups who would be within 20 or 30 miles of this air base in the jungle, we would be an effective weapon; we would be right at their hands. We learned

to put our fighters right smack at the hands of the frontline guy, not the 150 or 200 miles away, so to speak; we had them right there. We thought this was quite a capability. It was a refinement of what we were doing. That was our plan. We wanted to be really the first ever in history where fighters are actually operating out of bases behind the enemy's lines. Now that had never been done that we knew of, and this was to be a first.

Well, Wingate robbed us of that first. He robbed us partially of the surprise of plan by just arbitrarily putting fighters in there. I know what motivated him and that was his anxiety to bring in the British air forces to this action of his so that he could woo them to his side and extend his capability and his authority. I can't blame him, but he should have talked it over. He did not. But we went on then with the plan, and it worked well. We put P-51s in there time and time again. It got to be a routine thing. But we never left them there to be potted at or seen the next day by Japanese aircraft. We didn't want to attract the enemy on to these places. They were too hard to hold as it was, and we didn't need their fighters coming over and beating us up anymore than they were doing. They were doing

it quite often. The folks in there were living under those conditions. They not only had the Jap soldiers on their perimeter, now they got them from the air. We didn't need it, and it was another thing we had to defend against. But that was the kind of action that went on now for several months until the rainy season started to come upon us, and that was our withdrawal time. We were going to withdraw the troops out of there. The rainy season ends the fighting over there. We had accomplished our mission, and most of those people were to get out during the monsoons and come back and refurbish and then go back, and take lower down in Burma later. Myitkyina to the north had now been taken. The Japanese did have to withdraw. Stilwell's forces did start to come on down from the north to occupy the land in the area that we had taken. So our mission was completed.

Now, along the way, I know we should talk about how Wingate was killed. I was on the air base one night in operations and a radio message . . . No, let me start earlier. I was to meet General Wingate and a couple of members of his staff at my headquarters. I understood that he was over in Imphal. Imphal was a plain down in a valley over the immediate ridge we were behind, and

it was just over the ridge of mountains that were about 8,000 feet high, and then there was this plain, the Plain of Imphal. There was a British air base in there of sorts. There was a landing field; I don't believe there were any aircraft in there, but there was a British emplacement in there. We held the Imphal Plain. It was held because mountains surrounded it. You can see it on the map. It's that big. I understood that he had been into Burma at one of the emplacements, and he was coming back. He was going to have a meeting in Imphal, and then he was going to take off in one of our aircraft that was transporting him. He was to meet me at my air base, and we were to have a meeting that evening. I was down waiting for his arrival, and he didn't come on time. I thought, "Well, that's logical." He didn't come, and he didn't come. Then I said, "Well, I don't know whether to wait. Maybe I got it wrong. I'm not going to wait around, Maybe he had engine trouble." So we had someone signal Imphal, and they said, "No." In fact, he had left. They gave the number of the airplane and the pilot, so I knew that they were right and he had left.

Then I got a message from one of our transport airplanes that was in the corridor going into Broadway, or one of

the places, a DC-3 at night. The guy's name was Dick Benjamin, and Dick reported that he had just seen an explosion in the hills. He said, "Doggone if I don't think that was an airplane." Because these are jungle mountains, jungle hills, completely covered, and there isn't any light out there or anything. He saw this explosion on the ground. I remember looking at the officer that was with me and said, "Oh boy, now Wingate is in that area on his way in here. That's just about where he would be." So we told Benjamin to go and see if he could see anything more. He said, "Yes, I see the fire." I said, "Mark the spot the best you can." So he knew just about where he was, and he had it marked. He described it on the map. Then when he came back from his mission, he had it on his map.

Well, Wingate hadn't shown up. The airplane is overdue. It should have long been in, and we were pretty sure. The next morning in daylight we found that that was what had happened. The way we reconstructed it is that the B-25 had a pretty good load in it. The boy had taken on quite a few passengers out of Imphal, and although he wasn't overloaded, he had a good load. We established that he was not overloaded, but he had a good enough load that if he lost an engine at that point and made

an error in keeping his good engine down, or something that happened to him that quickly, he lost it and slammed the hill. We just about think it was something like that. We do not think that he just inadvertently flew into the hill in weather and wasn't high enough and that sort of thing. The weather was not a factor. He was not on instruments, I don't believe. I don't believe he was moon-blinded or anything and tipped the top of the hill, or got careless or what in the night. We believe that perhaps he lost an engine and didn't recover in time and spun in. But that was the demise of Wingate. Naturally, it was a terrible blow to us. It was a terrible loss as a vibrant, valiant person, but militarily it struck a blow.

So we got ahold of Mountbatten's headquarters and told them in secrecy what had happened, and our orders were to keep quiet. They had to stop and think: "Should we let the enemy and our own people, even his own troops who revered him, know that he was gone?" They decided, "Would you keep his death quiet long enough that a replacement control could be effected for those troops who are now out on the end of authority? They are out on the end of supply in a very precarious position, and knowing that their leader is with them and knowing what

he is doing is important, and it is tragic when you lose that inspirational person." They had to try to figure whether that should be done, and it was done for a time. Now we kept our mouths shut with difficulty, because the crews and everybody knew that that airplane was gone. They began to get word that Wingate may have been on it from Imphal. They didn't know for a fact, and we tried to hush it. But it did give them and us breathing time to get General Lentaigne [Maj Gen W.D.A.] in position to take over and to tell his immediate commanders and his staff and those brigadiers who were out there in the jungle facing the enemy that their leader had been lost, and that he was taking over--and plead with them to go ahead with their purpose and fulfill General Wingate's plan in his honor. This is what they did, finally. Then they finally told it to the world that he had been lost. So now our work was cut out for us, and we just got behind General Lentaigne, and we knew him well anyhow. We knew him as the fine soldier that he was and just got behind him. Although he was in no sense the flamboyant person, nowhere near the charismatic character that Wingate was, he was a solid, down-to-earth, well-trained, experienced soldier, and he had character, too, of that kind. And that character pulled the thing through and fulfilled it. He had a couple months of war

to go on with. He did it well, and the troops did it well. They went right on ahead doing their work, and we went on ahead doing our work, and kind of talked about making it a memory of that guy, and fulfilled our plan even though he was gone. We realized that none of us were indispensable, and we would have to go on if any one of us was gone. If I were gone, somebody would have to step right in and take over. We had that capability.

Again, this was a well-trained, well-planned thing. I keep saying it, but into it was planned enough adaptability that it could take blows like this and quickly take mistakes or adversity, or whatever, and quickly adapt to it and repair the wound and go on. That's exactly what happened, and it was a very, very satisfying feeling to know that your troops and your soldiers were of that ilk and went forward. It was very, very gratifying.

Then as the time of the monsoons approached, we had to plan on bringing those folks out of there. Some of them were to march out for tactical and strategic reasons. The presence was to be in there, but they were to march on back and be picked up elsewhere by troop carrier people. That was not our job. We were to be withdrawn because the rains would come and our landing strips

would become mud; nature had intended to have rice planted in them, and they become quagmires. You could not operate on them.

We had to plan and watch then for those times and not get caught. We had one tough rain where actually there was a couple of feet of water on the landing strip, and I thought, "Oh, oh, I've gotten caught. I waited too long." The British kept wanting more and more, and we kept wanting to protect those troops that were still in there, those columns that were still in and were withdrawing. They were coming out, and we wanted to make sure they had the protection of our air people, and to keep the enemy off, and all that sort of thing-- and keep the supplies going. So we over-waited, and luckily that was just a forewarning. As soon as that air strip dried, we were gone. I wasn't going to make that mistake. We got out, out, out, and out. Then we started to rearrange ourselves. The plans were changed; we were to be a 6 months outfit and disbanded. But now we were too much of a force; we were too much of an entity. We were an institution now, and the plans were to build three more along the same lines, a little bit streamlined, but a little bit different equipment, more personnel, and a more formal organization, and it was

to become an air commando group. We got a group designation after awhile because we drove the lines of authority, or the lines of communications, bats because we didn't have a number. We weren't a group. We weren't anything. We were a task force. So they made us a group, assigned us a number--the number of the group which I forget. We never alluded to ourselves or thought of ourselves as a group. But then as they began to plan four more, and this would be a wing--we were to have a wing of four groups--it looked like. In doing that, we changed our ideas a little bit, and they were to be formed slightly differently.

So those plans were to be done, so some folks had to stay. Many of the men, I remember, were disappointed that they weren't to be in and outers and back to the states. They didn't like India, which I think is understandable. I can say I hated the area. It wasn't a place that would incite any affection. I was ordered home. As a matter of fact, I had been ordered home earlier. I'll tell you an anecdote of that. But what we did was, I did say--and Stilwell got into this a little bit because, again, he was the theater guy. Again, here we are operating as though we were a separate entity and autonomous, and I started to give rules, and

Stilwell didn't let anybody go home. You would have to be dead to get out of Stilwell's area. He didn't believe in it. You were supposed to stay over there and die. You could have malaria until you were out of your mind, and he wouldn't let you go home, as I remember it. So I put forth my plan and got it approved that any one of the men in our outfit who had been--after all, you remember, we were volunteers and now had been through a rather difficult 6 months or so--anybody who had been overseas this second time, and that was a lot of the pilots and a lot of the men. Anybody who had had a second or third overseas term was to go home. One of my motives in that was that I knew these folks were tired, and I knew some of them were on the verge of physical difficulties. So I weeded those out and was allowed to do that, and I sent those fellows home. I left enough to rebuild, and they were taken back into India to a place called Asansol, and the rebuilding project started. That was when Clint Gatey took over from me. I was brought back to the states and started through the briefing-debriefing process, and the assessment, and the writings, and the planning for the next batch of air commando groups.

C: There are two anecdotes that I wanted to put in here. One was, and you have asked me about this time that I was reported killed, and that the newspapers picked it up and it got in the newspapers in the United States, and got into my hometown paper. You can imagine the traumatic effect upon my family when the headlines announced that I had been killed. The way that came about, there were about 16 of us fighters, and we were over Mandalay. We had gone over with a couple of 500-pound bombs on us, and we were after a very large supply depot that had been marked for us by intelligence. It was just north of Mandalay, just on the edge of the city on a bend in a river there, and it was a lot of steel-roofed buildings in which the Japanese were staging their movements to the north. We were conscious of anything like this that we thought might be coming at us, and we thought we would nip it off in the bud. We felt this was part of our job.

So I had 16 airplanes over that thing that day, and we made an error. We made a tactical error, an error of procedure. You would think that experienced airmen wouldn't do that, but we went about our business. We were flying over it, and I said, "All right, I've got the target spotted. I'm pretty sure, and I'm going to go

down and get as close to it as I can. But if anybody doesn't agree and sees the target, other than what I think is the target, then we'll talk about it. We will talk it over, and then decide which is which." There were several targets down there, and we wanted to make sure we got the right one. I wanted some help from other eyes, and I said, "I'll mark what I think is the target if I can get near it with my load, and I'll go on down with my flight. You guys watch that." So I went on down. They said, yes, they thought that was it. So they started to peel off, and before I could get back up and form an air cover, which was definitely my purpose, and which was routine procedure of anybody doing any dive-bombing, the other guys, in our anxiety, we just forgot that we were liable to be jumped. As I started back up and was collecting my four guys, we got jumped by a horde of Japanese. They were all over us, and they had us. They had us low in climbing, and they were above us, and they knew what to do. They weren't any kids. I don't know whether we bumped into them or whether they bumped into us, whether they had tracked us, or what in the world, but those two forces met, and we had quite a skirmish over dear old Mandalay. We stood and fought, and it was my decision to make. I realized that

we were in a tough position. We were low, we were climbing, we didn't have our speed, and we were not collected properly.

None of the flights now are intact, to form help for each other, and to properly attack this force that was after us. We had handed them all the advantages. So my judgment was to everybody, "Don't try to snatch victory from defeat." You know, I'm quoting Wingate again. I was in a terrible position. So I said, "Down and out." We weren't going to do any good by standing there and fighting. Fighter to fighter never does anything. We had valuable fighters and valuable pilots, and this wasn't our true mission. Our mission was to support Wingate, and here we were doing a strategic air war thing that, yes, was within our realm; and, yes, we ought to keep them back so that they can't come up when we knew we were going to invade. "Keep the forces back from your invasion spot as much as you can, and try to hit them." We had found this depot at Mandalay, and we thought that it probably was a threat to our invasion which was upcoming.

So I yelled, "Down and out." I gave the order. "Everyone of you!" I could hear the guys on the radio, and

their fighting, and their saying, "Look out, there's a guy on your tail," and all that sort of thing. Now, we did have a capability. We had P-51s. We had enough altitude to roll it over, dive, and run away from those guys and get the hell out of there because we were outnumbered, we were out maneuvered, we had handed them all the advantages, and we were fighting from a very, very bad position, with all the odds against us. They had Zeroes, an airplane that could outmaneuver us, and, boy, I'm conscious of maneuverability. I said, "Speed is maneuverability in this case, down and out. I order you, every guy, break it off, stop it, and get out of here." Well, I didn't know what was happening to me, and I could still hear guys fighting, and fighting. I kept saying, "Get out of here," but I thought they were still fighting and fighting, so I stayed over the target.

Boy, I was turning, diving, rolling, and giving orders and trying to regather some kind of order out of this thing that had happened to us.

So then I began to collect. I started calling my leaders and saying, "Where are you? How many you got? Are you on your way home?" "Yes." I was counting noses. I'd say, "Where are you?" He said, "Well, I'm north, and

I'm out of it, and I'm heading home." I said, "Are you all right?" He said, "No, I got some holes in me." "You're going to make it?" "Yes, yes, I'm going to make it." I said, "All right, stay north. You know where the areas are that will be the safest." We knew where to go if you had to go down or had to jump. "Try to get back to Imphal. Try anything you can."

"R. T. Smith, where are you?" "I'm having a hell of a time. I'm all shot up, my engine is missing, and I'm overheating." I said, "Oh heavens, R. T., hang on to it. Hang in there and get it in there. Any enemy around you?" "No, I'm free of it. I'm all right." "So-and-so, where are you?" Well, then, somebody called me, and said, "Where are you?" I said, "I'm over the target. I'm trying to get you guys to get the hell home. Get out of here." They said, "All right, we're on our way." Then here I am, I'm over the target. What had happened is, as they started to the west home, naturally, the Japs followed, trying to pick them off. They were following and following, and it suddenly dawned on me that now I'm over the target, and now the enemy, having followed the main part of my flight, are there between me and home. I'm going to have to run the gauntlet. So I thought, "Well, I'll make that." So I started on the

course toward home wide open and giving it all it had. I said, "Well, I'm just going to head straight for home, a beeline." There they were. They kept coming at me, and I went by the first one. He wasn't in a position to come down on me, but he made a turn onto me. But I knew I was going to outrun him. Then one guy got ahold of me. He was above, and he had the speed. He got down with me, and I kept using what altitude I had to gain more speed on him, because I was pretty sure I could outrun him. Supposedly, I could outrun any Jap airplane there was; they weren't supposed to be that fast. I thought, "Unless he has something new we didn't know about, I'm going to outrun him." I had decided that I wasn't going to stand and fight him. I was going to get out of there. So I just kept on going, and kept on going, getting lower, and lower, and lower, and he kept on coming. But I could tell I was gaining on him. He got close enough to fire at me, but he was not effective. I just had it to the firewall, and I just pressed it, and before we were through with this chase (laughter), I was running like a scared rabbit. I admit, it isn't terribly brave. You don't do that in the storybooks. You turn around and start fighting this fellow. But that wasn't in my mind at the time. I had made enough errors that day, and had enough discouragement in what

we had done, that I was going to use my speed and live to fight another day, supposedly, and I wasn't going to match airplanes with that guy down at that low altitude, because I figured he could outmaneuver me. I was going to get away from him. I was actually down on the deck and was using trees. I would hop trees and then go below them to keep out of that guy's gun range, and finally just outran him and kept on going home. (laughter) I got away from him because he didn't have the aircraft that I had. I had a P-51 which, at that time, was a pretty fast airplane. But I'll tell you, I was terribly disappointed in its speed that day. It wasn't anywhere near as fast as its book said it was, because I had it wide open. I was shoving with my feet getting out of there.

Now during that fracas, I heard a conversation between two of our pilots, and one of them was a kid named Forcey, and I forget who talked to him. I couldn't hear very well the other end of the conversation, but I heard Forcey say, "No, I think Cochran was in that airplane on fire that went down, and I didn't see anybody get out of it." Now piece that together. Someone had said, "Where is Cochran? Have you seen Cochran?" I was the leader, and here I was talking on the radio

trying to gather them, and our radios weren't jiving. I didn't hear the question, but I heard the answer, "No, I believe Cochran was the guy that was going down. He was on fire, and I didn't see anybody get out of it." I said, "I'll be damned if that was me. I'm still here, and I'm not in a very good position. I'm over the target, and I got three of them on me. I'm running, but I am still at it. That wasn't me that went down." They said, "Oh." Now, a guy I knew very well by the name of Terry /David D., Jr. who was a colonel from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and I had known him when he was at Langley in my younger years. Terry was about 100 or 200 miles north of us. He had an outfit up there, and I think they were P-47s, if I'm not mistaken. He had an outfit up there in the northern part of India, and his radio on skipped distance, I suspect, picked up that conversation, and he heard Forcey say, "No, that was Cochran in that burning airplane, and I don't think he got out." Terry picked this up--my friend--and knew that I was down in there, and heard that conversation. When he came back, he said, "I just heard on the radio that Cochran went in. He is lost." Well, naturally, they had journalists up there, and this man had heard it on the radio. He had to report it, so he reported it in his debriefing, and this got into the channels. It

got back down to the newspapers in New Delhi, and it went out on the wire. Of course, I didn't know any part of this. We came limping back, disgusted with ourselves. I have never seen a group of fighter pilots so disgusted with themselves. We berated ourselves and each other. I know that many of the pilots felt that I was wrong, that I should have stayed and fought and that sort of thing. I felt that they had not followed proper procedure in having a good half of your force as an aerial cover, and I criticized them and myself for that. I criticized their leader for not having trained that into them. I wasn't the fighter leader. I criticized myself for taking over a mission of that size. I thought it was proper, I thought that I was capable of doing it, but I was a leader imposed upon fighter pilots that weren't used to following me. They were used to following their squadron commander. I had injected myself into that, that I thought that was proper. We ran over all of our mistakes. We openly criticized each other. I allowed them to--not allowed them--(laughter) I'll say I may have permitted it, but I wanted them to criticize me, and not have any rancor, and to come out with it. We did. We berated ourselves and said, "By God, this will never happen again." We had been complacent, we hadn't been watchful, we had gotten careless,

and we had gotten beat. I explained to them that it was my judgment that it was a bad place to fight from, we had everything against us, and the wisdom of the situation that was called for was to get the hell down and out, and that's the order I gave. I resented them not obeying it immediately, standing around and fighting. I couldn't blame them, but in this instance they should have obeyed. Then they did obey the order, and they did get down and out. As I remember, I think we lost three men that day. I know one of them was killed right then. That was the burning airplane, and that was my No. 4 man. He was not looking, and he was trying to form onto--my wingman was already on me. My second element leader was coming into position, and he was trailing, and they got him right then and there before I could break. I broke as I saw him getting hit. I broke and turned and took a couple of shots at them, and we were all trying to wipe each other's tails. I remember going across the second element that was forming and trying to get rid of people that were converging on them, because we were sitting ducks. When I saw the sitting-duck situation, I thought, "This is stupid. Get out of here." I wasn't about to defend my position. I just told them that seemed to me to be the thing to do, and after all I was the guy that was there to make the command, and I did it.

