

OK, good morning. This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mr. Ernest Dutcher Jr. On February 19 2013 in Encino, California. Good morning, Mr. Dutcher, and thank you for agreeing to speak with us today.

Good morning, and you're very welcome.

Oh, sorry, I see your shoulder.

All right, so we'll adjust a little bit and I'll move out. And Mr. Dutcher, from what I understand, you were a liberator with the US forces of concentration camps in Germany and were a member of the military. So I'm going to ask a lot of questions that leads up to those events in Dachau, because we'd like to know a little bit about your life and your military service prior to the liberation of the concentration camps, and your role in helping survivors survive.

So I'll start at the beginning. Please tell us when you were born, where you were born, and a little bit about your family.

I was born in May 16th of 1920, and I was born in a small town in northern Wisconsin called Antigo. And I lived with my parents on the farm. Our background, initially, was all farming until I reached the age of approximately 16.

And I lived with my mother, my father, and I have two sisters, both older. And I had a brother about it one and a half years younger than I who also was involved in the war but never made it overseas. And I have a younger brother that was old enough to help out on the farm and so forth. And then--

Excuse me. Let me follow up on that a little bit. What kind of-- what did you grow on the farm?

Oh, it was a very rocky farm. We grew basically potatoes and corn. Mainly things for a family to eat and survive, because survival was the key item back in those days, very, very poor conditions.

So did you sell any? Did your family sell any of these items?

We sold a certain number, but there was not too much of a market, because it was quite a ways back in the so-called woods back there. And the farm was a very small one initially.

We later moved to a much larger farm and we sold maple syrup, basically. We tapped the maple trees in the spring and then we had big pans within which we boiled a 50 to 1 ratio. We boiled off 49% of the liquid, which was water, and the residual was maple syrup.

And is that why it's so expensive?

Well, that's only part of it. We took that raw maple syrup and ran it through-- we mixed it with milk. And the milk absorbed all the solids in it and it came out beautifully clear. And it sold at that time for about several dollars a pint. And several dollars back then was a lot of money.

Yeah. Your father and your mother, what were their names? My father was Ernest E. Dutcher Sr. My mother was-- my mother's name was, oh gosh, excuse me.

It's OK. Take your time.

Amanda Dutcher. And they were initially from Iowa, where they were brought up and educated. My mother was a school teacher down in Iowa, but she moved up to northern Wisconsin and eventually became a correspondent for the small town with the Rhinelander Daily News, which was our nearby large city with 9,000 people.

Oh my.

So I went to Rhinelander High School for two years, after which I had become-- I worked out in the woods-- and when

you say woods, it was a logging environment-- where I took care of a team of horses. I was 18, took care of a team of horses about five miles off the main road, and got snowed in sometimes. Sometimes the weather'd become 40 to 45 below.

Oh my gosh.

And I had a cast iron stove that I chopped my own wood and kept warm with. It probably is a luxury compared to what these camps went through. But anyway, I was offered a job at Montgomery Ward and Company during I think the-- 1939, 1940, '42. 1942.

So you would have been 22 years old?

Yes. And then we-- I was also working in the furniture and radio department of Montgomery Ward. I loved radios, and I didn't-- my first radio that I ever heard was a little crystal set. And to I had to share two earphones with anyone else lucky enough to listen to it. And we listened to the radio on WLS Chicago, music and everything else on it. Very scratchy and everything, but very amazing.

And then they moved on. That was quite a little earlier than my graduation. I graduated Rhinelander High School with a high school graduate degree, which was pretty good back in those days. And then in showing off radios one day, I heard a big bulletin come over the radio that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. And Roosevelt's speech saying about the dastardly deed.

And based on that, several of us in the store, the Montgomery Ward store, decided we had to enlist. So on the 30th of December, we enlisted. And I wanted to be a pilot. I just loved flying.

Can I interrupt just for a second? I want to step back just a little bit to find out about your town. It was called Rhineland, with--

Rhineland.

Rhineland.

Yes.

And you say it was 9,000 people there.

9,019 exactly.

9,019. Well, if your mom was a correspondent from the newspaper, those are the sorts of facts that newspaper people know. Tell me, if you can, were they all pretty similar in background, all pretty similar in religion? Was there a predominant religion?

The predominant religion in the town was-- most of them were like, Lutheran and that. There were several Jewish families. One owned the department store downtown. And I can't remember.

You knew what I was getting at. I wanted to find out whether or not there had been any Jews in the town, whether people knew them, whether you had gotten to know anybody that was--

I never did except when we'd go into the store for buying clothing and so forth. And that was the only ones we knew up there at that time. So then from there, we went to Wausau, Wisconsin, which is a recruiting center. And we all signed up at that place.

I had taken several years with the National Guard before that, from the time I was 16 and until the time I enlisted.

OK. I have another question. You said that you always loved flying. You had been in an airplane before?

No, I just loved the thought of it. I was really enamored with Lindbergh and his antics and history and so forth. But I definitely wanted to be a pilot.

So you had two passions which you've identified so far. One for radio, and one for flying.

That's correct.

OK. So take us through, then, the enlistment process where you enlisted and what happened after that.

Well, we enlisted in Wausau, Wisconsin, which is a much, much larger city. It must have had at least 15,000 people in it, about 50% larger I would say. But that was the center of a lot of activities up there.

So we were taken down to Northern Illinois, where they had a center for processing the troops and so forth, where we got all of our shots and all of our warnings and early, early instruction. The fact I'd been in National Guard, though, made me kind of special because I then was put in charge of small delegations that started training.

From there, we were shipped-- after the initial equipping and issuing of clothing and blankets and so forth, I was shipped to Jefferson Barracks Missouri, which is adjacent to St. Louis, Missouri. And Jefferson Barracks, it was cold, middle of the winter virtually. And down there we were placed in tents and very, very cold.

There we got all of our real tough shots. And the shots made us so sick that we were afraid we wouldn't die.

There, while I was at Jefferson Barracks and after we started our training there, I did the drill sergeant role of taking the raw recruits and showing them how to march, and how to turn, and how to stop and the proper commands and all that. But then the newspaper headlines come out; Roosevelt, we will be building 125,000 planes a year. It was beyond belief.

But anyway, it didn't make that much sense because during the time that I had gone through medical exams I got what is commonly known as white coat fever. And I got excited. I was so worried that I wouldn't pass that I, of course, didn't. My blood pressure went sky high during the exams. Well, so I wasn't, apparently, a good candidate and probably wouldn't last too long.

For what?

Well, poor health and all that probably.

No, but what were you-- was this to be accepted into the pilot program?

That's exactly right. They had lesser than-- other programs had lesser requirements physically. So I had no problem with any physical, and I had no problem with high blood pressure at the time. I had no trouble with eyesight.

But when we finally went down to Jefferson Barracks, I chose my second choice, which was radio. Radio training took me to Scott Field, Illinois just across the river from our training at Jefferson Barracks. And at Scott Field, I went through the course of radio, which I just loved the course because I loved the idea so much, where I learned how a radio works.

And I was selected, then, to become an instructor because I had such enthusiasm for it. I instructed radio there until I got a waiver on the two year requirement to join the radio officers program and officers cadet program.

And I was sent to Yale University via Valley Forge. And we spent some time at Valley Forge, again, taking courses and so forth leading up to the time that they could accept us in Yale. And we marched in and out the countryside, gorgeous area.

Excuse me again, I'm interrupting, but what year was this when you were accepted to go into Yale? How far in the '40s

were we?

We were, at that time, '42 probably. Things happened so fast. '42, '43, yes, '42. And then I was a little bit-- I also was-- before I joined the National Guard, I played in a little band.

And I was a trumpeter in the band, played the cornet and the French horn and trombone and a few other things. And I was selected as the bugler. Now, of course, every Reveille was to get them out of bed in the morning.

Then you must have been a popular guy.

So then we stayed in a beautiful mansion that we were allowed to use. We used that for-- marble staircases all. And then they had a-- way up in the top was kind of a little area where you could go up and look out over the terrain. And there's where I took care of all the bugling.

You had the space for it, huh?

Yeah. And then from there, I eventually went directly to New Haven, Connecticut, where we were put up in the EL dormitories there. And we were immediately put on a program of radio, army radio.

And all communication, different types of communications, such as teletype. And at that time, teletype was really coming into its own. And also Signal Corps type of wire communications, telephones, laying wire.

That must have been fascinating stuff.

It's very-- I was very-- and I was so thrilled with the course that of course I paid more attention than the average person. And after a period there, I forget the exact number of months, but let's say during the time that I was there, we had occasional nights we could go out.

And I loved ice skating. And coming from northern Wisconsin, I was pretty good at it. So I did figure skating. So I went to the ice rink in New Haven, and there I saw a young girl skating around in a short skirt. And I couldn't take my eyes off her. But I had a problem. I only had \$0.50 with me, because we hadn't been paid for weeks.

So anyway, she eventually came up. And she had had her clothes in the same balcony seat that I had. And we got acquainted. And so I took her down and I blew the \$0.50 on a Coke for her and her sister, who was along.

And I was so fascinated with her that-- she came to my graduation. We knew each other at least two weeks by that time. She came to my graduation.

And after graduating, we went down and got all our new army uniforms. They were so beautiful, long overcoat, and we just couldn't get over how great we looked. Then we were shortly thereafter shipped to Boca Raton, Florida, because my graduation score was 98.2, and the top five of the grade were sent to Boca Raton for radar training.

Wow.

And then the radar-- we arrived in Boca Raton, Florida. When I say we, the gentleman that became the 89th radar officer was a buddy of mine. And we stuck kind of together, and so we landed at the train station in our heavy beaver overcoats. Then we had the wool green and we had the gray pink trousers. But we wouldn't take them off 'cause we--

Because you looked so good.

We look so good, and we just couldn't take them off. Well, that's some of the things I remember.

And then we went through a very, very grueling course on radar. And radar was so new that information was coming from the MIT labs where they invented some of the aspects, including a very powerful tube that could generate

enormously strong pulses.

Well, we then took it almost from the design desk, and we went through school learning how it worked and everything. And you may have seen the underbelly of some of the planes that had a bubble under it. This was an antenna housing that the Pathfinder aircraft used eventually. So we didn't know a thing about what we were doing. We were learning it, and it wasn't important that we knew the whole story.

So anyway, after being down there about three weeks, I couldn't get over the idea of the little girl I met. So I wrote a letter up to her mother and says I'd love to have her come down, because she is the one I want to spend my life with.

So anyway, the father sent his approval down, along with his daughter. And we met. And I had a little apartment all picked out. And so we lived off base, actually.

But right away the big job was to get married, because that was a time that you never lived together. I mean, there was no way that could happen.

And she had some say in this?

Well, yes. She loved the idea, I guess.

OK.

I don't know what she saw in me, but anyway. I think she liked the idea. I was a pretty good figure skater. I could skate circles and so forth, you know, and backward, flips and stuff. So anyway, she came on down.

And so we found that we had to have the mother's signature as well as the father's signature on the approval. So we immediately forged that. And we went down-- she knew, you know, pretty well how to write it.

So we went down to Miami and went to the justice of the peace down there for the ceremony. And she so happened to be cross-eyed. So the thing I do remember that we were married by a cross-eyed justice of the peace on April the 5th of 1943.

Wow.

And we just celebrated our 70th wedding anniversary.

Well, congratulations. Congratulations. What's your wife's name?

Beatrice.

Beatrice.

Beatrice Jane.

And while we're on this topic, do you have children?

Yes, I have a son who went with me to the museum yesterday, and a grandson. My son was my last, my youngest. He lives in West Hills with my grandson. And then I have a little older brother-- his older brother was Ernest E. III, who eventually didn't like that term the III and changed his name to Ernie van Deutchten, because a relative of mine was--

Are you from Dutch background?

Pardon?

Are you Dutch background?

We're Dutch Swiss, I think a little a mixture of everything.

America.

American, yeah. So anyway, then I have a daughter. And she was the apple of my eye, Beverly. And she's just gorgeous. She grew up-- and when I say she, my wife and her family were Catholic. And I surrendered to the fact that even though I was Mormon, you asked that earlier and I forgot to tell you.

It's OK.

I was brought up in the Mormon faith, but not a good follower. I was a rebel. And so I kind of abandoned the church when I was 20. And I decided that, yes, I'll allow her to bring up the children Catholic. So that's a story there.

But Beverly went to Catholic school, eventually went to a Catholic university in Denver, Colorado. And there she became a nurse. And during that time she joined the motion picture side of it. She acted in a play with some professionals in *The Sound of Music*, and oh, that made the day for me.

I can imagine.