C: As I say, we berated each other, we knew we had made an error, and we said we were not going to do that ever again. We collected ourselves and got over it. But we felt the loss. We had been defeated by the enemy, and we didn't like it. We were bound that we were going to get that back.

Now that little fracas ended up in my being grounded. Because I had been briefed and was aware of all the invasion plans and everything, and then part of the architect of these plans, it suddenly dawned on Lord Louie and Wingate that if I were to get in the hands of the Japanese it would certainly compromise the whole situation so that it would have to be called off. Realizing that they were right, I ungraciously accepted the grounding. I was never to fly anymore in enemy territory, and realized that that was wise. So from then on in, I wasn't allowed in the territory, because it just wasn't prudent to have my mind running around back there with the plans in it. Even if you were able to resist torture, which no one knows whether he will be able to do unless he's confronted with it. They would have to decide that, in fact, they had gotten the whole plan out of me. When the plan is compromised, you got to give it up. So I was forbidden from then on in to fly combat. I respected

that for quite awhile, at least until it wouldn't be any longer so final if I were shot down and captured.

Now that word went out, of course, and I didn't realize it at all until I received a teletype from the Air Force headquarters to me, asking me if I were, in fact, dead. Now, this becomes one of those peculiar requirements. I was still the commanding officer and the message had to read: To Cochran, from Stratemeyer, for Cochran, something of that nature. Being the commanding officer, it still had to come to me, and they weren't sure. Then it said, "Verify or refute Cochran's death today. Signed Stratemeyer." Boy, I fired it back, "Hell no (laughter), I am not dead." Well, I realized they must have heard it some way, and that it was all over. Boy, I thought, Holy mackerel, my folks, my family back in the states. As remote as they were, it came into my mind, "Good heavens, this is going to get around." So I jumped in a P-51 and beat it back to headquarters. I forget whether it was Calcutta or New Delhi. Calcutta, I guess. I went charging back there and jumped out of the airplane, because my plan was this: "All right, I can tell the military, and they can cable on ahead that I wasn't dead, but that isn't going to get to my family very quickly, and it will never really be published." I thought, My goodness,

if that has gotten to the newspaper, then the newspaper guys are the guys to stop it. If they have already written the story to that effect, then they are the ones that better immediately . . . They could get through fast, faster than the Army or my cable. Of course, I cabled General Arnold right away directly, which I was supposed to do, that it was not true. Then I went right directly to headquarters and I said, "Let me get to the AP, and the UP, and all those guys quickly." You can imagine people meeting me on the street or in the halls that knew me that had just heard the day before, or 2 days before, that I was dead and accepted it, and here I am walking along. There were some funny looks. I did reveal to the press that, in fact, "Look, here I am. That's a mistake. For heaven's sake, will you get through quickly? Please get to the Erie Daily Times, whichever one of you that's in that business and in that syndicate or press association. Get word, please, will you? Just in plain, clear English as fast as you can." They did that. The Chief of the Air Force's office, upon getting the cable quickly, got ahold of my family and reassured them right in the middle of the night that, in fact, it was not true. But they had a pretty bad day, a pretty bad 12 hours, which says that I was killed. I have seen that headline in later days. So as you've said, it's

like Mark Twain. I think he had been reported dead, and didn't he say the news of my death has been extremely overrated or something like that? What was that? Well, anyway, it was terribly inaccurate and one of those peculiar things.

H: I have one final question I'll ask . . .

C: Before lunch?

H: Yes. Wasn't it kind of peculiar that you being the commander of this particular task force that you weren't put up to star rank to be more in line with what the British had? You know there was always a sensibility during the war of having too low a ranking American working alongside a ranking Ally. I have heard this any number of times.

C: I have heard of it, too. I heard it at the time, and I believe I am accurate in saying I think it was contemplated and just never got done. I think, in all humility, that General Arnold had this in mind, and that it just never quite jelled. We weren't terribly sure of the permanence of this task force, and it was going to end rather quickly. I know later on that General Arnold

tried to maneuver me into a position that required the star. I was aware of that; I couldn't help but be. But at the time people talked about it. They talked to me about it. But that wasn't my business. It was none of my business, and I didn't question it. As I remember now, perhaps I should have wondered, but it didn't occur to me that that was proper, and I was doing my job, and so what the hell? Who needed a star to get my job done? I think that was kind of my attitude. Actually, Wingate talked to me about that. He told me one time as we were walking along, in one of our conversations, that he had recommended it. I said, "Isn't that rather odd coming from a Britisher? Why wouldn't we let somebody of my own recommend it?" Well, the theater wasn't about to recommend it, and I don't blame them. They were limited in the number of brigadier ranks that they were able to own or to fill, and there wasn't one there. They weren't going to use up one of their valued spaces in their organizational setup. They weren't going to give up one of those spaces for this outlander who had come in and was superimposed upon them. You remember now, I'm a thing apart. We're a task force, and we are superimposed upon them, and they aren't about to bestow one of their limited number of general grade vacancies to an outlander who didn't really belong to them. And I insisted that

I didn't belong to them, you see. So they left hands off, so it didn't come from the theater where it should come from. Now it could have come from headquarters, but I suppose they felt that maybe that wasn't proper.

(End Side 2, Reel 6)

H: Would you discuss why parachuting wasn't the element considered in place of the gliders in your planned operations at Picadilly and Broadway?

C: Yes. Well, one of the obvious things that comes up is that paratroopers are limited in what they can carry with them. They can carry their own personal weapons and a few support hunks of supply that they can hang on them, but they certainly can't take in heavy firepower, and they certainly can't take in equipment to build a runway, an air strip, that sort of thing. In other words, they are limited to what they can carry on their own body, and therefore their effectiveness is limited both firepower-wise and work power-wise. So the only way we could have used paratroopers--and we thought about this--would be the assault people that went in and secured the area. We could have dropped a hell of a lot of infantry soldiers into that area to

secure it. Then we would have had to come in with the gliders, because the gliders would have to carry the equipment in there to fulfill our requirement and that was to, number one, make a stronghold, a secure area, in which we would build a landing strip, and then come on in with the thousands of men, and paratroopers can't do that. The paratrooper method is extremely limited. We needed a greater capability, so we used the gliders.

H: Would you like to continue with what we were discussing earlier in relation to why a general officer wasn't placed in charge of the air commandos?

C: Yes. I can't reconstruct the thinking of that time to really factually lay anything out on that. I was getting along with the rank I had, and I suppose maybe there wasn't any requirement. Now I know that it was contemplated. I was told it was contemplated. After I got back to Washington, and had some rest, it was in General Arnold's mind that I was going back to that theater, and that a couple of more air commandos were coming over there, and that I suppose he had the thought that I would be in charge of them. After I had been rested up at Pawling, one of our Air Force rehabilitation centers, and was about ready to get back into action, I know that

General Arnold intended to send me back to India. I also know, because he told me in no uncertain terms, that he had suggested to the theater that I was to come back out, and that he had gotten the answer that they didn't have an opening for an officer of my talents. They didn't say rank, but what they were hinting at, what was underlying it, was--I'm sure of this--that General Arnold would figure that I would go out and would, in fact, fulfill a position in their table of organization of the one-star rank, the brigadier general rank. Their answer was that they didn't have such an opening, and the inference that I took was, they didn't want me back out there. My attitude was that I thought they were right. I didn't blame them in the least. I know that General Arnold's attitude was one of pique. He was displeased with their answer, and he allowed me to see his displeasure of that situation when I was in his presence, and he was telling me about this. He said, "All right, they don't want you; you are not going. We'll find some other job for you." That was fine with me, and I wonder sometimes if I could remind "Bozo" McKee /General William F./ if he would remember the situation where General Arnold took a small pad of paper and penciled a note on it to General McKee, and it said on it, "Find Cochran a good job," and signed it "H. H. A."

as was his wont. He said, "Here, take this up to General McKee and tell him I sent you." So in the meantime, I guess he made a call, and so when I got up in the Pentagon, I went up to General McKee's office, and I saw my friend Bozo. I handed him this note, and we kind of had a chuckle. Bozo's question was, "Well, now what the hell does your personal personnel officer want?" We laughed. He was chiding me a little bit that, oh you know, I was kind of Arnold's project, a little bit of teacher's pet kind of thing. Although it wasn't said unkindly, it was a joke between the two of us, because here is the Chief of the Air Force telling his Chief of Personnel to get a good job for an individual officer. It just wasn't the thing to do. I suppose maybe Bozo knew why I wasn't going back to India, and maybe he didn't, but here came the note that said, "Get Cochran a good job." So McKee said, "What do you consider a good job? Just what do you have in mind?" I said, "I'll tell you what I consider a good job. I'll take a couple of weeks' leave, or a month's leave, and I'm going to New York and raise hell." He said, "Get out of here. You're gone." So that's what I did. I just went on leave again, and headed straight for New York, it seems to me. I don't know whether the races were on, or what was on, but I felt that I could have some fun in New

York until something came up. I just got out of his hair. That's a joke, because Bozo didn't have any hair. But he was glad to get rid of me, and I was glad to get out. It was a peculiar situation, and I couldn't stand there and say, "I want this job," or "I want that job," or whatever I wanted. But I had in mind that what I wanted was back over to Europe, but I wanted to get out from under this direct control, and I would have been very happy to get back into the fighter business over in England. I still wanted that, in a way. So I was on leave for about 3 days, and I got called back. This was when General Arnold decided that he did, in fact, have a job for me that he wanted done. I was going to be sent to Europe, and I was going to be placed on the Plans Staff of the First Allied Airborne Army. It was to be my job, without anybody else knowing or guessing or starting any unpopular ideas, to figure a way to an aerial invasion in Europe, an aerial invasion of Germany, I should say. Evidently, there had been thought of this before, and there had been thought of using air-landed capability, air-landed supply forces. to sort of leapfrog tank forces and infantry forces. He explained to me an idea that wasn't exceptionally clear, but it was a leapfrog idea where you would air drop, or air land, a forward position. Then the infantry and the military

would catch up to it, and then you would go forward again. It was a paratroop idea, it seemed to me.

We discussed that sort of thing. But he said he wanted me to go over there, and without ruffling any feathers, and without causing any disruption, to find out a plausible way to invade Germany by air, based upon what we had done in Burma.

The reason he brought the idea forward head on, it had been already tried and suggested, and it was exceptionally unpopular. The idea was getting no attention and no acceptance in Europe. The commanders over there, and the people over there, were terribly busy at their own jobs. They had their nose to the grindstone, and they were not at all receptive to any new ideas. They just wanted to be let alone to do their work. However, General Arnold explained to me that it was his hope, and it was in his mind, that an air invasion might not only be necessary, but it ought to be done. I also was informed that General Marshall was of the opinion that an aerial invasion was called for, and, in fact, this war ought to end up with an aerial invasion capability, that an air invasion was the coming thing. There was some thought of that.

C: Also, commingled here was the thought that oft is expressed, that the next war always begins the way the last war ends up. World War I brought forward tank warfare and some limited air war. The next war started as a tank war; there wasn't a horse to be found. The horse was a big part of World War I, cavalry, field artillery. The tank took over. World War I ended up with the tank idea, and so World War II started with the tank idea and with the air idea. There were those who thought World War II should end up as an aerial invasion innovation, and that probably the next wars would be air invading wars. All of those things had a part of this-- nothing positive--except General Arnold could foresee an aerial invasion of Germany that would preclude the agonizing, arduous advancement across France and the lowlands up across Holland, and in the invasion of Germany, and up from below. It was wondered, logically, "Wouldn't an air invasion hasten the end of the war, and make the tough, tough ground action--the World War I kind of ground action--creeping forward and forward, the lines, and all that sort of thing, wouldn't it make that unnecessary, if in fact you could invade a country that was as strong and as defensible as Germany?" Could you do that? His mind was searching for that. I was told that General Marshall's mind was searching for that. Then of course I was, in no

uncertain terms, informed that it was not a popular idea with the command in Europe. Therefore, my work was to be not right out in the open, but it was to be as thorough as I could be, to learn everything I could and to discuss this kind of thing perhaps with General Patton, who evidently was known not to be against this sort of thing. I think General Patton had expressed an interest in this forward supply that he would get. Maybe it was he who had accepted and wanted to further the idea of the leap-frogging, because Patton had already proven to everyone that he liked to go forward with tank columns and get on, on beyond his supply capability. He wanted somehow for them to catch up with him. We had seen him do that, even after this time that I'm speaking of; I had seen him do it in Africa. This was his innovation and it was something that he wanted to do. His trouble was that the supplies weren't there when he got out as far as his tanks could go. There wasn't anything there to resupply them and to hold the area--the infantry--to hold the area so that they could continue and do their work. They would have to turn around and come home to be serviced, and their flanks were vulnerable.

So I was also told by General Arnold that Patton would be a good person to talk to, and I was to proceed and

make those arrangements. I know that General Arnold told General Brereton [Lewis H.], who was the Commanding General of the First Allied Airborne Army, what I was about and what I was up to. We didn't tell anybody below him because it wasn't necessary. I could operate in his command in a normal factor, and nobody had to know what I had in mind, at first. Then I was to see what the climate was and then start planning such an animal to see if there was a plan for a logical execution of an aerial invasion.

I know that General Spaatz knew what I was up to, and I know that General Vandenberg knew what I was up to. Then of course they didn't know in detail, but they knew that I was there at General Arnold's request and order, and that I had been placed there to do a special job, to look into this situation, and I did that very thing. I got into the plan business with the First Allied Airborne Army, and I started to learn their business. I started to study the European situation. They briefed me extensively. I learned how the troops were deployed, and what the Germans were up to, and some of their strength, and so forth. Then I started to study with guys on the staff, on that plan staff. I started to study areas of Germany that might lend themselves to an area that could

be secured by a lightning strike so that you could start to pour in, in fact, an aerial invasion, and could it be held? I started to look at the area of the Kassel valley, the valley in which Kassel, an industrial city, was placed, and I noticed that it lent itself to the idea. It was a place to start, so we started to study the Kassel valley, and I began to tell the guys on the staff what kind of an idea I had, and they were intrigued. We said, "Let's study it." So we launched a study on the Kassel valley. Then, in the meantime, I wanted to fulfill the wish of General Arnold and talk to Patton. So I left my headquarters and went forward up near where the closeup air bases were, and I got with General Hoyt Vandenberg, who was in command of the Ninth, and I told him what I was up to. Now this is the same General Vandenberg, of course, that got me into the air commando business in Burma much to my chagrin. He knew that General Arnold would not send me on a wild-goose chase, that I did have a purpose, and I explained it to General Vandenberg of what my assignment was, and that it would help me to talk to General Patton directly. I couldn't go through a whole bunch of commands, and so forth, to do this in a formal way with General Patton. I wanted to know the plausibility and the feasibility of, in fact, an aerial invasion because, again, the basic idea was,

we could secure an area into which General Patton's armor could dash, and run, and have the tactical air forces which now had learned how to protect his flanks, O. P. Weyland's outfit. He was the protector of Patton's flanks, and Patton always told that to people. "O. P. Weyland takes care of my flanks." He could run, and he would run into a secure area where we could supply him with the infantry that he needed to hold the area, and make it safe. Then we could load in the supplies that his tank force would need and, lo and behold, we would have a big bridgehead right smack in Germany, and we would be behind their front which was on the Rhine at the Ruhr. Later, they were talking about flanking the Ruhr, or would you hit it head-on, or what would you do? They were planning this thing of crossing the Rhine. It looked like it was going to be a terrific confrontation, and the casualties and the losses would be horrendous. We said, "Why not rear the Ruhr? Why not get Patton around in behind it and supply him with an area that was a hundred times as big as the stronghold that Wingate built in Burma? Make it a large stronghold, the whole Kassel valley, and pour enough troops in there, enough infantry, and enough artillery, and enough tanks to hold the area. Then build it, and build it with the biggest aerial invasion anyone ever saw, and use every airplane

the Air Force could find and just launch a massive, massive effort, and make it the deciding effort, the final effort. What it would have done was, get behind the German front that was facing us at the Rhine, get in behind the German front that was facing us at the Rhine, get in between them, and go on to Berlin, and leave them cut off and surrounded. They couldn't come back, and they couldn't come forward. Very, very ambitious planning. I effected the meeting with General Patton, through General Vandenberg's, General Doolittle's, and General Spaatz's efforts, because they were going up to meet Patton at O. P. Weyland's place at the time of an operation. It was called "Operation Tink." It was an operation in which the B-17s, the Strategic Air Force, was in fact used as a tactical air force, where they were going to blast their way through the German line, and Patton was going to run through the area. Now that's another story and another maneuver. But Operation Tink, I think was its name, was to come off, and that was O. P. Weyland's wife's name. They were down there for that reason, and they said, "Now you come along, and this is where you're to meet up with Patton."

So at a dinner party in O. P. Weyland's quarters, I was introduced to General Patton by General Spaatz who

understood that I had a mission that I was sent on by General Arnold and that it could be brought forward or progressed quickly if I could speak to Patton and explain to him the plan. So I met Patton that night. We had drinks together. Of course, he didn't know it, but I had been over him down in Africa, and that I was the guy with the P-12s that they didn't have enough of. I told him that I had been sent over to communicate with him, and propose to him this aerial invasion idea, that it hinged upon his acceptance of the proposition that, yes, in fact he could make a dash in there, and that it was feasible, that if we had a secure place at the end of it to supply him, that he could pour in there. I explained that this would be a joint venture, and it would be an aerial invasion of sorts with his advancing on into it.