So let's see. From then--

OK, so we were down--

Oh, she'd become a nurse and eventually spent 30 years with the University of Colorado Medical Center. We'll go on for whatever you want to use.

OK. I'm sorry, I got you off on a tangent here. But you were in Florida, and you had just married with a forged signature.

Yes. Totally illegal.

Yeah. And you were going to be learning a lot more about radar that was coming from the MIT life. So let's go back to your military side, the military side of your life.

OK. Well there we-- again, we were graded based on our grades and our accomplishments there. And I had a handicap, because I didn't know too much about math, and that was all math at the time. But I did have a fellow student that was a math major, so he brought me along in the evenings and so forth and we spent a lot of time bringing me up on that.

And then we went through learning all about this new device out of MIT, the new radars, absolutely, totally top secret. And then we actually went out on another piece of radar flying off the coast and finding submarines out of the water with this particular anti-submarine device, which I never was involved with using later.

So then from-- my graduation there was a satisfactory rating. I was then assigned to, of all things, a shooting range while we were waiting for our assignment to various squadrons that are being formed. And on the range, I directed people in the proper stance, proper position using the Colt 45, the Thompson submachine gun, and the little 30 caliber carbine used by the paratroopers, and the M1 rifle that was used by the liberators, the people that came in to save the camps. So I had become an expert on this Thompson submachine gun and the Colt 45 and sharpshooter and all the rest just from my experience there.

Then I was transferred up to Fort Wayne, Indiana, where our group was being really put together, assigned to certain squadrons up there. Eventually, then, we went to Sedalia, Missouri for real flight training.

We actually took our places doing our thing, each of us doing our own thing not knowing too much about whatever someone else needed to do. We were being trained to be experts in what we were-- our education took us, you know? So that's the same--

Excuse me, I have to interrupt you. What does that mean? Did you know what your eventual job was going to be?

Yes.

And what was that?

Radar. Radar officer.

And so that means, for a layperson like myself, as a radar-- what does a radar officer do?

A radar officer was in charge of maybe 25 to 50 men that were also trained in the same thing, but they weren't officers. And we were the teachers. We had to teach them all about the things that we had learned about radar and so forth. And they also went to school, but not as detailed as we went.

So then-- and each squadron was the same. So then our other jobs were constantly trying to figure a way of improving the radar and communications that we had.

The technology that existed at the time.

Yes, and it was evolving. And so it wasn't perfect. So anyway, and to just go a little step further, one squadron-- a thing was repeated in four different squadrons that made up a group. The group that I was with was the 438th troop carrier group, become very famous, because we spearheaded the invasion of Europe.

You mean Normandy.

Yes. We were the first into Normandy.

Wow.

But going back to the organization, a four-squadron group. The squadron had 13 airplanes that were flying, several more for reserve. So each squadron had 13 airplanes. The group had 13 times 4, all right?

Now the four groups formed a-- they formed the next division. It escapes me for a second. Anyway, there was--

The next part of the structure.

The next part of the structure up. And then it was a wing. We were the 53rd troop carrier wing, and that consisted of a lot of groups. I don't know yet. I was trying to get the statistics before the meeting here, but I couldn't find them.

But anyway, a number of these wings consisted of the IX Troop Carrier Command. And that's the big thing that I want to come out of what we're saying here, because the IX Troop Carrier Command had more effect on the liberation because of the fact they shortened the war by so much by what they did, and I'll describe that later.

OK, fine. So I want to get back to something. You're a radar officer.

Yes

And you're in charge of others who are radar experts.

Yes.

And what's their job? Was their job to use the radar to detect where they would be enemy submarines? Was that it?

No, we had nothing to do with submarines. Everything was flying now. Everything was air.

Their job was to keep the radar gear in the planes in top working order. You know, anything made by man is going to break down it's like-- we were like a Ford garage. We took care of the defects that showed up.

And then every day they had to go out under my supervision and flight test every plane before they took off--

Got it.

--as to minimize the chance of anything going wrong and ruining, and the possibility of losing a lot of lives because of it.

So if I can summarize, but I'd like to know whether or not my summary is accurate, is that in many ways your role in this structure was an educational role as well as a maintenance role to make sure that you understood the equipment and to make sure that the guys who were under your command understood how to maintain that equipment.

Exactly. You got it right.

OK.

An additional job of mine was to-- because I was inventive, and I've been inventive from the time I was a young boy, 12 years old. I really developed a system where a very close friend and pilot of mine, Lieutenant Wilmer Klein, was in an airplane in the left seat flying with the blanked out windshield. He couldn't see out. And then we had another pilot that could see out.

We started trying to find a way of landing a plane blind, because the weather was so terrible over there. I mean, it was an unusual day, maybe one day a week, that the sun came out. And that's why the invasion of Europe was delayed. The weather was so bad.

So anyway, I invented a system where we could actually-- we made actually 12 blind landings utilizing that system. And I have a complete write-up on it, so you'll be able to-- you already have it, I think.

Yeah.

But anyway, that system got kind of spread-- I didn't know all this until just in the last couple of years. The system was memorialized on the daily record. Or monthly record, summarized monthly. We had to write what we had done during the month in a sort of a permanent record form. And they were classified as secret.

Anyway, that information started to get out to the group. We were only a squadron, one fourth of the group. Then through my friend and so forth, he witnessed-- we shared a radar building, and he witnessed what was happening. And he started to follow what I was doing in the 88th squadron.

Eventually, it went to the group. Then it went to the wing. And then the wing ordered all planes to be-- all pilots to be trained in utilizing that particular system, because it used equipment already in the plane. It used nothing except equipment already in the plane.

So it was based on what you had learned about the technology?

Right.

And you must have been quite proud.

Pardon?

You must have been quite proud that they adopted this system.

I didn't think of anything different. I didn't know anything. I was a 22-year-old at that time, and I was concentrating on what we were doing. And I never thought that there was any major accomplishment to it. I didn't know that until just the last couple years.

But anyway, then the wing decided to call the general of the Ninth Air Force. The Ninth Air Force controlled 1,000 of these airplanes, the C-47 airplanes, the most wonderful airplane ever built.

Everyone should learn about the C-47 aircraft. The Douglas DC-3 was the forerunner of it. And it could do anything. But anyway, we didn't-- I was concentrating on the job and not much.

Can I ask now, we're in Missouri. From what I understand in your story, as far as getting to Europe, you're still in Missouri, correct? Training some of these-- now a radar officer.

At that time. No, no, all that was done overseas. 100% of that was done overseas.

Oh, I see. So tell me at what point did your training end and you got shipped out to Europe?

It was-- we did a lot of flying and flight training. And believe it or not, we were not allowed on a test, on a final test we had to take, the pilots were not allowed to fly these airplanes higher than five feet over the highest obstacle.

Oh, my gosh.

Five feet. Not 500, not 5,000. Five feet. And so we were flying this high over the ground where it's level. And so we had to pull up to get over a fence. And the chickens were flying.

The chickens weren't happy.

They weren't happy at all. Neither were the cows.

[LAUGHTER]

So anyway, I'll give you some background, because that's important. So that took place on this side of the ocean, but most of the training of the pilots and navigators, radio operators, crew chiefs, took place in kind of a conference room that I had in addition to the shops and so forth of my office building that was right off the runway of our main airfield in Greenham Common in England.

I see. I see, when you were already over there. So I'd like to establish the date of when you left, because up till now, from when we talk about when you enlisted in Wisconsin to now, it sounds like such an intensive, intensive training from the very basics to something extraordinarily sophisticated.

Oh, it was. It was. It was very-- when I think of it now, I was thinking this morning, that entire thing, including the camps, everything, happened and within a three-year period. Of course, the camps went on way before that, but our reaction to it to get--

Well, that--

I'm sorry, keep on going.

It was only a three-year window. And I marvel at how we got so much done in three years. So anyway, we went

overseas then. It had to be probably-- let me see. The air echelon went overseas by way of South America and across Africa and then eventually up to England. They flew their planes over.

The ground echelon, which I was part of, went over by boat, under a heavy armada of destroyers and so forth, because a troopship-- they were sinking ships like crazy at that time. Probably only half of the materiel that was being shipped overseas got overseas, because they were sunk by the U-boats.

So we went over about-- to answer your question-- about the first part of 1942-- 1943. No. It had to be in 1943. We were married in '43, so training ended. Probably the latter part of 1943.

OK, because the invasion happens half a year later.

Yes, you're right on.

In June '44.

Right.

OK. By that point, I know you-- from your story, we get a sense of a real intensive focus on the work that you're doing, on the technology, on learning everything that you know about it. What about the wider political events that were going on at the time?

Do you remember? Did you read newspapers about how the war was progressing before the invasion? Did you hear anything about what was happening to the Jews of Europe?

We heard about it, but it wasn't concentrated like it should have been. And, of course, like we discovered later, we knew we had to cut the head off that monster. We knew that, because they were very close to running the world. Had it not been for the power of our country's factories in the home front-- they did a marvelous job. I give them so much credit for actually winning the war.

But unfortunately, the word of the camps were treated more or less like propaganda. We couldn't believe anything like that could happen. It just was the case that we were too naive to-- it wasn't the case we were insincere. It was a case we just didn't know any better. And of course being 20 years old, you don't get buried in politics anyway.

No.

So that was the--

I'm just trying-- you see, the reason why I asked this question is I'm trying to get a sense of the context of the time, the mood of the time, the level of knowledge of the time. You know, what had priority and what had less priority? And how much did people know and what they were aware of? Which I think you've addressed, you know?

Yeah. They only knew what the army, what the top generals and so forth wanted them to know. They wanted their morale to stay up.

And they didn't want them to get discouraged in the United States, because they were doing such a marvelous job of reaching that goal of Roosevelt's of 120,000 planes a year. Couldn't be done, but it did. It happened.

And so they only fed them information that was relatively good. And that's one reason-- one of the primary reasons, I believe. They didn't want too much bad news to get out, where we lost a battle or where we had made a mistake or something. Like the mistake that was made where all of those British paratroopers died because a bad mistake in judgment by the superiors.

We can perhaps come to that point. In your narrative I remember it's something that you wrote about.

Yeah.

Did you hear, then, about the Battle of Stalingrad, which was in 1943?

Yes, we heard about that. And of course all we heard was the good part of it, you know? We didn't hear-- although we knew that Stalin was brutal. We knew that. We knew the Russians were probably not-- you know, following that course was not the nicest people on Earth.

We followed that Battle of Stalingrad because we were so delighted over the fact that Germans were losing, and that was good news to come across. But the news of all the people that was lost at our air base during a short period of time, that didn't get back to the public. No one knew about that.

Well, let's talk about that a little bit. Was this in England?

It was in England.

OK, so tell us the story in-- tell us the story. Tell us what happened with such losses.

Well, the worst things, I'll tell you about. There was a tremendous concentration of aircraft bombing the coast and bombing inland and so forth. Planes were flying overhead all the time, going back and forth, a constant drone. You couldn't sleep. I mean, around the clock.

Two C-47s, because of the weather, bad weather, two-- not C-47s, but two B-17 bombers collided almost directly over our base.

Oh, my.

And the debris scattered over a very large area. And I was one of the few people that heard the crash. It was a tremendous explosion. And so pieces of everything, engines and bodies and stuff, were coming down all over the area.

I was one of the very first on the scene, because my radar building was only a short distance away. I had a Jeep that I had assigned to me. I jumped in the Jeep and drove over to where I knew the sound had come from. And then I started to see the debris all over.

And the first sight I saw of a body was a young navigator. The navigator-- I knew it was a navigator, because the body was quite intact. And it was lying on its back. And he was partially buried because the force of dropping to the ground. And he was a little gray looking and so forth.

But he looked like he was sleeping, like, peacefully sleeping. But his watch was still running. It was a strange thing. And then a little beyond, I saw a body that was decapitated from hitting-- from going through a tree branch.

Then a lot of the people from the base started to come over and we all scattered through to see if there's any survivors.

Were there?

Yes, there was a pilot. I think one pilot. Or maybe-- I can't recall now for sure, but I think at least one pilot survived.

And the pilot that didn't survive, in the last couple of years I've got to know who their relatives were, and they've written to me and so forth. They found out through another-- I had another interview with the BBC. And somehow or other that got out and they got a hold of me. And it was kind of sad.

But anyway, from that, that was number one. Number two was the--

Excuse me. Do you know how many people died in that collision?

Yes. As I recall, there was 22, because I got a figure of 51 in my mind that combined the two crashes that happened the same week.

And was this because of the intensity, and the frequency, and just the sheer number of bombing missions that were taking place, that there were just too many in the sky?