Now, of course, I knew that this was his proclivity. This was his nature; this is his long suit, and I knew I was playing to his long suit. That's obvious. It was obvious to him, and he had kidded me before our discussion as we sat down. He had ordered drinks for us. We sat on a stairway, by the way, off from the other people where no one could hear us, and where we were private. That was a safe room. We could have said

anything in front of anybody, but we had a discussion off from the other officers that were in the house.

He said, "Oh, you're the guy that knows all about that air stuff, that air invasion stuff. You're that guy in Burma?" I said, "Yes," that I did in fact know quite a bit about it, and that it was a limited field because not much had been done on it; therefore, I said, "Just because there are only a couple of us around, it ends up I'm the expert away from home." I told him we had some ideas and that General Arnold had sent me to seek out any ideas that could be brought to bear on the idea of an aerial invasion of Germany, and that I had a proposition, and I wondered what he thought of it. So we talked about it, and he liked it. He said, "That's a hell of a good idea. Now let's get going on this, and I want you to get with my Chief of Staff tomorrow. I want to talk to my guys about this, so they can start thinking. They'll start planning it, and you get it through their heads, and I'll tell them." He said, "And by the way, I'm going to show you how this war is fought. I want you to meet me at 7 o'clock tomorrow morning, and I'm going up and get shot at, and you're going with me." He said, "I will show you how we fight this war on the ground." I said, "That is all right with

me. I would like to see that." I told him that I had never seen anything like that. I had never seen a real battle, that I was an air guy. I was always above them, and I didn't think much of the ground work, anyhow, and I was going up to look for myself. So I met him the next morning, hangover and all, and I did meet his Chief of Staff. I did talk to them about the plausibility of this idea. They accepted it, and didn't think there was anything strange about it. They just thought it was a hell of a good idea. They were of that mood. They were audacious people, too, you know. They said, "Yes, that could be worked. You bring that off, and that would be something."

So I did go forward, and I saw General Patton do one of his acts which I found later, and had read about, he used to do occasionally. He would go right up to the very front where the enemy was right over there about where you can see him across that ridge, or across that creek, and he would stand right up there just in plain, full sight. I have seen that little act go on. I've seen him demonstrate this defiance, or whatever it is, and he called it "getting shot at." The people around him didn't like it very much because they said, "Hell man, he draws fire." None of us were about to stand

up in this situation. But he would stand there as boldly and just in defiance of the whole damned thing. I don't know whether it was defiance or arrogance, or what it was, but he would do it. I had read about it and heard about it, and I saw it. I witnessed this performance. Of course, he asked me what I thought of this operation. I was watching some engineer troops trying to get some sort of a steel bridge, probably a Bailey bridge, or whatever they called them, across a stream that was maybe 10 to 12, 15 feet wide, and it was holding up the action. The German resistance, the snipers, were just on the other side of the valley of this stream, and they were up in some kind of buildings and farm houses, and they were picking off the guys down there trying to work on the bridge. I saw a couple of them topple into the water after getting hit. I just told the ground guys that I thought that was the stupidest thing I ever saw in my life. I just couldn't understand that there was a requirement that urgent to get that damned bridge across that place. They understood the requirement, and it was their work, but I certainly didn't think much of it, and I told them so. Then, as I watched that thing, some armored vehicles of some sort--they looked like a sort of tank to me--moved that bridge. Came up and pushed it, and moved it into place, and monkeyed around.

C: Of course, the men inside of it, and the men behind it, were protected then against the fire from the other side. They were doing their work. I told him that I was not impressed. Our attitude of that was, "Why don't you go over that? You guys here are fighting for a 100 yards, and hell, it takes you 2 days to get across it. Hell, you can be 100 miles, 200 miles in an hour. Why not jump it, and get around behind it?" This was the kind of thinking that was happening to me. So I went back and started to fulfill this study of the Kassel valley then. We found in that Kassel valley, and in the area we were looking at, which I would suspect now was about 30 miles long and maybe 11 or so miles wide--I think I'm talking about that kind of an area--in that area there were 11 landing strips. There was one pretty good-sized airdrome that was not military exactly. I mean it wasn't a Luftwaffe establishment that you would have to go in and root out and beat up. The area, in fact, did lend itself to an invasion. It had high grounds surrounding it almost on all sides, and only therefore certain roads would come through low parts, or depressions, in the high grounds giving you a pass, we'll say, to defend. In other words, the area lent itself to security around its perimeters to hold our people that had to come through certain areas, and any other way would be difficult; therefore, you have

key places to protect, and keep the enemy out of those. He can't get in at you until you're strong enough to beat him back. So I suppose that would be called preliminary security for the first few days until you built your force up. It did lend itself to that, and of course, I had infantry people, and people knowledgeable of that kind of warfare, to give me opinions of whether we were heading in the right direction or not, whether we were dreaming or not.

The 11 air strips and other flat areas, where you could just go in at will, were readily available. The highway situation was good, so that your land communications would be instant. There were some drawbacks. There was a dam at one end of the valley with a large reservoir behind it, and if we were to have gone in there they could have flooded a good part of that valley. So we had the proposition that any defense force on that dam would have to be eradicated before we went in. The British liked that sort of thing. They could have gotten someone in there just minutes before at the time of the invasion and either grabbed the immediate area so that no one could open those flood gates, or the other of that is, go in and break that dam beforehand a couple of months, or 2 weeks before, and let it open.

C: Let it, in fact, flood and get itself over with, so that they didn't have a flood weapon to turn on you once you got in. Things like that had to be thought of. So we went forward with the study, and the operation was named "Arena," and it got to be quite a study. We got involved in it and got intrigued with it, and got more and more people in on it. So now I'm no longer an undercover agent. I'm now out in the open, because I've gotten an agreement from quite a few people. So it came time then to present this to the Commander in Chief, the Supreme Commander, General Eisenhower. So it was set up, and now all of our staffs, the British on our staff, the First Allied Airborne Army staff, were working diligently on it and were enthused. We then had a formal presentation. A formal presentation at that time was quite a sizeable do, and I remember I introduced the idea, and we had a set format, each officer doing his part. General Brereton briefed it, and then I came on and gave more of the overall plan and the strategic idea. Then others followed with what would be involved, the number of troops, the number of airplanes required, the supplies required, the timings. It was quite an ambitious plan. Many of these people on General Eisenhower's staff were enthusiastic and many were anti. The British were not for it. The British had a reason why they weren't for

it. They always wanted to hit across the lowlands. They wanted up in their sector to the north of France, Holland, in there, and they wanted to go across the top of Germany. You remember that they went to . . . Oh, what was the ill-fated paratroop thing that there is a book about? A Bridge Too Far, Nijmegen. They attempted that later. Their eyes were over on that, and they wanted to go overland to the north to Berlin. They saw a lot of the equipment they wanted to use being taken for this plan. It was not exceptionally popular with the air forces because it involved . . . I think they said, "Well, you realize that over this thing there would probably be one of the biggest air battles ever." Our answer to that was yes, and it would be a decisive one, because we knew that the Germans were low on fuel, low on pilots, and low on industrial capability, and had very few airplanes left. We also knew that we were trying to get them to commit what they had left so that we could eradicate it. Our ideas included the thought that, yes, this would be quite decisive; and that, yes, they would have to mount an air defense against it; and, yes, we would have to mount an air offense to keep those corridors clear and make it safe for those landings, but that they would have to throw in every doggone thing they had left in the air force and that would get rid of it--the air power--as far as they had it. Sweeping that

out of the way, we could then at will keep launching supplies, and supplies, and we would own the air once and for all, that this was really designed to be the decisive battle of the war. We agreed that that would have to be accepted. Well, a lot of the folks, you can see, couldn't readily accept that. I'm hurrying across a lot of things, but you can see that it's logical that folks would oppose it. It didn't fit their way of doing, and the Strategic Air Force wanted to keep on with their job. They didn't want to be diverted. We even had plans that maybe they would have to land some B-17s with personnel in them. I think that was an error, because I think it struck General Spaatz as going a little bit too far. But we had by that time a pretty good-sized airlift capability, and there was a hell of a lot of airlift in this country and everywhere that they could have gotten over there at a moment's notice. Hell, we had the C-47s, and the DC-4s were coming in at that time, and we had a lot of airplanes. For this one concentrated time, we could have brought airplanes from everywhere. You would not have to train anybody or anything. You'd just say, "Load them up and go," and keep pouring them, and keep pouring them. Many of the air people and the troop people thought our plans were too ambitious, that we couldn't load and take off airplanes and tow gliders

that fast. Our answer to that was to show them what we had done in the jungle, for heaven's sake, and how fast we could go. Our premise was that the lessons learned over there and the timing of that logistic problem--all it had to do was be expanded in this area, and going off formal airdromes back in staging places was certainly a hell of a lot easier than what we were doing over there out of landing strips made out of rice paddies. So we didn't think our timing was off. Anyway, it was a great experience, and it was a good presentation, and it was adjudged a good plan. Those are not my words. But afterward then, General Eisenhower made himself available to meet us, and as we came along I was introduced by General Brereton, I believe. I was introduced and he said, "Oh, you're that fellow that did the air invasion in Burma." I said, "Yes sir, I am." He said, "Oh, I want to thank you. You sent me an officer one time when I needed an officer for the invasion on D-day, and we had a glider plan in mind. A lot of gliders were used in that, and you sent me an officer to help us on that." He said, "Was his name Atkinson?" I said, "No, his name was Alison." He said, "Oh yes, Alison." He said, "Well, I always appreciated Lord Louie sending him, and I want to thank you. Now you know about air invasion. You are

one of the only guys in the world that's ever done one. What do you think of this plan?" I said, "General, I dreamed it up."

(End Side 1, Reel 7)

C: So after I said to General Eisenhower that I dreamed it up, we had a good chuckle. He laughed, and I remember him slapping the papers in front of him, which was the plan, and he kind of hit it with his hand, and he said, "I like this plan. I think it ought to be done." After I told him, "General, I dreamed it up," I didn't want to sound that bad, so I said, "I am the guy that General Arnold sent over to study this kind of thing and see if it weren't possible to get it going." He said, "Oh yes, I understand that, and I know General Arnold feels strongly about aerial invasion plans and feels that we are way behind in this sort of thing, and we ought to get on with it. I also know that General Marshall would like to end this war with an aerial invasion capability." I said, "Yes, I understand that too." So he again congratulated our staff, the team, that had put this thing together, and I'm sure it was well done. I had never been a part of one before, so I don't know what other plans were like, but I know this one was well done. I

know that it was well received by him, and the studies then were to go on, on this plan. Actually, to end this saga up, the plan was never really needed. In fact, George Patton kind of did his ground part, if you will remember, by making those forays on into Germany, those dashes on in. He kind of reared around-- they kind of got around behind the Ruhr. They did cross the Rhine in several places. But then he did dash from down south of there and run northeast up behind there on into Berlin, because before the aerial invasion would have been required, the Germans began to disintegrate and pull back. They began to give evidence of being on their last legs. Patton just had a field day rushing forward, and he was then getting his supplies brought forward by highway truck transportation and all that sort of thing. So the plan, the plan Arena, the aerial invasion of Germany, was never required, never brought in. I think the plan probably somewhere still exists, that is, the physical documentation of the plan probably is around somewhere. (laughter) I would like to read it.

So much for that. Then the war was ending quickly in Europe, and I wanted to get out very, very fast because I wanted no part of any occupation force. So I quickly engineered my withdrawal from Europe and back to the

United States right after VE-day, Victory in Europe. I was there on that day and was gone a few days afterward back to the states.

H: When was the last time you actually saw General Arnold?

C: Oh, it was after the war. He had been retired, and he went out to the West Coast. He went out to the, oh the, Imperial Valley area. That's where he wanted to live, and actually, the last time I spoke to him was on the phone. He had told me to come on out and see him. He was out there, and he was writing a column for a local newspaper and was having a lot of fun. You know, General Arnold was a writer, quite a writer. I don't know whether folks know this, but he in fact wrote children's books at one time. He had a writing talent and he liked to do it, and he was writing for that paper out there. He wasn't well. But one time, out of the clear blue, I got a telephone call from him. Dr. Howard Rusk was with him. We both talked on the phone, and General Arnold said, "You promised to come on out here and see me now, and you haven't done it. When are you coming out?" I said, "Well, I'll get around to that. I would like to see you, and I'm sorry I haven't seen you. It's really disappointing that I haven't." He seemed sincerely

put out that I hadn't come out to see him. Then he got ill and passed away before I could get to see him. But I think the last time I saw him was probably, oh, maybe a year or so after the war ended, however long he was down there. I was resigning from the Air Force and getting out, and I wanted to explain to him why, and he agreed with me. I sought his assistance in getting out, because I was a regular officer and had to resign a commission. My medical record hadn't been good enough that they were readily agreeable to letting me out. I had a little difficulty with that, getting them to agree to let me go.

I remember General Arnold's last talk we had, personally, in his office. He said that he felt I should get off, and that he thought that a lot of air guys ought to get out and get into Congress, get into politics. His indication was that he was telling me that that's what I ought to do. Get out and start help running this country with my young new ideas, and especially with ideas that would get the Air Force separated. That's what he wanted. He wanted a separate Air Force and a big Air Force. That was in his heart, and I think he had in mind that I should be a disciple and go out into the land and preach the need for strategic air power, global air power, and sell that,

and make the Americans aware of what we needed. I remember that was one of the parts of the discussion and his saying, "Yes, you get out and go to work. Tell the people. Build a big Air Force. Get into Congress. Be a leader." That was his role for my future, at the time. I remember that discussion.

H: What was behind your leaving the service? It looked like you had an awful lot going for you at the time.

C: I hadn't been the healthiest of guys all during the war. I had been told even before the war by the Leahy Clinic in Boston, where I went because I was not feeling well, that I had a physical situation where I had a hypoglycemic condition. That word and that condition is very fashionable now, but at that time little was known about it. It was called the opposite of sugar diabetes. It is not the opposite of sugar diabetes, because the opposite of sugar diabetes is normal. When they say opposite, this is a lack of sugar in the blood, at times, which makes your system function poorly as against diabetes which is hypoglycemia, or hyperinsulinism, is a lack of sugar in the blood, where diabetes is an excess of sugar in the blood. But either imbalance causes malfunction of the body, and it causes distress. In severe cases, it will

cause you to pass out. I knew this. I had been told this about myself even before the war started. I hid it from the military, because I realized that if they knew it I was done for. I would have been grounded, and I would have been discharged. I was able to hide it because I went to civilians to get a final reading on it. They were the ones that diagnosed it, and also they were the ones that taught me how to manage it. I learned how to manage it, so I felt that I was not doing an improper thing, that I would go on as long as I could and function as normally as I could. To this day, I still manage a hypoglycemic situation which is not as severe as it was then. But the Air Force used to read into my condition, which would become obvious every once in awhile, they judged it as cumulative fatigue, which many of us had. I think General Arnold had cumulative fatigue, and I think that it ended in his heart ailment. I'm not sure I'm accurate there, but I know that General Arnold, toward the last year or so of the war, was not well. But he fought it, and he understood my illness. He understood our managing of it. He said to me one time, "Well, after you get this way, how long does it take you to get over it?" I said, "About 6 weeks." He said, "All right, we are going to get you over it." It had been reported while

I was in India by an investigative officer, who was of the investigation branch of the Air Force, who had come through our base. He had been told by someone, and maybe observed it himself, that I wasn't well. When he got back, he told the Chief of the Air Force, General Arnold, and that staff, that they'd better get me out of there. He told him that I was sick again, and that maybe for everybody's good, I'd better be withdrawn. I sensed it when I got a cable telling me that I would be relieved, and to come on home, and to pick a successor. I think that was in May. I knew that the monsoons were coming, and I had maybe not more than a month to go, and I wanted to finish the job. I knew that I was feeling punk, and that I had stretched it a little too far. My guys knew it, but we knew how to manage it. But this inspector, from the Inspector General's office, had to report it. It was his duty. If he hadn't done it, he wouldn't be doing his duty. He saw it, and he heard it, and he had to report it. So he reported it, and I, in effect, was told to get out of there and come home by General Arnold's office.

I answered the cable and said, "Yes, all right, but I still have some things to clean up, and as soon as I get them through, I will be home." That was about the

gist of the thing. What I was trying to say was, "I can manage the end-up of this thing, and I want to pull it out. Now hold. I don't want to leave it. I don't want to leave those guys in there, I want to fulfill this mission, and I only got a little time to go. Now lay off me, and let me alone. I'll get it done. I know what I'm doing." When I was in Washington, I was later shown in a book the general's order to me and my answer, and they had them side-by-side in a folder. They said, "There is an example of how not to answer the Commander in Chief of the Air Force." I got away with it. The guys on his staff knew me. You know, I had grown up in the Air Force with them. We were old-timers mostly, and I kind of think they knew what I meant. But when you saw it stark on paper, here was the Commander in Chief of the Air Force telling one of his ragtag, lower ranking guys way off somewhere, with all his busy time, and running the air forces around the world, here's some guy out there, and he tells him to get out of there and come home, and the guy comes back and says, "Well, all right, as soon as I finish what I'm doing, I'll be there." It didn't look good, but therefore he knew, and it was now known that I was capable of getting pretty darn tired, and pretty beat up, and pretty ill. I had done the same thing in Africa, and they had sent me home, and I would

recoup. Then I did it again. I couldn't last much longer at this much concentration, so General Arnold then said, "All right, we are going to get you straightened out health-wise. You're going to do as you are told. You're going to go down to one of our new centers. We have gotten three new Air Force rehabilitation centers. They have got hospitals, and the Air Force is going to have their own hospital capability." That was one of his dreams, to have our own hospitals where our boys wouldn't go into Army hospitals. He said, "We are doing a wonderful job, and that Rusk is doing a tremendous job, and you're going down there to Miami." I said, "General, I don't want to go down to Miami. Let me go home and see my folks for awhile." He said, "Oh, that's another thing. I got a place for you down in Miami near this hospital. I got a house, and I'm going to fly up to Erie and get your mother and father, and they're going down there. I understand you got a brother there, and they are going down there and be with you." I said, "General, for heaven's sake, my mother and father are elderly people, and they have never been in an airplane. They don't want to be in Miami in June and July. I don't want any part of Miami in the summer. Please don't upset my family. Let me go up and visit them, and I can manage this thing myself." He said, "No, you

are going to be observed, and we are going to get you healthy. We are going to take care of you." So I said, "I don't want to go to Miami." He said, "Doggone, you are going to have to go somewhere." Then the next day, he said, "I got it all figured. You're going up to Pawling. We've got one of these rehabilitation centers up there in Pawling, New York." I said, "Where is Pawling, New York?" He said, "Just a little bit up above New York City." Well, that struck a cord. I figured I would get to Pawling and check in and get out and go to New York and go where I pleased. I think he saw the glint in my eye. Anyway, he said, "You go up to Pawling, and you get yourself straightened out. They will take good care of you. While you are there, I want you to observe that place, and afterwards I want you to write a report of what you think of that, and what we could do to improve it." So I said, "All right, now already you're putting me to work." So I went up to one of the great Howard Rusk Rehabilitation Centers where he was performing wonders. It's a great story, and we won't go into it here, but he has become the greatest rehabilitation person in the whole world, and he teaches this throughout the world. He is an internationally famous doer of good. He's one of the grandest people in the world, and he, too, was an admirer of

General Arnold's and was closer to him than many people, and certainly closer to General Arnold than I was.