Well, military aircraft usually flew in formation. And the formation consisted of-- let's say our formations consisted of 13 airplanes, but that means they weren't too far apart. And the weather was so bad that you couldn't see. In other words, they just lost their sight. And in some way or other, two of the planes rushed together and caused an explosion. And that scattered them all over.

Then I gave you an article about Bob Owens, our engineering officer that was big in all of our missions and so forth. So he-- well, I'll follow that later.

Oh, no, I'll pick that up now, because the Horsa Glider was a British-made, all wood, but a very large aircraft. And instead of carrying only 15 paratroopers, they could carry 30. Well, they had 29 in that, plus two pilots.

So that meant 31.

And that makes a total of 31. And the 31 plus the 22 made the 53. It sticks in my mind as far as the loss.

Anyway, he had told them. They sent the aircraft in, and he noted in an inspection of the aircraft that there was about a 3-inch space between the tail mounting and the fuselage where it's supposed to be tight.

The glue had-- this is all glued together. It's a wood aircraft. The glue had separated. And he issued what they call a red tag. And every one of the Horsa Gliders on the base was red-tagged.

But wing, next step up, decided that they had to have a practice run of a troop carrier, a 647 aircraft pulling this bigger glider. And so they assigned two 88th pilots, glider pilots, to the task.

Can I interrupt just for a second?

Yes.

I just want to establish the manufacturer of the gliders was British.

That's right.

But they had sold them to the Americans, and this was now an American military operation.

It was part of our assigned-- we didn't pay attention to who furnished it, but we had a certain amount of planes, a certain number of gliders, a certain number of CG-4 gliders, which was the smaller.

Got it.

And a certain amount of the others. They wanted a test to show the capability of the C-47 aircraft towing that fully-loaded glide. This fully-loaded glider would go OK even with that tail problem. So they were able to fly the gliders in to the airport.

But he said that the minute you take off, it probably will not be more than just a few seconds and that tail is going to separate. Well, just exactly like he forecast, the tail broke off when the tow plane and the glider was probably about 100 feet in the air.

And, of course, then they dove straight into a little knoll. I recall the plane had dove straight into that knoll, and every one of the occupants was in a mass of flesh in the front of that glider.

I wasn't there. I wasn't, certainly, the first there. But they had removed the bodies. And then hearing about the crash, I drove over to that also, which is in the same area, in the same debris field as the crash of the two B17s.

And the guard, there was a guard assigned to it by then, he says, well, there's some human hip or something, like a big roast, still there. They had removed all the human remains, but they had missed that. So that's number 30-some.

Anyway, but the thing that was so remarkable is seeing 13 ambulances, each with four bodies, all people that were highly trained, moving off the field toward the cemetery.

Oh my.

And that was very impressive, I mean, in the wrong sort of way. Those are things that were not relayed to the American public.

Were they considered secret, top secret? Could you speak about them to your relatives, to your wife?

We couldn't speak about anything, no. They took every one of our letters, and when the relatives got them, there was a lot of black marker. They took out a lot of information. You could not mention anything. Highly, highly-- they edited everything that went out.

It must have been that those-- that you and others on the ground, when you saw the price of somebody's decision, the mistake, I mean, the anger at the price that was paid.

Well, one step further, the man that tried to stop it, Bob Owens, was on his way to a court martial because he had ignored an order to allow the 88th pilots or planes to fly. The unfortunate thing is they chose two pilots from the 89th squadron and a plane from the 89th squadron.

There's now a Memorial there to that particular thing. Princess Margaret was there at the dedication of it. But they got it a little wrong, I'm afraid. I think they showed 88th pilots still in that marker, but it was only-- it was actually the 89th.

To remind us again, what part of England did this all occur?

It was in southern England. And Greenham Common was close to a town called Salisbury. And then that was a short distance toward London. We were west of London, probably about 100 miles. There was Salisbury, Reading, and then London.

The other way was the Salisbury Plain, where that big, prehistoric monument stood.

Stonehenge.

Stonehenge.

Stonehenge, yeah.

These are the little details you forget.

Well, I'm amazed by how many details you remember. I really am. It's a lot.

Well, you know, the whole picture never came to me. Each one of these were separate little things, and I wrote about it a spot at a time. I was going to use each one of these little things as a separate chapter in my book that I was writing, I was

going to write.

But lack of time and the fact that I'm still working, I still own my own business, I never got to write the book. But I didn't want these details to be lost. And so it was just-- back in those days, it was just me doing one job and nothing big about it, nothing. Nothing unusual about it. That's what I was supposed to do.

But then when I look at the whole picture, the IX Troop Carrier, with their 1,000 planes, ordered that the entire group of 1,000 planes be equipped or be given the information, taught the information.

I also came up with an idea to extend the range where they could see the signal from farther out when they were coming back to try to find the airfield in bad weather. I was able to extend that by so-called peaking of the frequencies. I don't know now how I did it, but I did it back then.

There were several things that the-- right up to General Williams, who came to the base and interviewed everyone and so forth to try to figure out what all this fuss was about. He then ordered the entire-- now comes the British-- I don't recall, but it's a British engineering association.

It was very big. And they designed a lot of beautiful equipment and so forth. But they kind of took credit for the fact that these things happen. And they ordered the RF and every part of their fleet to be using the same equipment.

And so it's just recently that I could see the whole picture, and had an interest in seeing the whole picture, that I finally decided that this was a lot more than I had ever given credit for, that every plane that flew in the ETO, the European Theater of Operation, at that time utilized these advancements. Well, that's--

Then because of that, the 438th performed flawlessly in the invasion of Normandy. They lost no planes. They missed no targets. And the radar on all their planes worked perfectly. And they came back, and eventually got the only unit citation ever received by a troop carrier group.

Wow.

And groups were kind of tiny. There's dozens and dozens of groups, so we were kind of singled out for that. Based on that, I finally realized that what I had done probably helped a lot toward getting that citation. So I did give myself some credit later.

Well, congratulations.

Thank you.

Congratulations. I'm also impressed that it sounds like innovation was something that was allowed.

Oh, definitely.

Innovation was something that was encouraged within when the structure.

Encouraged. Oh, I've got to give the upper level a lot of credit. Anything they saw that would improve the chances of a man getting back and his aircraft and his crew getting back safely was encouraged and certainly adopted if it worked. And later the-- I lost my train of thought for a moment.

Something about the innovation being encouraged.

Yeah. Well, I was trying to think of a certain instance where it was very, very easily. Oh, the outcome was, of course, of course, the outcome was that probably untold number of lives were saved by pilots that could find their way back, and didn't have to ditch or didn't have to crash land or something like that.

So then I told myself, you know, I never killed anyone. I never had to shoot someone. That's terrible. That's hard to live with. I've never done anything, but I believe that I've saved lots of lives.

And since that time, I've had no nightmares. I slept very soundly. I have no regrets for anything, any judgment I made or anything. So that's the--

There's peace. There's peace in that.

Peace, that's exactly right.

Let's go forward. We need to find out how it is that you come in contact with what people realized later was the Holocaust and the genocide against Europe's Jews. So were you part of the invasion of Normandy, or were you staying in England while the-- on that particular mission, I stayed in England.

But on the bridge too far mission, or operation market basket, which was a big mistake. Operation market basket, I went along with my friend that was the blind landing pilot. I went along with him because the CEO thought it'd be nice to have more than one navigator in the squadron in case the first plane got shot down. So he asked if I'd go along as a wing navigator.

And operation market basket was what?

It was where they tried to save all these bridges. A bridge too far is probably more memorable.

But the bridges in what part of Europe?

It's on the Rhine River. They tried to-- wanted to shorten the war by saving the bridges so they didn't have to rebuild bridges across the Rhine. And that particular mission was to preserve those bridges so that the tanks, Patton's tanks, when they got there could blast across without having to build pontoon bridges.

He was moving very fast. And we were terribly important in the fact that he was able to move so fast, because the C-47 carried paratroopers into areas of drop. Then on the way back, they came back and picked up the gliders and flew them in. Then they came back and they flew into-- like I took a mission on D-day plus 6.

We flew into Omaha Beach. And we flew into a landing strip that had been cut hastily in the bluffs above Omaha Beach. And we landed there with flight nurses aboard and picked up the terribly wounded, most terribly wounded, of Omaha Beach. And we had just had a constant stream of airplanes flying in and out, bringing those people back to hospitals in England.

And while I was there, I stepped out of the airplane trying to help with the loading of the litter patients and so forth. And a captain on the ground in the infantry yelled at me, get back on that airplane because you have greens on. I didn't have the camouflage on. And he says there are snipers in the area. So, of course, I was forced back into the airplane then.

But I'm telling that because the C-47 had done so many other things. On Patton's rush across, he outran all of his tankers. He'd run out of gas and couldn't go any further, then we started loading up 6,000 pounds of gasoline on each airplane and flew a constant stream of these airplanes right behind Patton's army as he raced across Europe.

We land in pastures. We'd land on roads. And these planes were so powerful they could pull themselves out of mud.

Wow.

And so they flew supplies, gasoline supplies in, and loaded the medical patients. They had litters that come down from the sides on the inside. We loaded the litter patients up and got out of there and back to hospitals in England, you know.

I'm trying to say that the airplane itself was such a big story, what it could do. And then naturally, it was a natural

carrier. So thousands, and thousands, and thousands of displaced people, and survivors of the camps, and survivors of the slave labor camps, very close together.

In one area we went in, the slave laborers and the ovens were right close by, because they had to use the ovens to dispose of the slave laborers that was too weak to work anymore. And then they had the V2 factory underground right there, you know?

And the lady from the museum said about a young girl, she was 16. And that's actually the people that I was involved in helping get back into France and different areas.

OK, so let's go to that point. You said you were in operation market basket, and that was-- was that the right way of calling it?

That was before.

That was before. That was to try and save the bridges.

Yes.

And did you? Did the--

No, it was a total failure. A total failure. Montgomery talked General Eisenhower into doing this thinking it would cut time off the war. Really it added a year to the war, because Patton's tanks didn't have the gas that we were flying in. We had to fly to save bridges instead of flying the gasoline in to Patton where he could keep going.

Got it.

The war would have ended one year earlier had it not been for that mistake.

So when you're finally-- the war does end. Had you had any knowledge or contact of what it is that you eventually saw? Or were these flights that took place-- I'm not phrasing this correctly. Let's go this way. What's the first time that you flew on these planes, the C-47s, where it had contact with the survivors of the concentration camps, the survivors from slave labor camps, and displaced persons? Set that up for us.

It was June. Around the 1st of June and the second part of May of 1945.

So the war had ended.

The war had ended by then. And we had lots of transport available. And the need for getting those people out of there as fast as possible was great.

How did you-- did you know what you were going to be meeting? At that point did you know-- what did you know about the camps before you even got there?

We knew-- by that time there was a lot of information out. And so I mean, months and months earlier we knew about it. And that was, of course, one of the great reasons, and I'm sure that it was on everyone's mind, that if we don't knock the head off that monster, that these people, there would be nobody left.

So we were aware of it. And we were very shocked by it. Of course we were very shocked by it way before June.

OK, and where did you take off from?

We took off from Amiens, France. We had moved-- just before that, we had moved in to Amiens, France in an old World War II battlefield. We had the whole-- I'm sorry, not two, one. World War I, correction.

We had the trenches from World War I all around us, virtually. And there was this level patch of ground that they laid down the airstrip made of interlocking steel sections. And we had to be careful, because if we went off our general area of operations, there was unexploded ordnance around. And people were still getting killed from World War I armaments.

Oh my goodness.

And then the trenches were full of nice, small birch trees, beautiful birch trees. And I got some pictures that eventually the museum will get. And there's a picture of an 88th and everything made out of birch. A kind of big entrance, like to our Amiens base.

So that's where we took off from. And the idea was to be closer to carrying gasoline at the various tanks and so forth. Patton went so fast that his big express that they had designed to keep gasoline flowing to them just couldn't keep up. And he was being slowed down. And they got together, and just a day or two later they came up with the idea of flying them in by troop carrier and flying out the wounded.

OK, so when you were taking off from Amiens, did you take off with gas and came back with people?

No, no, no.

No, OK.

No, it was primarily to go. We went there empty. No, we probably carried supplies in. It's that I don't recall. We almost never flew empty. And we knew that that area was being liberated and so forth, so we knew the need probably would be great. I'm sure we took medical supplies, at least, and things of that sort in.

So do you recall how long the flight was, when you landed, where you landed?

We landed at Halle, Germany.

Halle.

And I'm still not quite sure how far that was from the closest--

Well, Halle is in what was East Germany.

East Germany.