But anyway, I went to Pawling figuring I would just check in and maybe have a little bit of a physical, and beat it. I had a car waiting for me, and a bunch of guys, and we were going to go down to the races down on Long Island. But I got fooled, because I think General Arnold anticipated me a little bit, and my orders were such that I would stay there and, in effect, my pants were taken away from me. I then went through a whole bunch of tests, and lo and behold, there was a whole stable of horses there that were for the use of the rehabilitated air people, the wounded folks, and the people that were being brought back to health. I rode twice a day. Lowell Thomas lived right near there and had become the patron of this place, and he took it on as one of his projects to make sure that the boys down there had everything he could get for them. It also was near Governor Thomas Dewey's summer home, and he and his wife were interested in the Pawling project. So I got to know those very, very fine people. I rode in the morning with Lowell Thomas, Governor Dewey, and a couple of state troopers that would ride along with the Governor, and it was quite an experience. I think I was incarcerated for

about a month, and I finally escaped, got out, and went back down to Washington, and started to help finish off the forming of the next two air commando units that were going to India.

Now we will sum up the answer to the question. It was known that I didn't have a good health record. Then I could also see what was happening to me, that I didn't think I was ever going to again be trusted with a combat outfit. I could understand that. A person who is not right up to snuff physically isn't thinking well, or it could be that they aren't thinking well, and there's a possibility that a person who doesn't have his full health capacity might be tired, thinking tiredly, and not make the right decisions. I could understand that. But, of course, my goal was to get back to some combat situation. At the end of the war, I was going to get back. After I had come back from Europe, I was brought down again to the Pentagon, and I met General Arnold again. He again had me briefed on the Japanese eastern situation, and it was in his mind that I was to go to take over the long-range P-47 effort that I believe was based off Iwo Jima, an island off there. They had briefed me somewhat on that situation, and it wasn't a good situation as I remember it. They briefed me on the island of Japan,

and what was going on there, and what was required. I had orders to go out there and take over that wing. The war ended before I got to my embarkation point at San Francisco, and I hurriedly went to the personnel office to chop that so I didn't get out there at the end of things. So I never got to the fourth theater of war. But General Arnold was still inserting me into what he thought was "good jobs" (laughter), and I was to go out and take over that wing. That wasn't needed; the war ended.

So I had some thinking to do then. I realized that my health wasn't going to improve if I didn't get into some other endeavor in life, change my lifestyle, goals. My thinking had to take into consideration that now with this openly on my record, I was not going to be allowed to retain flight status. This concerned me. I could just see that now--I'm in the hands of the medicos, they are looking out for me, and they are going to make sure that I rehabilitate well, and that I am going to reveal to them the hypoglycemic situation, that now there is no longer any sound reason to hide it, or to fight it; I had to face it. The urgency, the requirement, that I felt in my own self--no one put this on me. This is my own doing. I felt it in myself that this is the

requirement of me, that I had to perform the way I wanted to perform, to the best of my ability, and ignore this physical disability, or uncapability, or malfunction that I had, and now there is no longer any need to do that. The war effort is over. I've done what I set out to do, and to me this is the end of that requirement. I didn't foresee future wars like Korea and Vietnam at all. This was the war to end all wars, and it certainly seemed to me the end of the requirement for me to fulfill what I saw as my duty. I no longer had to push that thing aside, and it was going to come out that I wasn't entirely the healthiest guy in the world, not incapacitated in any sense, but not up to snuff, that I would always have to manage this malfunction. So I could see that I was going to be a guy in the Air Force that might not be on flying status, and I couldn't face that. I told General Arnold, and I then had guts enough to write it--not guts enough, but I could bring myself to face the fact--and I think I wrote in my resignation, which I was required to do, why I was getting out, that I didn't want to be a member of an organization in which I couldn't participate in its main goals and functions, that I didn't want to stay in the Air Force, taking the chance that I might not be on flying status. I didn't want to be taken off flying status, so I said I wanted to resign. This was

agreed upon. Now I had a little trouble getting out, because they said they looked at my medical record and found back that, yes, I had been in fact rehabilitated a couple of times, and hospitalized, and they recognized there was something wrong. They said, "We better get a look at this guy before he gets out, because it's our duty to make sure that if he is ill, then we don't get him out of the service. We have to care for him." That, of course, is the law. So I had a little difficulty convincing them that I was well enough to get the hell out, and that getting out would start me on the road back to at least sounder health. I was convinced that there wasn't anything really terribly wrong with me except that I was inconvenienced by this damn thing. I remember feeling that my body had betrayed me, and all those sort of things, because it wouldn't let me do the things I wanted to do. It was holding me up. I thought it was time to go. Also, there was a very strong inclination in me to want to do other things. I wanted to be in business. I wanted to be active in other areas. I wasn't quite sure, but I knew business was one of them. I was intrigued with advertising, always had been. I had studied marketing at Ohio State, and I wanted to get in marketing. I wanted to have another business career. I actually did. Actually, it's odd to understand,

but I felt that "All right, I've had that in the Air Force. That's one career. It's fine. Let's end it now and start another one, and have another interest in life." I find that I have always been that way. I know that I wanted to get into horsemanship; I was a horseman at heart. I wanted to do more of that sort of thing, and I knew I couldn't do those things if I were in the service. The service is rather confining, and rather narrow, and I wanted to be more open than that, and that was another inducement to get out. And yes, I had 11 years in the Air Force, and you can't take them away from me. They are the grandest thing that ever happened to a person. But now it was time to move on. So I faced up to it, and at age 35 said, "Okay, kid, here we do." At age 36, I got out and started a new career in business. That's where I am today.

H: You didn't get a medical discharge, did you?

C: No. I was allowed to resign on a waiver. I think you will find in my files a waiver, and I did agree that if I got out, and then as I got on into advanced years I became ill, that I would be treated not as an ill veteran but as an Air Force officer, and be taken care of. That waiver, I think, is still there and no longer required,

because now I'm old enough to get sick. (laughter)

At age 66, almost anything could happen.

H: Oh yes, one other thing here. How did you become involved as a technical advisor on jet plane motion pictures for Howard Hughes?

C: That was kind of a coincidence. I went out to California, and I looked up my old friend Beirne Lay who was a fighter pilot, and then a bombardment pilot, and a group commander in England. He was a fine, fine, close friend, and I had an occasion to be out in California. I went to visit him, and he was working on, lo and behold, a brand new story called Jet Pilot, and the name was owned by Mr. Howard Hughes. Mr. Howard Hughes had hired Beirne Lay to write the screenplay from a short story that Beirne had developed. When I came on the scene, Beirne was stuck. Here he was a bombardment pilot at heart, and he was trying to write about a fighter commander. He told me to read his first few pages, and I said, "Hell, Beirne, you've got that guy with the wrong attitude, especially since you've got that guy a colonel, a group commander. No fighter group commander is going to take orders like that from the ground. You've got to remember that he is in command. He is going to tell

the ground; the ground ain't going to tell him." Beirne slapped his forehead and said, "Oh my goodness, that is my error." He had been worried about this sequence that he was writing. So we got to talking about the premise of his story, and he wanted to check it with me and see if it played, and see if he was on the right track. He wanted to be as accurate as he could be, and he wanted to write a good story about Air Force guys. He asked my opinion, and we had some good discussion, and he enjoyed it. He said, "Hey, what are you doing?" I said, "I am not doing anything for the next 3 weeks, but I want to be back in Erie at Christmas." He said, "Hey, would you work with me for 3 weeks and help me get started on this thing? Maybe that's what I need." I said, "Boy, that would be fun." So he called up the head of the studio and said, "I got a guy sitting here that got me off dead center, and I've been worrying about this for 2 weeks, and in talking to him for about an hour, he has advanced me 2 weeks. How about we hire him and give me a banking board to kick these ideas off? He knows the fighter aviation business as well as anybody that I know of and that's available." So they said, "Hey, will you go to work?" I said, "Sure." So I started. At first, I was just listening and giving a few ideas, but then we began to

call it a collaboration, and pretty soon I was sitting there helping write a screenplay with Beirne Lay on a picture called Jet Pilot. The 3 weeks went on into 3 months and kept on going, and going, and going. We finally wrote quite a screenplay. Then by that time I was a fixture, and when they started to shoot the film, Beirne Lay was gone, and lo and behold, I was still there. I started to help the producer and the director. Then we got ourselves in a situation where we needed a jet airplane to photograph other jet fighters. So we had a B-47 four-engine jet, but it could only hold a pilot and a copilot and a couple of guys down in the nose, so I got checked out as a copilot in that airplane, and directed those air scenes from the air. So there again I fulfilled a need and was able to get some ideas across. I found that it was very, very interesting work, and I ended up being the second unit director of the aerial sequences. I was director of aerial sequences for this John Wayne-Janet Leigh movie called Jet Pilot. I have to tell you that the aerial photographs were gorgeous, and they were wonderful. Mr. Hughes was extremely patient, because we had to do them over, and over, and over, and over again. We had to chase clouds all over the country. We brought out some very, very good films of some of the early pictures of

the maneuvering of jet aircraft at these high speeds. We had quite a story and quite a pictorial story. I can tell you that the film wasn't that successful. Also, having gone to work with Beirne Lay for 3 weeks, ended up working 2-1/2 years for RKO on Mr. Hughes' project. I had an occasion to meet, greet, and talk with him a couple of times. I had an enjoyable time and a very interesting time working for Mr. Hughes' pet project, the film Jet Pilot.

H: Why did you choose to leave RKO?

C: I didn't choose. (laughter) They ran out of business, and there weren't any more jobs, and I found that I disliked California. That's an odd statement, and I wouldn't want to broadcast it, but I disliked California. I disliked probably, I would say, my situation in California. I didn't like Los Angeles. I wasn't that enamored of California. I have nothing against it; I think it's a grand place, and I would be very happy to go back and be around there, but I didn't like to live there, in that part of California. I think it wasn't anything wrong with California, I unconsciously was hankering to be back in the East. I found that out. I like green trees, I like creeks that run water constantly,

I like lawns that are there on purpose (laughter), and I am a typical Eastern-Midwestern guy, and I like the area. I suddenly found out where I wanted to live. I know I remember coming into Dayton, Ohio, and I was coming in to go down to the air library there in Dayton to look up some film for the air picture. There were some sequences that we thought maybe we could use, and I was going to go through the film library and pick them out. As the airplane banked to come in, I looked down and I saw green trees, and little lakes, and creeks with water in them, and trees. I said, "Aha, that's it! (laughter) That's what I've been longing for, unconsciously." So I got out of California, because I wanted to be back in the East. It was a wonderful experience, and I enjoyed it greatly, but I knew I wanted to get back into something more basic, more solid, and there was a trucking company waiting that needed some marketing talent. It was owned by my brother, and there it was, and how better else to fill your days of work than to do it in your own family company? So I just rolled up my sleeves and went into that company, and a few years later I was made president of it. I have been there now for 23 years; I am now running it. It has expanded, and it has been a worthwhile use of my talent and time.

C: While I was in California, I did an awful lot of horse riding and work which I love, and getting back to Erie and the East, I then, being settled and in one place, started to fulfill my desire to breed those animals, to ride them, and race them. I fox hunt on horses, and I breed them, and that's my avocation and something I will retire with, if I ever retire. So I've been able to do those things that I couldn't do in the Air Force. So there is another reason, probably an unconscious one. I didn't plan it all that way, but it was in my mind.

H: Okay, to top this off, have you had any further association with the Air Force?

C: No, I was in the inactive Reserve and that's all. I never wanted to be in the Reserve. I always felt that if I were going to do that, I'd have stayed in. But I have always stayed close. I've been retired from the Air Force Reserve after 35 years, and that was quite awhile ago. Well, it would have been 35 years in--I went in in 1936, so 1976 would be 40 years, wouldn't it? So somewhere along about 1969-1970, they invited me to leave. So I am out now.

H: Well, I realize that your time is about out, but I do hope to get with you later to discuss things that we haven't brought out in this particular interview. In the meantime, I appreciate it sincerely that you took the time to talk to us this long.

C: I sure talked. (laughter)

(End Side 2, Reel 7)

H: In this interview, Colonel Cochran, why don't we go back and review some of the things you wanted to go into in more depth? One question I have is about Lieutenant General Joseph W. Stilwell in which he wrote a letter to General Arnold and remarked that his operations in China would be hampered by the use of Indian troops in place of American ones. What was your assessment of the Indian, Burmese troops, etc., that were assigned to you?

C: We didn't have any Indian troops. As I remember, it was planned that they would be used, but then some political situation intervened, and the Indian troops not only weren't used, they were held back. There seemed to be a great reluctance to use any Indian units

in any aggressive role. Even as Japanese troops were coming over the border into India, infiltrating, the Indian troops didn't move to keep them out. It was Wingate's forces and the Army along the border, that they kind of moved back so that it ended up that neither the Indian troops nor the Chinese troops, who were planned to come in with the Wingate forces, and the American forces, didn't materialize. Neither the Chinese nor the Indian troops got into this action, the retaking of northern Burma.

As I remember it, there wasn't a high regard for the Indian troops. Maybe I picked up the British attitude, or Wingate's attitude, but I know that, number one, they weren't available; and, number two, they weren't considered top-flight troops. I don't think Wingate wanted them, and I don't think Stilwell wanted them. Now, in your question, you indicate that he kind of said they would be more bother than they were worth. It may have been that the degree of training and the degree of being equipped, and ready for actual battle, they might not have been that well prepared and, therefore, not wanted. Maybe they felt that they would be more of a liability than an asset, because if you put them in they would have to hold up their end. They

would have to perform a phase of the action, and a phase of the campaign, and you'd would want to make sure you could depend on them performing their goals and their tasks. If they didn't, they would let all the other forces down, and the plan wouldn't go forward. Now I know that about the Chinese.

I remember the discussions with Wingate. He sincerely wanted the Chinese to come from the east and start down, but he also wanted to be able to control their movement and their action, and control their contribution to the whole plan. I don't think he was about to get that. I don't think Chiang Kai-shek, the Madame or whomever--and Stilwell--were going to allow that. Therefore, being limited, I imagine that General Wingate decided, "Well, if I can't control them, I don't want them." He didn't want a divided control. He certainly wanted to be able to call all the shots, and he didn't want interference from the Indian Army, or even his own British Army. He didn't want that kind of interference. He probably said, "If I'm not going to control them, I don't want them." So, as it turned out, the American force which became Merrill's Marauders was withdrawn from Wingate's control and kept under Stilwell's control, and under General Merrill.

C: Now they operated separately, and they performed and advanced through jungle in a different area than the area that Wingate worked in. Then also, you see, Stilwell's forces came down from the north, and they were performing a sort of a complementary movement from the north. Wingate was coming from the west into northern central Burma, and then the Chinese were to come over from the east. They never were moved; they never got into it. Wingate then went forward with his own three brigades. You see, the fourth was going to be an American effort. That didn't materialize. I don't know why, but I know that you could sense a kind of a power struggle, or a control struggle, that probably was quite necessary, because you not only had different goals by the different countries, the British, the Chinese, and the Americans, but then you had within those three larger entities different concepts of how this was going to be done. Then you had the personalities in conflict, and it was noticeable, and probably rather normal. At the time, you wouldn't consider it normal because it was an annoyance, and it would make you sometime disgusted. But that's the way things are, especially when you get strong personalities and strong feelings, and there's a rather fluid situation where,

really, after this time nobody really knew what to do about it. Here was the whole Indian Army over there just sitting, and the British Army that was there was just sitting. The Air Force, it was a vast number of people to have there, and to keep there, and to house and feed, and just their very existence was a tremendous effort.

You can remember your attitudes, and when asked a question, I can remember describing for General Arnold this massive force that they had over there. They were sitting back in the cities, and it was a mammoth support effort: thousands and thousands of troops, supplies. But all they did was take care of each other. I remember saying to him that from the whole effort, it was like when we finally got up to where there would be any action, and where the enemy was, it was just like aiming a gun and having a bullet dribble out of it, because the resultant effort militarily that could be brought to bear on the enemy was just pitifully small.

Being sent there to do a fighting job is just like coming into people who have been relatively quiet and rather idle, combat-wise, for a long, long time, and then in you come and say, "All right, here we are. You

people move aside, and we are going to do this thing." As I indicated before, naturally, you were not that popular. But the good guys then would say, "Okay, we finally found somebody that's going to do some fighting, and I don't care how they are going to do it. We are for it, and let's get in on it." You'll find those people, and you'll find that kind of an attitude.

Then you'll find the others that say, "Well, who are these people to come over here and tell us all about how to do this thing? We've been here a long, long time, and wait until they get up there. They'll find the same thing." You have quite a job not to let that start infecting you and your people, because it was rather a quiet front, and the status was quite quo, where everybody was just sitting. Here are the lines, and that's where the Japs are, and this is where these are. There was a little movement on them.

Then when Wingate came in with this idea and this campaign, naturally, there was an awful lot of action, and there was an awful lot of resentment. He didn't want to be fettered with the dull Indian army. He just didn't want any part of it, and, as I can remember, I have the definite feeling that they felt that those

troops weren't capable. They felt that they wouldn't perform. They were afraid that they would not perform, that there was a feeling in the Indian army, at that time, that they wouldn't advance. They would just sit. Naturally, we didn't want any part of that kind of thing. So the

H: Do you think part of this might have been due to the fact the Indians simply felt they were pulling the English chestnuts out of the fire for them?

C: I think that's close. I think that there was some of that feeling. We didn't realize it, but looking back now, you see, right after the war, India was in fact separated from the British Empire. As you remember, Mountbatten was sent there as Viceroy to accomplish that separation. You have to realize, as we realize now, that that feeling was already building, and that there was some separation of unanimity on this campaign. This power play that was going on which, really, I got to remind you, was to try to keep the life lines open into China, to keep China on our side. That was the American goal, to keep China open, and to keep China as our ally. The British weren't terribly enthusiastic about that. As I recounted before, they had their eyes

on holding Singapore and getting it back. They were not that interested in our goal of keeping China.

Now I think this is a good place to just remind ourselves of the complexity of the command in the area. You see, you had the British, of course, who had been in India forever, and had been on those borders. They were "old" British Army. Then you had an American Air Force superimposed upon that structure. Then you had some high, high ranking British officers; they were high ranking but they were their older men. The old general, whoever he was, I remember he was the ranking general in the British Army, and the oldest, and probably one of the more staid and less aggressive types. It seemed to me there was a lethargy there in that Army.

So you had the British. You had Chiang Kai-shek, and Madame Chiang Kai-shek, who was a strong individual, and her force was felt. General Chennault was their ally, and was highly regarded by Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang.

So there was an alliance there between the American air, General Chennault, and the Chinese. Then you had General

Stilwell who was a stubborn, strong individual. I don't know whom he liked, but I don't think he liked anybody. I know he didn't get along well with the British, and he didn't get along well with Chiang Kai-shek, as I remember it. I don't think he and Chennault saw eye-to-eye. So you had all these opposing factions. The factions came out in these strong individuals. Now then, General Wedemeyer [Albert C.] was sent over to take charge of all the American forces. General Wedemeyer was a nice, fine man who had strength along the lines of diplomacy and getting people to work together, and coordinating. I know that was a great part of his role. He was going to try to pull these factors together so that you could have some kind of force, and not have them with divergent views that hampered everything.

At one time, when we were in Washington building this, we thought we had the concept that . . . I can remember very clearly that General Wedemeyer was going out there to be the top commander. He would be in command of the whole caboodle, and I'm certain that he felt that that's what was going to occur. What did occur was that, no, Mountbatten was sent, and he was made the supreme commander.

C: So you had the "supremo" in Lord Louie. Then you had the strong British Army influence who were very, very independent and strong-willed and strong-minded, and rather, I think, obstructive in their views. Their views were not aggressive at all. They were kind of complacent and wait-and-see, and why are you doing that sort of thing? Just let the enemy wear himself out. It seemed to me their ideas were old and tired. That wasn't only my view, it was the view held by many of the Americans out there.

Now you have Lord Louie, General Wedemeyer, the British command, and Stilwell, who operated independently of everyone and would just go into the jungle, and you couldn't find him, that sort of thing, that he was famous for. Then you had Chiang Kai-shek's, Chennault's, and Madame Chiang's influence, and I would say none of them ever really got together. Lord Louis tried. He was a coalescing influence as was General Wedemeyer.

As I remember it, they never really saw eye-to-eye, and the main fighting, therefore, was left to Wingate and his strength, and he had enough strength to buck this whole system over there, the whole establishment, and get his job done, and we along with him.

C: Stilwell also was able to move forces, both American and some Chinese, from the north, and they did keep on pushing down and finally came on down into Myitkyena, and then on the rest of the way. So that was the fighting that was done. It was a small effort compared to what really was over there. When you think of the forces that could have been brought to bear, this was the effort. Again, it went back to the strong personalities. Stilwell's personality was so diametrically opposed that you just would never get those men to think alike or work in unison. However, it ended up that they did their job in the north, and Wingate did his job in central Burma. It was effective. So we will sum up by saying, politically, the Indian army was reserved from this kind of action. They just didn't get in it. As I remember it, their condition, either their attitude or their political feeling at that time, was not wanted. It seemed that the powers that be felt that it was wrong to even try to commit them, and there was something politically wrong about using them.

H: Since Stilwell was so antagonistic to almost everybody, why didn't General Marshall take steps to remove him earlier?

C: I don't know. He was in place, and it's probably hard to remove an old soldier who kind of owns the territory. He had been in it, and then walked out. If you remember, his march out was a rather ignominious defeat. I'm sure he felt strongly about it, and was just positive that, "I'll be damned if I'm not going to go back." He wanted so strongly to redeem his having to pull out earlier that I imagine the command in Washington said, "Well, old 'Vinegar Joe' deserves the right to slog back through that jungle." I suppose it was felt he was about the best we had at that time for that role. You remember now, he is a strong personality, too, and he was a ranking officer in our Army, probably the highest ranking general we had, just about, in the field. He was an old-timer, and I would imagine they felt that was a good place for him. He was a stodgy man when he was over there. He would get forward with his troops; you remember the stories about him wading rivers with the GIs, and they wouldn't even know who he was? There's the story of the one boy that said to him as they were crossing the river, and he was stumbling and falling into things, and the boy was mad that they had an old geezer like him up there trying to fight. He said, "What kind of Army is this when we got poor old guys like this up here?" The GI thought he was just

another poor old soldier, because in his battle dress and condition you wouldn't know he was the commanding general. This is all commendable. It was part of his character, and part of the legend.

But I seriously, at the time, believed that it really hampered the whole effort because, damn it, he didn't belong up there slogging with the boys. He belonged back using his noodle, and using his command facility. He was sent there to lead, to plan, and to campaign, and not get out and walk with the troops. This was his nature and he wanted to do it, and he made a big thing of it. Everybody at the press made a big thing of the "Walking General" that was out with the fellows. That's fine, but we certainly didn't see it that way. I can recall now of being critical-minded of him, because there were several times when we needed information from him and, actually, you couldn't find him. That's actually true, and his staff would be exasperated that they couldn't get messages and decisions from him. He just had the reputation of being a cantankerous old guy that was going to do what he was going to do, and it sometime seemed not prudent for him to be spending his time in that way. I realize that's rather critical, but that's the way it looked to us. The reputation of

being the grand leader right up with his boys just didn't come off with us, because we felt that he should be available. We wanted him, I think, in the role of a proper general back where he was masterminding the thing, where he had an orderly organization, and it functioned. It really didn't. He was such a strong personality that it permeated the whole thing, and it was rather awkward. He didn't really want to have anything to do with anybody else. He wanted to do his own job in his own way, and that was it. He was not cooperative. Being the ranking general there, it was kind of difficult when you had that kind of a remote person who didn't get on with other armies, and with other generals, and went off on his own. Now that might sound odd coming from me, because we were certainly independent, too, but that was our role, and we were told to do it. We did cooperate, and we did try to explain ourselves to other folks, and to other commands, and work within them, and not against them. I have always felt that General Stilwell shouldn't have been that independent and that remote, and that stubborn. There would have been a better effort and a better attitude out there, certainly a more aggressive attitude, and a better combat climate, had he used his leadership to pull the forces together and made a

team out of it. That team just never happened. It didn't happen.

Now, how serious was that? Well, I have to say that you have to put it in context with the importance of that theater. It would seem now, in retrospect, and it did seem to me at the time, that this wasn't a terribly important part of the global war, of the overall war. Naturally, the main show was in Europe. It had been Africa and Europe. It had been MacArthur's efforts against the Japanese, and those were the important efforts. The India-Burmese border and keeping the Chinese channels of supply open was a kind of a side issue and wasn't really that important. There, again, I come back and you say, "Why did General Marshall leave Stilwell out there?" Well, maybe we can see the degree of importance that that area was thought of by the command in Washington, and "Vinegar Joe" was the suitable person for that role out there. It just wasn't that big a part of the overall scheme.

I felt that rather strongly, and when I came back I was questioned about that by General Arnold. I remember expressing the thought that this wasn't really that important an area, and that maybe our supplies and

our efforts that were going there could be better directed somewhere else. When General Arnold asked me what I meant by that, I told him that I had learned they were planning to send out more air effort to the area.

I know one form that it was to take would be four air commandos, or at least three. There were to be three more including the one that was out there, and this would be a whole big wing of air commando forces. They were building them here in the states. Then also, there was thought--and this comes to another one of your questions--of moving on across Burma and on into China. The question was put to me, "How could we take the next leg of invasion and go on into China with some sort of an air invasion technique?"

We did some studying. I was briefed partially about China, and submitted an idea. General Arnold had asked me to think about it and see if we could see anything there. We did say it would be possible to come out of, we'll say now, Burma and parts of China by sort of hopscotching, or leapfrogging I mean, to get on over to the coast of China, and to drop in there from the air and then build a base, or an enclave, large enough on

that coast that you could hold it. Then have that as a jumping-off base for Japan. We were asked how you could do it, and I remember that one of the plans that we thought was feasible was to not use gliders in the tow situation to begin with, but with equipment we knew. We had studied an area there, and we knew where you could come in with a great, great number of C-47s. The first ones, for instance, with their equipment in them tied, you could actually land those airplanes on their bellies. You could get rid of the glider situation, and actually use a C-47 as a power glider. Take it in and land it on its belly, and realize you were going to expend it. But we kind of felt, for this effort, it would be proper to use them in that manner and smash them. Get them in there, and they would have good enough equipment to quickly build air strips, and then come on in with your transports. By surprise and by a sizeable effort, we felt that it was possible to establish a base on the Chinese coast. Then MacArthur and those forces could come to that, and as they then would come into the secure place, it would ever widen, and widen, and widen, and widen the enclave until you have a good area that was secure, and then move on from there toward Japan. I realize it was kind of a dream. It had some practicality, and with great effort probably

could have been done. But that was the only way we thought that our type of experience that we had just had in Burma could be extended and used on into China.

But I didn't have much faith in the idea. I was not of the opinion that the air forces in India should be expanded. Having been asked, I had to express what I felt, and that's what I expressed. Then General Arnold, seeing the way I felt, decided that I was to be briefed on what the MacArthur island-hopping plan was, and how it was going to unfold. That was the other plan. I had given my views on the invade-China plan and set up some sort of a take-some-part-of-the-Chinese-Coast plan in order to get at the Japs from there. The opposite of that was follow what MacArthur had already started to do, and that was approach it island by island, by island, and finally build his force and invade that way; the project being the invasion of Japan. How do you do it? When I was shown what MacArthur's plan was, it just was so much more practical and feasible that I knew, and it was obvious, that it couldn't compare to the taking of China from the India side, and try to do it that way. But I remember that the practicality of MacArthur's plan was so patent and so obvious that I remember my attitude being, "Forget

that other business. It doesn't make sense." However, in these briefings and debriefings, and discussions, the things that I was saying struck a note in General Arnold, and one day he sent word for me to report to his office. I went in and he was coming out. He said, "Come on with me." It didn't surprise me. This is the way he worked, and this is what he would do. So just the two of us went down, and we got in his car. We went over to the--it was a war office and I believe it was in the State Department building, as I can remember it. It was a war room, and a big one. I gathered that this is where the chiefs were briefed. I have not been in the building since, but it seems to me that that's where it was, and it seemed to me it was the State Department building. But, anyway, on the way over in the car, he said, "You are going to meet a fine man. You are going to meet Bob Lovett." I said, "Oh." Of course, here was the Secretary of War at the time; he would be now Secretary of Defense, but at that time he was Secretary of War, and it was Mr. Lovett.

We went into a room, and we were standing. I remember going over and standing in front of a map of the area of the China-Burma-India theater. This was another

angle of General Arnold. He just introduced us and said to Mr. Lovett, "This is the guy I have been telling you about. I thought you and I ought to hear what he has to say." General Arnold just turned to me and said, "Talk," (laughter) which is kind of a difficult role. But I had sensed from his conversation on the way over what he wanted to talk about. He wanted to talk about whether or not to beef up the China-Burma-India theater with more air and more action. To make a long story short, at the time, I can't remember what I said, of course, but I can remember that my inclination was to say, "No, it's kind of a waste." I described some of the attitudes, and I remember being asked about the British air effort out there, and how kind of complacent it was, and not terribly aggressive. I remember we had an idea that it was manned by discordant guys, guys that had had it in other sections of the war, maybe Africa, maybe England. They were fellows who had been worn out, and used up, and would end up out in India just because they had to have someone there. They had to have some bodies there, and they sent their poorest people there. We met and knew many of the guys, and this was our opinion, that most of these guys had wrung themselves out in other parts of the world, and they probably had been good,

aggressive combat men at one time that had a full charge in them, and were now kind of used up. They were just out there putting in time.

I am certain that I am pretty right about that, and it isn't a very kind thing to say. But the British Army out there was full of that kind of thing, and the Air Force--it was obvious.

I think Mr. Lovett knew that or had a suspicion of it, and I'm pretty sure General Arnold did, too. They probably didn't just hear it from me. I think they had already heard it, and I remember having the definite idea at the time, that as I talked and as I told it as straight as I could, and being careful to try to be accurate, because I realized it was a serious accusation, that I was getting from them not many answers but kind of looks between them that said, "You see, that's what we thought, and here's a guy, he isn't all right probably, but he is expressing something that we can use." I suppose in my youth and in my fervor, and sometime in my disgust of some of the attitudes and situations out there, that it all poured out. I think that probably helped those men come to some sort of a decision, or maybe they were just collaborating something

that they had already discovered themselves. I'm sure I wasn't any deciding factor, but my information or my attitudes, or something, probably lent another little piece of evidence that they could put together to make a decision. I do remember Mr. Lovett's graciousness, and I remember what an impressive person he was. I know I came away being very proud that we had a man like that in the position he was in, and in control. He certainly left me with the opinion that the war effort, from the civilian side, was in damned good hands.

I probably got a lot of that from General Arnold, from the way General Arnold spoke about him. I remember afterward saying to General Arnold that that was a pretty fine person, and then Arnold talked about him. I could get from General Arnold that he thought a great, great deal of Bob Lovett. Then in ensuing years, of course, I had reasons, as everyone did, to realize what a fine person he was, and what a great contribution he made to the war, and what a good man he was, at the time, in his position, which of course was never easy.

I know that the plans, therefore, then for more air capability to be sent out to that theater was downgraded.

C: It was lessened and one more air commando force went out there; the other two went to the South Pacific, were diverted to the South Pacific, to be used elsewhere, and then I don't know what became of them. I think they were assimilated into the commands down there, and that was the end then.

(End Side 1, Reel 8)

H: You mentioned the strong personalities, and the different views of these personalities, out in that theater. Do you specifically remember any conflict between Wingate and Stilwell?

C: I think their whole relationship was a conflict. Their attitude toward each other was certainly in conflict. I know there were strong feelings because General Wingate attributed the withholding of the American force from him, not allowing the American force--it was to be one-fourth of Wingate's whole command. I'm pretty sure the first concept was that the American forces would, in fact, come under his control. I'm sure General Wingate felt that Stilwell was the one that said, "Scotch that. No, those forces will not work under Wingate's control. They won't be under British control,

and they won't be under Wingate's control." They operated separately, and I am sure Wingate attributed that decision to Stilwell. So there was no love lost between the two men, and between the two forces. I think the attitude permeated down through the officers, probably even to the men. There was a dislike and sometimes a disparagement, and I think I've recounted in another place that we weren't held in terribly high regard, because our job was to support Wingate, and we did it. The American forces felt that we were kind of traitors, and they actually used that word. Anybody who would stick with the British and work for them, and not work with the Americans who were there in place, there was something wrong with them. We had to take that. That came down from the Stilwell headquarters, so there was no regard. However, I must also say that the effort that was coming from the north by General Stilwell was a large part of Wingate's plan, because he knew he was up there occupying the Japanese on that front, and made it possible for Wingate's air force to penetrate in behind the Japanese and below them, south of them, and cut off their supplies. So whether they liked each other or not, the whole grand campaign plan was a cooperation between the two armies. They could do their role that effectively; they weren't out to do

each other in, but there was no love lost. I don't know of any confrontations between Wingate and Stilwell, but I know it was a living attitude of opposition. They didn't see eye-to-eye, and I don't remember them ever being much in contact with each other. Probably through signals, and messages, and orders, and planning, and that sort of thing, but, personally, I don't remember them ever meeting. I know they must have, but I know they were not in communication with each other to any real close degree, where they were working in unison. They just both did their jobs.

Of course, they were opposites: one a zealot. Wingate was just so aggressive, and they were both egotistical, naturally. But one with so much fervor and so much fight, and so much desire to aggress, aggress, aggress, aggress--pound. You know, Wingate's nature. He was really a fighting man. He was obsessed with fighting. Now I am not saying that Stilwell wasn't, but he was rather slow, ponderous, almost to the point where we felt he was obstructing. I realize it's a narrow view now that you look back, but it certainly was exasperating at the time and place, and at the moment. It was an exasperating thing to watch.

II: You mentioned that you didn't think Stilwell and Wingate had ever met together. Was there any effort to bring all these various headstrong leaders together at one special conference to map a strategy?

C: Yes, and at that conference . . . Well, there must have been others, but there was one where the plan was presented, and I went to that meeting. It probably was one of the first meetings that Lord Louie had after he got out there. At the meeting, all of the factions, all of the various entities, were represented. Chennault was there. I don't remember who the Chinese person was. It was not Chiang Kai-shek. But Chennault was there, Lord Louie was there, General Stratemeyer, our air chief, was there, the British command, and I forget the person; they were all drawn together to listen to the plan. Wingate was ill at that time. Wingate was just out of the hospital, and he was not well. But he had a representative there. I was to give the aerial invasion concept as we saw it.

I do believe that without our plan, without our capability of taking troops in and putting them in place, I don't believe the campaign would have gone forward. It was almost stalled. The planning and the ideas were

grinding to a halt. I think there was some theory that Wingate would not get well, and he wouldn't be able to lead it. That seemed to be a relief to a lot of folks, to some of the guys that didn't want to go forward with this plan, this invasion of Burma. The Chinese were hanging back; they were ill-supplied. They weren't real favorable. We could sense that. They didn't want to use their troops. In other words, in this effort they wanted to use them elsewhere, and Chiang Kai-shek was limited in his troops, his supplies, and his equipment, and he probably had other ideas of how he wanted to use them. I won't get into that history, but he had his own troubles in his own country. To ask him to split off what we would have called a brigade, or something like 8, 9, 10,000 troops with all their supplies, and move them in place and do the east to west effort into northern Burma, maybe he didn't want to employ his troops and his limited capability in that fashion. Who knows? But there was a dragging of the feet there. It seemed to me that it had been agreed upon, probably at Quebec or someplace, or the later grand plan, including a force of the Chinese, and as the time came forward for them to be started and to get them in place, there was a reluctance, and they never did come into play. Same thing with the American

forces. They were there, they were moved in, but they never came under Wingate's control. They never became a part of the invasion effort, except to be used as a preliminary confrontation with the Japanese to use them up, and that was Merrill's Marauder effort down through the jungle. Then, of course, Stilwell's effort, the American effort, from the top--from up around Lido--to come down the Lido Road which he had been building for 2 years. We used to laugh and say, "We are going to do in 2 nights what he is trying to do for 2 years." Now that was a little bit of arrogance, but it was the airman saying, "We can fly over this terrible terrain and plunk the forces down in a spot by the use of air."