East Germany, what became East Germany. Buchenwald was in East Germany, what became East Germany. And Dachau was near Munich, which was going to be in West Germany.

This was quite a long flight. It was fairly long, because as I recall, and I was a navigator on that flight, as I recall the time of takeoff and then coming back over the German-French border was quite long. So it had to be back in East Germany.

OK.

I knew nothing about geography those days.

OK. So when you landed, do you remember what you saw?

Well, when we landed, all we saw was the very carefully selected survivors that were strong enough for the flight. And they had been put-- they had been organized by the 88th of all things, anti-aircraft, AA, anti-aircraft something.

It was a ground-based force that was real big in the liberation. And their story was told in one of the articles I gave you. But we met up with them there and took their assignment. They knew how many we could carry.

How many could you carry?

Well, we could carry about 18 to 20, probably.

Per plane?

Per plane.

OK.

And then my job was to be sure that-- going back from navigating and so forth-- being sure that they were doing OK. They'd sit in long rows on each side of the airplane.

So they were sitting up.

They were sitting.

The people were sitting up.

Huh?

The people were sitting up.

They were sitting, yes. They were sitting. Some of them had sticks over their shoulder with little bandannas or something, with their little worldly goods in them. Very, very pathetic.

Tell me, what did they look like?

They looked like skeletons. Even though they can walk and everything, they looked like a skeleton, a miracle they could walk. I'm saying, some were worse, some were better. But they were-- their skin was kind of tallow-looking, and their eyes were kind of hollow. Their clothes were in tatters.

Were they wearing the striped--

No. By then they had changed into some other type of clothing. But it wasn't Brooks Brothers. And a lot of these were French that we had on this particular mission.

And it was hard to tell, because they were mixed. Anyone capable-- there wasn't any discrimination. Anyone capable of being flown out of that hellhole were assigned a spot on one of the hundreds and hundreds of flights that came in and left.

Could you tell who was a man and who was a woman?

There were no women on our flight. No women on our flight. They probably were segregated. But our flights were all men.

Were they-- well, could you tell their ages approximately?

It was impossible to tell. They all looked old.

Yeah.

How did they walk?

They walked with-- some with canes, and some-- we had to help some of them in getting aboard the plane, because there was a step, kind of a little ladder that came up into the plane. And so they had to be helped. Most of them had to be helped into the plane.

And then again, water and so forth, important things that they needed we supplied during the time. And candy bars, but we had to be very careful, because they gave us orders not to feed them.

Because in feeding them too rich a diet-- they had to have a special diet. These are little details I can recall, special diet. And then they were fed instead of gallons of water at a time, just small amounts of water at a time and so forth. But it was very pathetic.

And the most memorable part of the trip is when I made the announcement-- I had to go back among them-- made the announcement that we were just crossing the French border out of Germany.

That's where I can't-- to this day, I can't talk about it. To this day, I can't talk about it without breaking down. The joy, seeing smiles on these skeletons. And these will give me a lot of thanks that I had not been on the other side of that fence.

But that's the main memories of that. We never flew any women to my knowledge. You probably couldn't tell the difference between them anyway. But that was very difficult.

Did they say anything? Did they say anything?

No, they were-- a few of them could always understand English. And I didn't have to try to sign language anything, that we're going to be crossing over the German-French border. We were able to-- of course, we could have been able to do it by sign language just in case there wasn't English speaking survivors there. But that was so powerful it kind of blanked out some of the other memories I had of it.

And we landed in Amiens on one of the flights that I could recall. And it was kind of interesting, there were also German prisoners who were stationed in the same place. And the German prisoners were doing pick-up of cigarette butts, and they were doing all the maintenance around our camp and our tents and so forth. And so that was such a thing, those super powers, and then we were flying these people in that now are part of us, you know?

Did they see them?

Oh, I'm sure they saw them. But they were still in prisoner garb.

Did you recall anything about how they left the plane?

Well, again, they had to be helped off. And I can just recall helping some of them off and being sure they still had their belongings, and being sure they were strong enough to join. Someone was there at the time with-- there were ambulances there.

They were pulled up, and the weaker ones were taken off by American ambulance. Where they went from there, I'm not sure, because our job was to keep flying them back.

Did you do more of these trips?

I did only two of them, and they were both very similar. They'd come back to the same place. But there were hundreds and hundreds of those trips. Almost like invasion, they were just constantly-- the planes were flying in and coming back

in different areas.

Our planes actually-- I didn't go along on them, but our planes actually flew in and picked up Russians. And they hated it to be taken back to Russian lines. They just hated that, because once they got to Russian lines, they communicated with the flight crews that they had to walk all the way back into their country, back to the Red Army.

They landed at Red Army lines. We dropped them there. Then from there, they had to walk all the way back into wherever they were going. And they said after that, they'd probably be shot for traitors for not dying for their country.

It happened.

So you would pick up Russian prisoners from some place in Germany and fly them to the Red Army lines to another place in Germany? No, the Russian prisoners were prisoners that were used as slave laborers.

OK, and so you would fly them east?

We would fly them east, yes.

I see.

But not too far, because the Russian lines were not that far. Then we flew Czechs to somewhere in Czechoslovakia. We flew people all over. And I have a detailed analysis of that in our written record there.

So it was not-- if I understand correctly, your flight where you helped bring survivors of the camps out to France, there were two flights?

Yeah. Well, there were a lot more than the two.

I know, but the ones that you were involved--

I had my job to do on the ground. I had to keep those radar sets working and stuff. So I just went along because of a lack of a navigator or something of that sort. I filled in. As I can recall, that's all.

OK. Did they say anything to you on either flight? Did anyone speak with you?

I can't recall anything except the unmistakable change in their mood when they crossed the border. I can't recall any conversations. Everything was so blotted out by that demonstration of joy that it took most of my memory away from that.

Did they stand up at that point?

Oh, those that could. They weren't supposed to, but they were just-- they were so joyous. Certainly not everyone stood up, because they were not that strong yet. But it was like seeing a bunch of smiling dancers, you know, like they were putting on a big dance.

I can only imagine that they moved very slowly if they were weak, you know?

They were different. Every person was different. So they moved, but they were strong enough to stand a flight. Those that could not-- they could still walk, but weren't strong enough to survive a flight of any duration. They had to be under hospital care.

As you know, as we discovered after we got to Halle, the camps were actually quarantined. And the doctors moved into the quarantine areas and took care of people trying to save as many lives as possible until they were brought along strong enough to move out of the area. But we learned a lot, a lot about the camps.