Now this plan was brought out at the meeting that I am speaking of. I remember Lord Louie saying to me after I had done the presentation, my part of it, and he used these words, or close to that, "You are the only ray of sunshine" expression. That kind of expressed the whole idea that if we had not come in there with the capability to move the troops by air, I know that campaign would have had an altogether different flavor. I really know that it was in jeopardy right then and there. The plan was in jeopardy and may not have come off without the air capability we brought to bear, and

supplied in these instances. I think the prospect of starting out three different brigades and thousands of men and equipment, to slog through the jungle for a whole month just to get into place, just wasn't looked upon as a very rewarding thing to do. I believe that our air capability changed that from a plan that had a rather dismal outlook at this point to something that was really exciting and acceptable.

It's easy to say now that, "Well, they should have seen that this thing was possible." But we have to reconstruct the climate of the times, and no one knew whether this could be successful or not. But it made so much sense in the planning stage that it was accepted as not a possibility but a thing that could be done and could be made very effective. I remember being elated after the meeting that the mood had changed, and that we were getting support from these men, and they felt pretty good about what we were talking about. Well, of course, we were building a better mousetrap. We were building something new, but it looked so feasible that we began to feel better about it and think of it not as a plan but as a way to go and get ready and do.

C: I remember I went back to Wingate and recounted what had gone on and told him how we were received. Of course, he already had had word, I suppose, from his own people. I remember from that point on that guy got well. I wouldn't have given you a nickel for him just before that. He was down; he was quite ill. I believe his illness was close to typhoid or something of that sort. But I also believe that he had an illness of confidence; he was disappointed. We weren't faring very well. Although our plan was going forward, it was getting shot at by so many people. The factions were powerful that were against this plan, and were against Wingate. But I know he was down in spirit as well as physically down, and this one meeting that I am speaking of, where all the heads were there, and there was a community of feeling after it, that this was a good plan and, lo and behold, the only one, and that it should go forward, I know it built up his spirits. I know it helped him get well, because from that point on he came back fast. Then he became his old self again, and he came quite aggressive after that.

At that meeting, by the way, I was trying to deal with General Chennault, because he was getting some P-38s

that he wanted. We were getting P-51s that I tried to sell him, and I went into a long business . . . I had a theme, and the theme was that--I was borrowing his attitude--that every hour they flew over there had to count, because every gallon of gasoline had to be flown over the Hump. You had to really put it to use; you didn't waste anything in his theater. So it seemed to me that there was a good basis for a little bit of bartering, because I expressed to him the thought that you've got two engines there, and it's really using up double fuel. And, really, the P-51 with a single engine was such a marvelous piece of equipment, and it had the new rocket capability, just as did his P-38s that he was going to get. I remember dwelling on the rockets and telling him what I figured that his guys could do with rockets on the 51s, and that we would trade airplane for airplane. Now, we wanted the P-38, because we thought it was a better platform for air-to-ground action that we were planning. We thought it was a better platform for rockets and would carry more bombs, and would carry a better payload, and could remain in enemy territory longer. It had a greater range.

I tried to con him out of his P-38s, and he listened and listened, and just kind of looked at me, and I said,

"You really ought to have the P-51s. That would help us all." He just looked at me and said, "That's very interesting." (laughter) That was as far as I got. He didn't buy it. He didn't buy it at all. So we didn't get his 38s. We kept going with our 51s. But he was for our plan, and I know Mountbatten was. It was probably his leadership that kept the thing intact. It pleased me at the time to be able to give him something that he could justify going ahead with because again, I go back. This is General Arnold's foresight or something; but we were a deciding factor at that time on whether to scotch this thing or go ahead with it. Our demonstrated ability to transport the troops in there was the deciding factor and, oddly enough, that wasn't thought of when we left the United States-- that phase of it. I came out of that meeting, and I remember saying to Arvid Olson, who was our operations officer, Colonel Olson. I said, "We'd better get ahold of Washington and up the number of gliders." I believe we had planned on 100 gliders, and I think we upped it to 150 right then and there. We were dealing that close to the vest at the time, and it seemed obvious to us that if this thing was going to go, we would need more gliders.

C: But I am sure, to go back more to the question, there were meetings upon meetings, upon meetings, that is, between the representatives of the various factions. I don't personally remember any other summit meetings, so to speak, where all the hats were. I remember as Olson and I went into this meeting, we realized that we were going in with the top brass, and we were the youngsters, and we laughed. We looked over, and all the men had come in and put their hats on this one table. Here was Mountbatten's gleaming white hat with all the braid on it. The table was lousy with braid on the visors. Then the colorful British army hat, and I forget what Chennault had. He always wore an overseas cap. That was thrown on there. Stilwell's funny--you know, the Boy Scout hat he wore, the campaign hat--that was thrown on there. We stood there and laughed at this table of hats representing all the brass and braid. I remember, also, we weren't dressed properly. I think we were just in khakis as was everybody else. You know the climate there, you can picture. But the hats were rather impressive.

H: Was Mountbatten able to work quite effectively with Wingate?

C: Yes. He believed in Wingate, and Wingate recognized Lord Louie's authority. Now that might sound funny, but he didn't recognize very many people. Sometimes, he purposely was rather antagonistic toward some authority. He resented a lot of it when he thought it was improper or thought it was faulty. But not so with Lord Louie, and I have always told the folks over in England that Louie Mountbatten was more our champion than they even realized, because when a command has a fellow in it like the obstreperous full-charged guy that Wingate was, that's not easy on a commander. I remind you of General Eisenhower having to control George Patton. A great part of leadership is to know how to use the talents and the capabilities of each of your guys, and when you got one guy that's an obstreperous brat that doesn't get along with the other folks, and that sort of thing, it's not easy for the leader to keep all the factions at peace, and use each one of them to the best ability. Lord Louie certainly did that very thing with Wingate. But there was an admiration by Wingate of Lord Louie.

Now, he also knew from whence came his power, because Wingate's power was actually Churchill. Churchill had decided that he was the guy and put him in place. At

the Quebec Conference he said, "All right, we are going to take back northern Burma for you, and here is the guy that is going to do it." Then Lord Louie was going out there, so it was cut and dried. The other people didn't want to believe that, a lot of the underlings, but that was the word, and that was the order, and that was it. You were going to do it no matter how much fussing there was down below. The top knew what the effort was, and that was it. Wingate was smart enough to realize that his power was from Churchill, through Mountbatten, to himself. He knew how to work it. He used it and, as I recounted earlier in one of the tapes, Wingate had not the least bit of compunction, he didn't hesitate one bit to fire off a telegram to Churchill, just right off, and send it through. Of course, I don't know whether they got through or not, but I know he sent them. I know he would fire them off.

So he had the blessing of the very top, and he was put there through agreement between Mr. Roosevelt, Mr. Churchill, and the Supremo, Lord Louie. So he had a shelter there. No matter what happened in the in-fighting down below, that was still the power. But I remember the association between Mountbatten and Wingate as being very

healthy, and very good, and a great deal of respect, and a great deal of wisdom on Lord Louie's part in using the cantankerous, obstreperous talent of Wingate.

H: You mentioned that the British had an awful lot of deadwood out in the CBI. Do you feel then that Wingate and Mountbatten were really the only two exceptions to the rule?

C: Oh no, they had some real fine people that came over to us, some guys that really wanted to fight. But I would say there was kind of a malaise that permeated that whole command out there, because they had been there so long, and it was discouraging. They only got supplies or notice or a commendation, or whatever you have. They only got what was left over. The main effort of the British and our forces, the American forces, was elsewhere; the important stuff was going on elsewhere. Most of the talent, and the equipment, and the backing were in the other areas, and this was a stepchild area that was rather a side issue. It showed. I think when armies get in place and there isn't much fighting to do, they began to degenerate. That's a harsh word, but their spirits lag or flag, and the officers' club, and the enlisted men's club, and the creature comforts become

quite important. The in-fighting in commands, or the jostling for positions and filling spaces in the organization, the ambitions come out. An army, especially one overseas, needs some action, needs some fighting, needs some reasons for being, and when things slow down, the rocks start coming in. The individuals are people that are trapped in this, fine people, but where are they going to go? As I say, their efforts get into housekeeping and supplies. It's a thing you can almost feel.

H: Where did Mountbatten operate out of? Where did he have his headquarters?

C: First in New Delhi and then down at Calcutta, and then back in New Delhi. Our air was in Calcutta, but his main digs were, at that time, in New Delhi.

H: How did Stilwell view your air commandos?

C: I don't think he believed in the airplane at all. I don't remember him ever wanting much of it, or using it. It wasn't in his scheme of things. He wanted to build that road. That was his way of doing, and building that Lido Road, and the trucks. Miles and miles of trucks that sat over there, and sat over there, and rotted waiting to use the road. The road was a difficult thing to

build in the jungle. You'd go forward a foot and come back two, and the rainy season would get you, that sort of thing. It was a tough effort.

H: Did he sort of feel that your outfit was stealing some of his fame?

C: I don't know. I think he suffered us, and that was about it. There we were, you know. He went on about his business. I think he is too big of a man to worry about us stealing any of his glory. He had his own concepts. There was no way we could steal it. He was a well-established character. I don't think he looked at us as much of a threat. He just put up with us.

H: How did you view the very controversial Chiang Kai-shek? There have been all kinds of viewpoints, pro and con, about the man.

C: I was very much on the periphery of that. I remember hearing attitudes, rumors, and talk, but nothing I could ever put my finger on, as saying I knew anything positively, that I experienced anything. It didn't seem to be much of a factor in our concentration. The only thing I knew, it seemed to me he withheld Chinese troops when the plan was that he was to provide them. He was the kind of thing that was just out there. I can't tell you

much about him. I didn't know anything about him. He was just another entity that existed over there. I knew none of the interworkings of that, just hearsay.

H: You already talked about this a little bit, but how was the association between Chennault and Stilwell? Did they work together effectively?

C: No. No, again I have the impression that there wasn't much of a meeting of the minds there at all. It certainly wasn't a meeting of character. Again, Chennault was the consummate air man. Chennault was air from the word go; Stilwell was the epitome of the ground person, the old infantry slug-it-out, slosh-through-the-marshes kind of tough effort, and I just don't think that their personalities had much in common at all. Now, what they got into with Chinese ground forces and that sort of thing, and what Stilwell should have had, and what he got, I don't know anything about. But I am of the opinion, having watched it, that there was hardly anything in common between those two men. This was another one of the divisive attitudes that went on out there, and it was these strong guys who were just set in their ways. There wasn't a great deal of team effort at all. I think Chennault had a strong idea of what his role was,

and it was to support the Chinese in any way he could. Boy, he did it and, of course, that wasn't Stilwell's role. Stilwell's main compulsion was to take back what he had lost, what he had been kicked out of, and try to get northern Burma back, try to get Burma back, because he had been kicked out of it. He was stubborn, and he was positive he was going to get back. All his thinking was focused on that main thing, getting back, and he was going to do it on the ground. It was the only way he understood and wanted to do it. I suppose we can say that it's just normal that he would feel that way. I really don't believe that General Stilwell understood the use of air.

H: Did you sense this hostility between these two when you attended this so-called summit meeting?

C: No, there was no hostility in that room. You know how men are when they meet. They don't show those things. I don't remember any at all. I don't remember. There might have been some objections, or there might have been the kind of questions that would indicate an attitude of opposition to the idea. You know how men will ask a question that is loaded enough that you can guess that they don't buy the situation. There were questions like that, but by the time it got up to the summit, the

in-fighting had been done. Most of the tussling and the conflict had gone on between the staff, and when it finally gets up there, the men are big enough that they say, "Well, I guess this has gone forward whether I like it or not," and they will just shut up on it. But, no, I don't remember any animosity being shown at all.

H: Would you like to discuss any further the status of the air commandos, how they were set up, and whether there were attempts to have them absorbed into other units or some such things?

C: Of course, the first one, we have pointed out, was a task force, and it was a single-purpose organization that was to run about 6 months and just work itself out and go away. But as we kept building, and building, and building, we realized that this could be another form of combat unit. As I say, it didn't start out that way, but as it began to formalize itself, and the desire of the command function to make order out of everything, the closest organizational unit to what we had was a group in the Air Force. So they made us a provisional group, as I remember it, because after we got over there, we had to have a number. You had to be identified some way, and so we were a provisional

group whose number I have forgotten. This was an attempt to make order out of this completely different kind of a unit that was floating around, the task force. So they formalized it and made it a group. Well, then they said, "Well, now we can make more groups of air commandos, and it will be like a bomber group, or a fighter group, or whatever, and then it will build itself into wings. You will have three and a headquarters and a wing, or something of that nature, three groups."

Now, it started to take that form, and we did actually build, I believe, four air commando groups. One was already out there. The one that was the task force became now a group. Then there was another group sent out, the 2d Air Commando, and that was sent to India for the next season. Then the other two went to the South Pacific. They were diverted. Evidently, the structure, or the animal, was not healthy, because it didn't last. It didn't, in fact, become another kind of air unit. It never jelled, because here you've got transports, fighters, bombers, gliders, liaison aircraft, and you put that together, and you say, "Now, that's a group." Well, it wasn't, and there was always a tendency to split it off. There was always the thing there that if it got in position it had to be supported by other

people, and it would start to draw from other units.

"Bring in that fighter squadron; bring in those transports over there, and attach them to this thing." So the concept just did not lend itself to order, and it died.

H: Do you think it was purely the personality of General Arnold that kept the thing intact in the first place?

C: Yes, the task force, oh definitely. Yes, it was his idea completely, and his authority that kept it together. Every other force bearing upon it wanted to split it and put it back where it belonged. Take the various parts and put them back. Take those transports and put them back over in the Transport Command. Take those fighters and put them back over where they belong. There's always that tendency to do this, because this was a special thing. It didn't belong. It didn't belong anywhere, and there was always that tendency to do it, and that's what happened. Now, we still have such forces, but they call them special forces, as you know. They are down at Eglin, and the 1st Air Commando still exists. It has a different form, and it did fight in Vietnam, and President Kennedy brought the 1st Air Commando back into active duty

early in the Vietnam thing when our country could see there was, in fact, going to be some kind of unconventional-conventional warfare over there, the guerrilla-type action, and that we were going to get in it. One of the things that lent itself to that kind of warfare, again, was the commando idea to be worked in the jungles. It took a different form but, again, it was Air Force jungle forces, the guerrilla-type thing, and the training went on down there at Eglin. They got jungle training and guerrilla training, and that still goes on. But they are now part of what is known as Special Forces, which comes under Tactical Air there at Eglin. They served very, very valiantly in the Vietnamese war. If you remember, they had AT-6s that they were using for ground support and had an excellent record there. Now, when they were brought back into being and revitalized, put active again, that was kept secret for awhile, I later learned. I, myself, didn't know that the 1st Air Commando had been reactivated and was again training. They kept it quiet.

H: Wasn't that due to the fact that they were in support of that Son Tay raid up in North Vietnam to try and release those captives?

C: No, the time I'm speaking of is long before that when President Kennedy . . . Even before we got more involved in Vietnam, they were planning, and they looked at, first, where do you find jungle forces?

(End Side 2, Reel 8)

H: Would you like to continue where we left off? You mentioned during the break something about the opium trade. Would you like to talk about that a little bit?

C: Yes, but let's not label it "opium trade." In our survival kits that we carried, the kit being attached to the parachute, the seat part of the parachute, and we had the usual currency, money; we had some gold certificates, and yen were useless. Money wasn't very good in that area, because if you were down behind enemy lines, and you were trying to induce the natives to help you, they were most cautious about that sort of thing, even though they would want to help you. They would have to think it over, because you were there one day, and maybe the Japanese would come in 2 or 3 days later and have found out that they helped you. The Japanese would then take it out on them. So, they were reluctant to aid an American or Britisher, because they would get

told on, and after all, the Japanese were occupying, and they would come along and, as I say, take it out on those folks who would help you. So they didn't want to get caught with American money. That would be a dead giveaway--or British money. Also, we have to remember, money isn't much use to a fellow in the jungle. Where is he going to spend it? You know, they don't have supermarkets, and money is useless there. You could hand a guy a \$20.00 bill, and what would he do with it? There is no market. So I don't know whether this was a British idea, or where we got the idea, but we realized that legal tender, we'll call it, could be opium, realizing that most of the people in there used opium-- or a lot of them used opium. Opium was scarce. It became a very valuable medium of exchange, and so we would carry a chunk of opium about the size of a square, maybe not quite 2 inches all the way around, and that's quite a bit of opium. I don't know whether you have ever seen opium in its raw state. We realized we were dealing in a pretty precarious substance. Dope is not the kind of thing you run around and throw around, and we had to account for it. But I personally flew to a British opium factory in India. There was a landing strip near there, and we landed. I was in the company of British authorities, and I signed for so many bricks

of this opium. The bricks were about the size of a pound of butter, or maybe a little larger, but about the size of a small house brick. The stuff was kind of like tar. Then we took it back and set up a quite rigid system of accountability for each and every ounce of that stuff. You had to cut it up. I remember the consistency of it being tar-like and resisting the knives, but I supervised the cutting up of the bricks into squares and then packaging them, and issuing them to the pilots who would be working over enemy territory and would be liable to capture. They would have with them, with all their other survival gear, they would have this hunk of bribery that might help them. Now, we realized the danger, that if a guy knew you had it, and he wanted it as strongly as people who use opium want it, you were liable to get your head snapped off just in order to get it. We had to be conscious of that, and we had to consider that. But we still considered it a pretty good thing to have if you're in danger, and you could use it to buy your way out of a tough situation.

So then we learned that, in some instances, when you're in there in the jungle and you wanted to get somebody to help you to scratch out an air strip along a stream,

or knock down some of the walls of rice paddies, smooth the furrows out, and you needed manpower, that you could use opium again as a medium of exchange, as money. You could pay for labor with so much opium, and what you did, you could go to a headman in the village and tell him how much opium you would give him for what, and you would haggle the price. Then he would order workers out to help you scratch out this strip. Maybe fell some trees and knock down, smooth out ground, and make a strip long enough for a light airplane to get in there to take out maybe a wounded person, or get a guy who was down, or to just supply the air strips that we were always building all over the place--to come in near the troops, to bring in supplies, and bring out their wounded.

We found that opium was good money, where money was nothing. So we did that terrible thing. Well, you couldn't defend the morality of it. I can't defend it now, but I could at the time rationalize that if my life were in danger, or we desperately needed some labor, that we were not above using the opium to buy people. I know that's nasty, but it seemed pretty practical at the time, and we use to kid about it. Our gag was . . . and we hoped that Mrs. Roosevelt would never find out about this. (laughter)

C: For some reason or another, we didn't want the "Dear Eleanor" to know that her dashing American air people were bribing natives with opium. We found another valuable substance to barter, and this goes back to Colonel Arvid Olson. He went down in a glider on the invasion night, and he landed very near some Japanese troops. The men in the glider were British troops, and they all spread out. They knew that their salvation was to spread out, and Olson and some other man-- I forget who that was--but they knew they were being chased, and they knew they could hear dogs. They knew they had dogs on them. They realized the Japanese knew they were in the area, that there was someone in the area. Arvid actually went into a river, swam a river, and was able to make it--he and his companion. They saved themselves by getting under the overhang of a river, and the Japs actually came along on that bank searching them, and they were hidden underneath there in the dark. They were able to move some more that night, and the next day they got in the hands of natives. I believe it was a couple of weeks before the word got back to us where they were. I'm not sure if it was this instance or some other instance where we rescued a man, but the word came out that these natives had a very, very pronounced salt lack which seemed to us rather odd. But

when the body needs salt, the want is as great as what we know is a sugar want. These people needed salt so badly that they would work for it, and so we were told to drop so many bags of salt in such and such clearing, and "The clearing will be marked. You go in and drop that salt in there, and we will get the headman and barter with the salt. We will barter our salt for his labor. He will scratch out a strip and you'll be able to come in and get us." We did that very thing, and we did it more than once. We found that the natives had a great want, and we could supply it very, very easily. So we would trade our salt for their labor and get things built for ourselves. I had never understood a salt lack, but then you've got to remember that much of the travel in medieval times, the old times, the going to India and all that, trying to find a route to India, was not entirely for gold, it was salt. There was a great salt trade in the old days, because there was a great salt lack in Europe. They didn't have any, and they had to get it from elsewhere. Salt was a very, very valuable and necessary mineral. Our bodies need it, and when our bodies don't have it, the want is a very, very strong force. We ran across that very thing in the jungles there in Burma, and found that we could use it to our advantage. So it was salt and opium that

oftentimes bribed the natives when you couldn't give him money. What was money? It was nothing. But he understood salt, and he understood opium.

H: Did any congressmen ever get wind of this opium business?

C: No, we didn't see many congressmen out in our dirty end of the world. I imagine there were some around, but I don't ever remember a visit in this rough area by a congressman. I'm not saying that they wouldn't want to come there, but it wasn't on their route. Again, this wasn't the big war. They weren't out there, but we thought of things like that, and I am glad no congressman ever got ahold of it. I don't remember even Lowell or any of the people who wrote about this, bringing up the opium trade we were guilty of. We were conscientious, however, I must add quickly here; we kept pretty doggone good track of that opium. We didn't want it to get out of hand and, of course, it isn't like today. Drugs and so forth are a big part of civilization now. At that time, it was extremely unordinary to have anything to do with drugs. We didn't even understand it. We didn't realize what a lethal thing we were carrying around. Drugs were so remote to an Air Force pilot, that it was

just exactly what we were to use it for. We were going to use it to get some man to do our bidding, to help us get out of a bad jam. We were willing to lower ourselves to do this immoral thing to get us out of jams.

Then we did use it as a source of payment for labor, but we didn't throw it around. We had a very, very limited supply of it. I don't remember ever resupplying ourselves, and the guys just carried that darn thing and then, I think, we handed most of it all back; I forget. We had to account for it, and we handed it all back. It was not a thing you expended, and I imagine we lost some, and we "spent" some there in the jungles.

H: Was there much addiction to this stuff amongst the Burmese?

C: Yes, the hill people. Yes, there must have been.

H: Is there anything else you'd like to discuss before we get over into your experiences back in North Africa again?

C: No, we may think of something later. Thinking of North Africa, it occurred to me that maybe we ought to talk a little more about the unique experience of going off a catapult carrier into a battle situation.

When I was appointed by General Cannon to take command of the reserve pilots, the replacement pilots, that were to accompany the 33d Group into the North African invasion situation, I had never heard of a catapult of this kind. Naturally, I knew about catapults because I was an airman, but that was Navy stuff, and we had never seen a catapult. It was my concept that they were fired off kind of like a cannon. A charge was put in, and pow! Off they'd go. So my first introduction to the catapult idea was just so foreign that I had never heard of it, and here I was being told that I was going to be in command of 35 P-40s that were on a British aircraft carrier, and we were to be fired off when we got to our destination. Of course, at that time, I didn't know where we were going to go, but we were aware that a force was being gathered to go into North Africa, but no one knew exactly where.

So I suddenly realized that I'd better know something about catapulting P-40s off the deck of a carrier, and

I didn't have much time. I think we were due to leave in 3 or 4 days. I said, "Where am I going to learn about this? Where am I going to get my instructions?" Here I was, I'm in charge, and I'm going on with a bunch of Britishers onto a carrier, and we know beans about catapulting. So I was told to get in touch with a lieutenant commander at some Navy emplacement in Philadelphia. I got him on a scramble phone, and he started to instruct me about catapults. Of course, I wanted to discuss it first, then I wanted to know just how we would go about this activity. I remember I had some sort of a pamphlet that was given to me, and I was questioning him about some regulations of some sort. It was a Navy regulation, probably a technique kind of instruction, that I was reading. It didn't make an awful lot of sense, but this man did. He was good. He said, "All right, I know that equipment, and I know that installation. What you'd better have when you go off the carrier, you should have a breeze as close to 15 miles an hour across the deck as you can get, and your ship should be doing 15 knots. So you should get the ship to get you into a wind, naturally, get as much air over that deck as you possibly can, and get him to go full out and get at least 15 knots. This mechanism can't handle an airplane over 7,000 pounds,

so your aircraft should be 7,000 pounds and not any-more." Then he started reading me how much pressure the mechanism should have in it, and this was done with air pressure. He got into the mechanism where he lost me. I realized that if I was going to have anything to do with the running of that catapult mechanism, we were lost. I trusted that the people who owned it knew how to work it. But he told me how much pressure I should have, and that I should insist on it. I should insist on the speeds so that I had enough air across the deck to get me into the wind, and to get me into the air. Then the weight of my aircraft, and that's about the bare bones of what I knew.

Now the other 34 guys didn't know anything, and they were gathered from hither and yon. They were not an organization as I explained on another tape. They were all youngsters, and they were the replacements, and somebody had to get them off that carrier into the battle of Casablanca, and be on the ground to replace those who were lost in the battle of the 33d Group. We had these 35 P-40s. I remember my first sight of them. I was on shore, and I looked out into New York harbor and the convoy was forming, and there

were more damn ships than I had ever seen in my life. They kept pointing at this one odd-looking thing that was sticking up out of the water, and they said, "There are your airplanes. They're sitting there on that deck. You see them?" Here were these 35 P-40s perched up on this deck very, very high out of the water, it seemed to me. So I said, "What in the devil is that thing?" They said, "That is His Majesty's Ship Archer." (laughter) I've always said, "Leave it to the British to name a catapult carrier "Archer." What Archer was, was a converted Mormac liner. It was a banana boat; and if I remember my figures correctly, it was about 240 feet long, and it stuck 60 feet out of the water. What they had done was, they just built a platform completely over on top of the superstructure of this banana boat. Now picture an oceangoing boat; you remember the bow is high and it comes along, and then there is an indentation down to the decks where the cargo is loaded down into the hold. Then you come along to the superstructure of where the man runs the ship, that central part, and then you go down again and then back to the bow which rises again. Now, they had built a platform completely on top of that whole thing and, therefore, it was very high out of the water. It didn't look very stable or seaworthy, because we

kept saying to each other, "This doggone thing is a quarter as high as it is long." Then we learned, after we got on it, that in order to keep it from toppling over, because it was very top heavy, that its hold was loaded with cement. So the cement, being down in the bottom, would keep the top from rolling over. Well, luckily I knew nothing, of course, about ships. I knew nothing of the sea. So I didn't realize what a peculiar animal that ship was, and again I trusted everybody knew what they were doing. But it turns out that this Mormac liner was a small carrier. You realize it had to be a catapult carrier. It could get things off, but it couldn't receive them. It was too short to land back on.

But it was designed to accompany convoys with a few British Navy-type aircraft. I remember that they had some odd articles called the "American Buffalo," which was a fat . . . Who built the Buffalo? I don't remember, but it was a fat kind of airplane that looked something like a Grumman. Maybe it was a Curtiss, I don't know. But they were British aircraft, and they had a few of those on board, and the idea would be that when they got in trouble and if aircraft were after the convoy, they would launch their airplanes

and fight, and then they would go down into the sea, the land-based aircraft. That's what would happen to us; if we didn't make it, we would go into the sea. You understand, this ship could not receive much of an airplane back on its deck. Maybe it could have received the Buffalo, but I doubt it. It was completely a catapult carrier. It was not a carrier that had as its added equipment catapult capability as our carriers are built.

So here was my dear banana boat sticking out there, and there were my airplanes on there, and here were my guys. So we got together and they put us on board. I don't even remember having any orders. I never saw a written order. But I was supplied with certain instructions that I was not to open until I got to sea, and I was supplied with a packet of maps for each of my guys and that sort of thing.

By the way, after I got on board and I opened these things and looked at them, then I knew where we were going. But, of course, I was under rigid security control, absolute secrecy. I would not even reveal this to the captain of this carrier who was transporting me and my guys over. I felt that I shouldn't even talk

to him about it, and I never did. It turned out that I was the only guy on the carrier that knew we were going to Casablanca, or Port Lyautey, that coast. Whether we were going in at Casablanca or Port Lyautey or Rabat, whichever, I didn't know, but I had maps and descriptions of all of those airports. I also carried with me, I remember, another set which gave me the landing fields around Oran which would have been through Gibraltar and on into the Mediterranean, and over around on to that part of Algeria. Evidently, that was an optional plan. It turned out that we used the Casablanca plan and we didn't go into Oran, but we were prepared to be shot off wherever this was decided. I think Casablanca was decided all the time, as I remember it, because this is where Patton went in. He had maybe weather conditions or enemy displacement, or whatever. We had an optional plan to go on into Oran, and then, if you remember, some of the forces did come into it, that part of the Mediterranean.

Our trip over was a rough one. I think we were in a convoy of some 50 or 52 ships. The seas were unkind, and were most unkind to this very top-heavy aircraft carrier that we had, that we were in, and the British people were a revelation to us. We were on their ship,

of course, and we were 35 Yanks with some mechanics, and these P-40s on their decks. The first thing I found was, it was very, very difficult to secure the P-40s to those decks. We had them tied down, and tied down, and tied down again, and they would move, because the rolling of the ship and the vibration of its engines would cause those airplanes to move ever so slightly, and they were so jammed on the deck that they began to move into each other. We caught this quickly, and we devised all manner of ways to try to snug those things to that floor so that they couldn't move. With the vibration up and down, which was quite pronounced on that deck, the vibration of that propeller--I imagine it came from the wheel as it would turn--would vibrate that deck so that it was perceptively moving. The airplanes would bounce up and down about maybe an inch travel on the oleos or struts, and they would sit there and you'd get that motion. Then you'd get a rolling motion of the aircraft carrier, and that deck was so high that when it leaned over to the left, and the bouncing effect, the airplane would tend to move. So we had an awful time with that. Then the wind was a factor. The wind was blowing across that deck so strongly that you didn't dare put anything down. We had all landlubbers. Our mechanics were landlubbers,

and they were in the habit of removing a piece of cowling to work on an airplane, to make some kind of adjustment, and they would take the whole side of the engine cowling off and lay it down on the deck. The wind would get it, and it would start moving across the deck. So we had to devise new disciplines on ourselves. We said, "You will never lay anything down on that deck that you don't wrap a line around." A rope we would call it. The British were trying to help us, and they'd say, "We'll have to put a line around everything, or pieces of your aircraft are going to blow into the sea." I could see myself getting over there and saying, "Well, five of these mothers won't get off of here, because it doesn't have half its cowling. It blew into the sea." So I got everybody together, and we cautioned each other that this was a new element that we never had to deal with on land, and we'd better be cautious. By the way, as an aside, I was on deck one day and I saw a piece of cowling moving, and there it was going to go. It was going into the sea just as sure as anything, and I started to run. Of course, I had been around P-40s an awful lot. You know the airplane, and you know where things are on it. You know when you duck under a wing that your head is going to clear, and I wanted to duck under this airplane and

make a flying tackle of this 6-foot, long piece, of engine cowling that was moving, and I wanted to grab it. But I had forgotten that this P-40 had a bomb rack mounted under the wing, and it had kind of a wide bolt coming down, a bolt that came down and separated into two parts, and that was kind of a shackle on to which something else fitted. It was hanging down there, and I rammed my head right into that thing going full tilt. I made my flying tackle and saved the piece of cowling, but I became a casualty.

I had a very, very bad cut on my head, actually an indentation, of where I rammed that doggone thing right smack into the skull. I didn't go out, I remember that, but I was quite a mess. They took me to their surgeon on board, and he sewed it up. I remember he had to shave the thing around. So I had a thing on my head about a good-sized silver dollar, hole on my dome. Of course, they kidded me about being such a landlubber and such an idiot. Anyway, why didn't I have my helmet on?

Well, from then on in, we realized that things like this could happen, and we did wear the liners of our helmets around. On another occasion, I was again diving for

something and I hit my head. I had my liner on at that time, but it snapped my mouth shut so hard when I hit that--my two front teeth here had been damaged in an accident at one earlier time. I had porcelain caps on these two front teeth. My mouth snapped shut, and didn't I break one of my caps? So here I was toothless, one tooth out of the front of my head, that one big tooth there. I went through the whole African thing and, of course, there weren't any caps. The dentists in Africa that finally caught up with us weren't equipped for this kind of cosmetic dental work, so I went through the whole African Campaign with a front tooth out, that is, only the stub of the tooth was there. The cap fits over it, so I had a gap there. That happened to me. The captain of the ship said, "Hey, we'd better keep you in your bunk, because you and these ships don't get along. You're just clobbering yourself before you ever get into battle. You're accident-prone on this thing." Lo and behold, I was. Then we kidded that there's going to be a third one. All things happen in threes, and all that stuff. But he said, "Boy, maybe you'd better stay in your stateroom." I said, "Maybe it would be a good idea," laughingly, of course. Well, lo and behold, I was in the stateroom, and this ship is rolling. We are not

sailors, and I didn't know about it, but I was in my quarters in the bath part of it. I think I had been shaving, and the door was behind me, and the ship was rolling. I made a turn, not looking, to go out of the bathroom, and the door had swung back because of the movement of the ship. The door and I collided right smack on my nose. I got it right in the nose. (laughter) You've heard the excuse, you know, "What happened to you?" "Well, I walked into a door." Well, I walked into this heavy steel door, and I had two black eyes that were the prettiest looking things you ever saw in your life. So I was really accident-prone on that ship. It was actually the physical living example of the fact that this ship was a foreign country to us. We were landlubbers if you ever saw them, and we had land airplanes, and here we were at sea on a British aircraft carrier of dubious capabilities. So our trip was rough, and we added to it because of our ineptness--mine anyhow, and various things were happening to all the guys. But the British were very hospitable, made us very, very welcome. We struck up some very close ties in the 12 days that we were at sea with these folks. We had a lot of fun with them, and they had fun with us because of our different ways, and our laughing at them, and their laughing at us. Our

situation was rather peculiar, because I found out after I got on board that they, in fact, didn't know much about catapults either, although they had been briefed, and they had been through tests. They, in fact, had come over from England and met their ship in New York Harbor; they didn't know it very well either. It had been modified there, I gather, in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, and this deck had been superimposed upon the ship. Then the mechanism for firing had been installed. They had been living with it for some 6 months or so while they were getting fitted for this thing. So they did know their ship pretty well, because they had shook it down. They had taken it to sea, and then they had had many drills over and over again with their catapult equipment. But I was very, very chagrined to learn that they had never fired an aircraft off it. They had fired what they called test sleds, and this sled would be a big hunk, glob of weight that weighed somewhere in the neighborhood of 7,000 pounds, and they would fire that off the ship. It would fall down into a net that they had on the front.

But never had they fired an aircraft, actually. So I said, "Oh boy, this is fine!" So then I told the captain what I required. I read off the requirements

that the Navy officer had given me on the phone, and I told him that I had to have 15 knots breeze across the deck, and that I should get 15 knots on the ship's headway, giving me a 30-knot wind to be fired into, which would help lift us off the deck. The man informed me in no uncertain terms that full-out his ship wouldn't make 10 or 11 knots, and he would be damned if he was going to be in the midst of a battle, probably being shot at, running up and down any place looking for a 15-knot breeze. (laughter) But when the time said "go," we were going to have to get gone. When we were told to launch, he wouldn't know what his position was, and he wouldn't quite know the direction of the favorable breeze, and he wouldn't know, in fact, if there was one there. But one thing he was sure of, his ship would not go 15 knots. It would barely make 10. So I began to worry, therefore, about the weight. I looked up the specs on our P-40, and I found that the P-40 weighs much in excess of 7,000 pounds, the way we were outfitted. So I realized, lacking a good wind in which to be shot--and the speed of the vessel to give me the breeze over the deck--I'd better lighten that airplane up as much as I could lighten it. So we realized that we would have to get rid of the accessorial equipment that came along with the P-40, like engine

covers. Now, engine covers to cover that whole nose weighed quite a bit. So we left those. We took all the tools out of it. We decided that we would only use ammunition not in six guns, but we would use limited ammunition in four guns. Then I got with the mechanics and said, "Where can we lighten up anything else?" We decided that we would go into the air and have enough fuel to fight a limited time to get us into shore, and then to get us to the airport. So we decided to limit our fuel, take off the auxiliary tank down below, the outside tank--remove it. They're a removable tank, a droppable tank, that was on there. We dropped that. We didn't fill the auxiliary tanks behind the pilot's head, and we actually took out some of the oil, and kept getting us down, and getting us down, and adding up all those weights and coming off the spec weight, and the equipment lift that were there, and trying to weigh that. I think the barest we got down to was 7,200 pounds, and we said, "Allright, we are going to have to go with that." I don't actually know what we went off with. I know we were heavy. I know we were too heavy, and we were right on the edge of our safety factor. We used up all of any safety factor we had. So I limited clothing. We left our B-4 bags, and we each had our whole worldly possessions we went off with

in musette bags that we stored behind our heads, so that we could rest our heads back against the musette bags, because somewhere along the line the design of the P-40 had changed so often that the headrest was at least a foot and a half back of a man's head. (laughter) In order for a pilot's head to rest on the headrest that was in a P-40, it would have had to be off his body. The design had changed so much, and so many modifications had changed, but that headrest was still back there. In the space there we put our musette bags, and we beefed that up so that we would, in fact, have something for our heads to go back against when we got the jolt of being launched into the air.

So our sole equipment as far as creature comforts were concerned were the clothing we had on, our parachutes, our helmets, and a musette bag with stuff in it.

Well, later I found out that some of the guys were afraid there wasn't going to be any liquor, or anything to drink, in Africa when we landed there. Being very typically provident Yankees they thought ahead, and I found that they had bought from the British bars a few bottles each, and they had stashed them back in the ammunition cases that I had emptied. I found that the

boys were putting their liquor supplies back in there to be fired off with, which was kind of a typical American aside of what a guy does if he's going into battle; he carries his booze.

(End Side 1, Reel 9)

C: Now, as I say, in the passing over, the weather was not kind, and neither were the so-called German submarine wolf packs. As I have recounted, we were a convoy of, I would say, somewhere around 50 ships. We were the aircraft carrier protection, and as the convoy moved along, and say it was in the form of a square, we were the lower right-hand corner. We found out later that we were a source of amusement to the rest of the convoy, because as this very top-heavy-looking ship would roll the people on the troop ship said they would stand on the rail and bet each time it was not going to come back up. (laughter) It looked so ungainly out there rolling back and forth. And it was. It was a rough ride, and that thing really rolled. I can imagine people looking at this odd-looking ship rolling out there. They did, in fact, wonder how in the world it stayed afloat and didn't keep right on going over. We on it felt about the same way. It was a peculiar

feeling to be up on that deck and feel that thing roll. We encountered several submarines, and then we were subjected to many submarine attacks on the way over. They would get us at night, and they would get us at various times, and there were repeated alerts. Our sonar was going constantly, and I became intrigued at the seamanship that was being practiced here in this marvelous effort. Those convoys were tremendous efforts. To keep those ships together and in line, and in the dark, seemed to be almost an unaccomplishable task, but they did it. We stayed together very, very well, and everybody kept their position. They zigged when they should zig, and they zagged, and they never were on the same course for any length of time at all, because you didn't want to become a sitting duck for the ever-present German submarine that was lurking out there. So you constantly changed course, and during every minute of the day and night you were changing and changing, and just slogging forward, through these heavy seas, and they were able to keep that thing intact and keep it together. Then the attack would come. As I said, I became intrigued with the seamanship being practiced here, and I spent quite a bit of time at night on the bridge in the company of the captain whom I became very fond of. He was an older man. He was quite old,

I imagine he was in his sixties. I remember his officers telling us that he had had two carriers shot out from under him, sunk under him in the Mediterranean; he had been in those battles. He had been around Crete, or somewhere, in those battles, and I don't remember the names of the ships that he had had, larger commands, and had lost two, and it was not necessarily his fault. But he wasn't very lucky, and here he was a grand person on this ignominious command that he had, but he was good, and his men were good. As I say, we struck up quite a friendship, and I was often tempted to tell him where we were going. I thought maybe he knew it anyhow, and he was under orders. He wouldn't say it, either.

But then I learned later that he, in fact, didn't exactly know. I didn't exactly tell him, because I didn't think it was my right, and then when we got near the target and we were ready to launch, and I broke out the map, he realized that I knew all along where we were going. (laughter) He felt a little put out. He felt hurt that I hadn't told him.

But the experience at sea, and at night in bad weather, or in an unfriendly climate, of having an attack from a submarine leaves one feeling terribly vulnerable,

extremely naked. I can remember being on the bridge standing beside the captain and watching the maneuvering during a torpedo attack, and hearing the guy down below deck where he had the sonar, the ping was coming up, and he would be calling off distances of an already-launched torpedo that was coming on your course. He would sing out the number or yards as it approached, and we would then wonder, "Is it going to hit, or is it that well aimed, and is it aimed at us?" Hearing the yards diminish and diminish, then have this captain-- he reached over to me, and he touched my arm. He said, "Grab hold of something, grab the rail," and I grabbed hard. He yelled out his command which was hard-to-something, and he just swung the rudder and swung the whole ship, as I remember it, a right turn into the direction of the torpedo that was coming toward us. Now, of course, he already knew its track; they had tracked it, and it was committed. So they knew about where it was coming, and they knew the positioning of their ship. What he did was turn from the broad side and faced with his nose, and pulled his tail or stern around in back of him, and he faced the direction of the torpedo, and it went by us on the right. In other words, he maneuvered his behind around so that he just got it out of the way. I remember the admiration I had

of that guy and all of these stoic men who just stood there and went through that exercise, and that damned thing didn't miss us much. We saw it go by. We actually saw the doggone thing, the wake of it, go on by. Then we started to worry, "Was it in line with another ship in the convoy," because we were on the corner. Of course, this was their design--the German that was firing that thing. I think he fired it at us, because if he could get rid of that aircraft carrier, it was the nice target that he saw. Also, our position out there on the corner probably was a target of opportunity, and probably the positioning of the ever-busy sub chasers around us, that were always busybodying around us, running back and forth dropping cans. They were always doing this. We had fireworks display all the time, because when the submarines were in the area, and they knew it, they would be around there dropping their cans, and the great geysers would go up and the explosions would rock our ship.

This was quite an experience for a land-based fighter pilot that wondered what in the hell he was doing at sea on this thing. So in order to even get to the position where we were going to be launched off this slingshot contraption, we had to run the gauntlet of

the Atlantic to get there, and we were shot at quite often. Then when we got over and got in place, and we knew then that we were, in fact, getting ready to be launched, and we were going to put into actual play the thing that we had been practicing, we were very, very busy aboard the ship for the 12 days going over, because we looked at our airplanes and found that the machineguns were just placed in the aircraft and were not actually mounted. They were covered with cosmoline and wrapped in oil paper, and they weren't ready to do battle at all. So here we had 35 airplanes and very, very few mechanics. So our pilots had to be guided by the mechanics, just had to get those guns out of there and clean them. We spent many an hour on that deck cleaning cosmoline off of our .50-caliber guns, which was to the great amusement of the British crew, seeing officers actually doing a dirty job of cleaning some very, very dirty guns and putting them together. Then the armorers that we brought along did mount the guns. We helped, but they mounted them and got them into position, that they were at least firing forward. We had no way to boresight them, so our guns were not terribly accurate. But that was a chore.

C: The other thing is, we had to drill constantly the procedure of getting the aircraft off the carrier: running the engines up, the various signals of the deck officer, the routine of putting the stabilizers in the proper placement, running the engine up full, the prop, in the proper full takeoff position. Then the drill of putting your right elbow, or your stick arm, into the pit of your stomach so that when the jolt came of the catapult firing you forward, your arm would not have a tendency to pull back and pull the stick back and stall you as you took off the edge of the carrier. Also, placing your hand on the throttle around the frame of the throttle quadrant, so that you knew that after you had opened your throttle full, you took your hand off the throttle, which is a habit--any pilot's habit is to have his hand on the throttle on takeoff, and it's a very difficult one to break. You have to physically make yourself take your hand off there and put it, in fact, over and grip something solid. In this instance, it was the edge of the throttle quadrant, where the hand pulling back again with the acceleration forward, which would tend to move your body back, and your hand back; it, in fact, would be gripping something so that it couldn't come back, and that you would then kind of brace your body. Then after you got into position,

and they had put the cable on you that was to sling you into the air, being pulled by a trolley in the deck, and a rail in the deck--they were attached to the struts on your landing gear, on each one of them, then they went down and hitched to the mechanism on the floor that was to pull you forward. Then after you went into the air, after you would leave the deck, that cable would drop off into a net that was on the bow of the ship, and it would be retrieved. So you would get into position, and then at the officer's numbered order with his fingers, you would go through your routine. The routine would be, "Yes, in fact my seat belt is fastened, my harness is on." Then you'd go through holding the stick back, running the engine up full, getting it to full, seeing that all your clocks are reading properly, that you do have the RPM, that you do have the manifold pressure, that you do have oil pressure. You'd scan that thing, and he keeps giving you one, two, three, so many fingers, and you keep answering. Then the last thing you would do after you got this all set, and you had your arm tucked into your belly so that it wouldn't pull the stick back, and you were satisfied that everything is ready, then you would show the deck officer your left hand that way, hold it up so that over beside the right-hand side of your head here--and

you would hold it over and show him that your hand was not on the throttle and that you were, in fact, going to take it down and grip a piece of the airplane and not the throttle. Then after you looked at him, he gave you the third finger, and that was you put your head back against the rest, which was our musette bag, in the back, and then it was up to him to read the rise and fall of that deck, and he would time it so that he wouldn't fire you when you're going down because, actually, this thing would roll so much that actually you'd dive right into the sea. He caught you on the upswing so that as you came up . . . and the ideal time would be just about level; he would fire you. And the last thing was an innovation that I had put there. We had a large blackboard with chalk, and the last thing the pilot saw was a great big, say 64 or something, degrees. You see, we were at sea; we couldn't see the land, and although we kept telling the pilot what direction land was, because we were moving, and because there was a battle going on, and because we were being shot at by submarines, I realized that the man still had to maneuver his ship. This is when he said, "I can't always be into the wind." He was going to maneuver according to what was happening to him. He might be facing away from land; he might be facing toward

land; he might be running up and down the coast; we didn't know. So we had to have something to just indelibly put into that pilot's mind, "Just put 64 on your compass and go, and you'll run into land. Then start reading your map. See what you can see." So then you would put your head back, and I remember my mind saying, "The damn thing isn't . . . ," and I was in the air. There was such a delay; the delay was too long to me. What the man was doing was timing with his button. He fired the thing. He was timing, and my mind quarreled with his timing. But we were instructed over and over again, no matter what happens, do not move your head. Leave your head back; don't get out of your position, no matter what. Stay in it. So I stayed in it, and my mind just got through the thought, "It isn't going to work, or there's a malfunctioning," and I was in the air. Of course, this was a new feeling, because I didn't know why I had been in the air. I hadn't taken off. Your reflexes quarrel with you. How can you be in the air when you didn't run down the runway, and you didn't lift off, and you didn't reach down and get your gear up? "Oh, oh, I'd better get my gear up." There was such a lag there that habit took over, and habit is so strong. This was the only time I was ever going to perform this function, and I did it.

C: Well, after I got off and realized that I was safely in the air, and what a wonderful feeling it was, I waited for the next aircraft, to watch the next aircraft come off, and it didn't come off and it didn't come off. So I kept circling, and finally I went down and buzzed the deck a couple of times to see if I could see what was going on and if somebody would give me a clue, because we were forbidden to speak on the radio. We had radio silence, and I didn't want to break it. The British seamen were down there giving me messages with an Aldis lamp, and if you've witnessed sailors the way they talk back and forth with an Aldis lamp, they go so fast that I couldn't understand them. I couldn't understand Morse code that fast. I could see them blinking at me, but I had no more ability to read that than I could read Chinese.

So I finally realized that I had to do something. I was going to be out of fuel. I did want to get to land. I didn't know what was going on, what I was going to be running into, what kind of a battle situation or combat situation, so I finally broke silence. I flew by them so they knew it was I that was talking. I said, "What's going on?" The answer came back, "Mechanism inoperable." I said, "How long?" They

said, "About an hour." So here I was. I didn't have an hour's fuel. There were my 35 airplanes still on that deck, and here I was in the air. It suddenly occurred to me that I had made an error. (laughter) It seemed to me now that I made an error, and the error, of course, had many causes. There was a tendency for the leader to want to be the first man off, to be the example in this rather precarious thing that we were going to do. It was strange. We had no knowledge of it; therefore, when you don't know something, there's fear connected.

These fellows were young, they were not seasoned pilots, and they didn't have much time in the air. They had had limited experience, and they were going into a rather terminal experience. It just seemed the judgment at the time that I should go out first. I knew then later that was not proper, not the right thing to do. Because I landed at Casablanca, I saw the potholes on the runways, and I realized there wasn't any battle going on at that time. I couldn't see any, so I did see Americans on the strip, so I went in and landed. I went over to some hangars and realized where a parking area was, and I stopped the P-40 and got out. I was getting out, and here came a jeep toward me, and

in the jeep was General Cannon. Now, he had come off a cruiser in a different kind of catapult that had been brought ashore by a Navy pilot, and then the landings were going on and so forth, and he was already in place. He came up to my airplane and said, "Cochran, where are your boys?" I said, "They're out there, sir." He said, "What goes?" I said, "They fired me off and the mechanism broke, and they said there will be an hour delay." He said, "Isn't there something wrong with that?" I said, "Yes sir, I've already thought that through." He said, "Who's out there?" I said, "My second in command." I gave his name, a very competent young man. He had more time than the rest, and that's why he was second in command. He was as fully briefed as any of us could be. He knew as much I knew, and he knew how to get them off. They all then, when the mechanism came back in, worked, they all came pretty soon. The first four of them came in, and they were a sight for sore eyes. Then four more, and then they kept more and more, and they all came ashore. One aircraft was damaged in a hole on landing, and the rest of them got in all right. We lost four aircraft and two men. One of the boys--they could tell me what happened to him. He did, in fact, raise up and relaxed his arm and raised his head forward to look over at the

deckman, because he thought that the mechanism had broken again, and the thing fired. They saw his head go back, and he did, in fact, go off the end, and kind of pull up, and went into the sea. The airplane just didn't fly. It spun and went on in. On another one, the mechanism didn't perform properly, and it just dribbled the airplane off the bow. It didn't get it going fast at all, and it was just as though it was pushed right off the deck. It fell down into the water. That boy was fished out by our guard. We had destroyers placed, two on one side and one on the other--one ahead and behind, and one on the side. When a pilot, or an aircraft, went in, they would rush over and grab the pilot.

We fished two boys out. The one boy went off and stalled, and he was lost. Another one of the pilots, whose name I believe was Carpenter, got off and went up into the clouds. It looked as though he was heading toward joining his flight leader who was circling, and some way or other he must have become confused, and must have taken the reciprocal, and did what I feared that one of us might do, and not head toward land, but actually head toward sea, and got confused, and got lost, and ran out of gas. That's the only

thing we could ever figure, and I remember reporting that. I remember the debriefing and questioning the other pilots, and they said, "Well, we saw him heading toward them, and we thought that he would join us. We looked around and he was gone. We never knew what became of him. As he got up in the clouds and got confused, and couldn't find us again, or what, we never knew." He was lost; he was gone.

So much for the saga of His Majesty's Ship Archer. A peculiar thing, how in the world we thought we could accomplish that. If you sat down and thought it over, you would think, golly, that's a tough thing to do, even if you've been drilled on it and practiced it from the beginning stages where you begin to learn about catapults and the aerodynamic effect of being shot forward and all that sort of thing. It was just understood that we could do it, and you're supposed to do it. So go do it. As I look back on it, it was one of those things that was a calculated risk that ended up being relatively simple, because people on the team knew their job, and each one of them did their job, and, lo and behold, we had nothing to do with it. You're sitting there in the cockpit of an airplane and, yes, you take over after you get flung

into the air, and you do run the engine up and so forth. But you had to depend on the knowledgeability and the expertise of these other people to even get you there through submarine-infested waters, and the weather trying to get you, and the clumsy, cumbersome design of the ship, and the men who knew how to run it, and how to get it there--it was a hell of an effort. How we knew we could do things like that baffles me now, because it's so difficult to reconstruct the climate of those times. As Mr. Eisenhower said, "It's impossible." It's impossible for me now looking back to figure out how in the hell we had the knowledge enough to know we could do that (laughter), that we could get the things done, because looking at it, it was quite an effort, a unique one. I would like to find some way, find all the P-40 pilots in the world that went off the two catapult carriers, the two carriers that went into that battle. You see, the 33d Group, the 75 main body of this group, that we were the reserve of, were on a proper American carrier named Venango or Shenango, I forget which, and they were on there, and they had practiced, however. They knew that this was going to be their function. They did have some knowledge, as much as a pilot can have, of a catapult. But they had been briefed and drilled and done some practicing, not

of an actual carrier takeoff, but of all the things that lead to it. They had been pretty well practiced. So they went in, by the way, to Port Lyautey, north of us. We had none of that knowledge, and yet other people had the knowledge that they knew we could do it, and it was done.

But I was saying, it would be fun to get those guys. That's a very small club. I don't think it was ever done anywhere else in this same way, this catapult carrier thing. I don't believe it was considered routine. It would be fun to get together a bunch of those guys. I know many of them, and every once in awhile I see one. But I think we're rather an exclusive club. We started with probably, say, 108 guys that went off those carriers, and then you get down to the specialized ones of us going off that banana boat, the 35 of us that went off that thing, and those of us who are left would be rather exclusive, and it would be fun to get them together and laugh at ourselves sometimes, and wonder how we knew how we could do that.

H: Was there still a threat of submarines while you were in the Mediterranean prior to launch?

C: We weren't in the Mediterranean. We were on the coast off Casablanca. We didn't go through Gibraltar. We were out in the Atlantic still. Yes, the submarines were firing away at us all the time, and they were picking off Patton's invasion force. They managed some way to get most of his transportation. The thing that we wondered about, and I still wonder about, there were troops ships in that convoy, and how many thousands of souls would be on one of those things, thousands and thousands of troops on those ships, and the German submarines didn't get them. But it did get other transports. It did get other ships. I remember being told that much of the transports were sunk and much of the communications gear, and I remember having the concept that the Germans knew which of the ships had those on them. Their intelligence was that complete that they knew which ones and they got those, and it did, in fact, cripple Patton for quite sometime. Yes, there were sinkings going on. Now I don't know of any direct firings at us while we were launching, and I'm sure I wouldn't have cared. My mind was so glued on that launch that I would have been thinking so hard about that, that even a submarine attack would have been rather prosaic at the time, because the anticipation of this launch was quite heavy.

H: Would you like to break for lunch, and if you can think of anything else, we will continue afterward.

C: Yes, we will talk it over during lunch.

[End Side 2, Reel 9]

[End of Tape No. 876]