Tell us a little bit more detail, if you can, about the other flights that you took in addition-- oh, excuse me. Before I get into that, both times you flew into Halle?

Mm-hmm.

OK, so--

Both times were almost identical. I could have predicted it on the second flight.

The other flights you took in addition with the Russian prisoners of war or slave laborers--

I didn't take that.

You didn't take that flight?

No, no.

Oh, I see.

No.

That was somebody else who did?

Yeah. I mean, most of the flights were without my need. Thank you.

And what about the ones for the Czech-- you said there were Czech people who were flown back?

Yeah, our records show that in the May and June period we flew just about all over the continent flying people back to their home, or their hometown. A lot of flights into Paris, many flights.

There was a lot of French soldiers taken prisoner and treated as slave laborers. And so a lot of them come back. And the stories of that, they would take them into Paris, the big airfield in Paris. And they had honor guard and a red carpet and so forth. And they were treated just like victors as they deplaned there.

And there was a lot of those flights, lots of those flights. But then other flights was all over.

[KNOCKING ON DOOR]

I've got to answer that.

OK.

Wait a second.

OK.

Let me remove your transmitter.

No, no. Someone can answer.

I know.

So where were we? We were in-- are we ready and rolling?

Yeah.

OK, we were in France. And you were talking about when French prisoners of war came home and how they were treated. I'd like to ask you now, how much longer did you stay in Europe? Tell me about what happened in your life after that.

Let's see. That was actually in June of 1945. Immediately after finishing the task of bringing all the survivors to their various destinations, we started packing up to come home. We had to go to Europe-- had to go to-- at that time, we had to go to the South Pacific.

And so the month of June, the latter part of June especially, we were packing all the supplies up and so forth to be transported back to the United States. And then probably in July-- July, August-- July, August, September. Probably about in early August-- this is subject to correction, but it's in that time frame anyway.

The air echelon, all the airplanes, loaded up all the gear that they could take aboard that was higher value. And they took off and flew via Iceland to Nova Scotia, back that route to I don't even know what field they landed on.

But anyway, the ground echelon, which I was on, were packed up and put aboard a Liberty ship. No, it was a Victory ship. A Victory ship.

There was two types of ships, and the Liberty was the slowest and the ugliest. The Victory ship was a troop carrier and did about everything, but it's faster. It took less escort.

They took around somewhere in August. And we then, aboard the slower ship, came in probably some time in September. And we landed in Boston. And you know, in some ways, what we did over there is clearer than what happened afterwards.

And anyway, we landed in Boston. And, of course, in Nashville, every time we came back there was a huge demonstration. The Red Cross people were there and we got the first milk. We hadn't tasted real milk since we left.

Wow.

Everything was powdered. Then my wife met me. I can recall she had a big black hat on, dressed in black, beautiful. And again, we then drove. I think she came with her parents or somebody that was able to drive. We drove back to their home on Russell Street in Connecticut.

And there we decided what we were-- talked about what our future was going to be. And back there, we decided to-- I had saved a lot of money. I didn't smoke or drink when I was overseas, so all the money that I was allotted for that went into this belt around my waist.

And I was able to-- and then I turned them into money orders. By the time I got to the States, we were-- I had quite a little. I had probably several thousand dollars. I don't know.

Anyway, we bought the latest vehicle manufactured, a Pontiac. The last wave of passenger vehicles that were manufactured before the war, turned into war time status. And we decided we'd go to California, because we'd never been there.

So you were out of the war? You were out of the effort for the Pacific. The war had ended for you.

I missed one point. During the time we were talking about, in the time we were packing up to go, news came the atomic bomb had been dropped. And so immediately we knew that the war in Japan was over. We knew that our wartime experience was over. I missed that, I'm sorry.

So anyway, we drove to California for the first-- go ahead.

Hang on. Before you get there, when you came back, how much of what you had-- first of all, how long had you been overseas? If you left in late '43 it was?

I left in late '43.

And you came back in--

Late '45.

Late '45.

Only two years.

Less than two years.

All that had been compressed into two years.

Did you feel like you were a changed person?

I never gave it a thought. I never-- I didn't have nightmares like so many did. We were able to look to the future and say, OK, where do we go from here?

I decided to get into business rather than take the GI Bill that sent so many people to college. And so we finally went across the country with this little car.

And I was able-- we were staying at-- we had a destination of my uncle's place. My uncle, his name is [? Callie. ?] And they lived in Santa Monica. So we came in with him.

And he was a painter. And I spent several days painting. And so I started making money just about as soon as I got back, because our pay was delayed again. By that time I was a captain, and the pay wasn't too bad from the service.

Anyway, living beyond that, as fast as we can, we received a lot of the four-engined US Air Force planes back to Douglas Aircraft Field. We started to renovate them.

I was involved. And I knew wiring and so forth, so I was involved in the electrical side. And we spent several-- spent almost a year with them in about 1946, '47. In the meantime, we had a daughter born in 1946, Beverly. Beverly June.

And she is now retired and also working. They had to call her back. She was a nurse at the University of Colorado Medical Center. Anyway, going on from that, in 1949 I opened my first business, which was a radio-television operation.

And I spent quite a number of years with the star community, like Clark Gable and all these big stars, including Disney. I mean including Jack Carson, John Wayne, and many, many. I mean, we had the walls plastered with these signed photographs.

So that meant you owned a television company?

Yes. I opened it up and owned it. Ran it for about 10 years.

What was it called?

Valley Video Service. And later, we opened B&D Electronics, B&D being Beatrice and Dutch, B&D Electronics. And

we handled the entire 13 Western states and distribution of electronic parts for television and radio and accessories.

And then I eventually wanted to see more of what goes on in the real world. So I stepped out into various jobs that led up to me designing an anti-collision device in the '60s. I think about 1965, when the first jet aircraft flying passengers came out.

Two TWA planes had crashed over the Grand Canyon. And I said, what a terrible, terrible problem. And what a terrible thing to happen when there was a solution. And again, I used what was available in my radar training and so forth. Same equipment, same stuff, and I designed an anti-collision device.

And believe it or not, it was just the same basic idea. Why not take what's already proven by war, by everything, and turn it into something that could save lives? Anyway, there again after drawing the design kind of roughly, I just decided before I waste any more time, I would go back to Washington and meet with the FAA.

And so they set up an appointment, a half an hour. And we got-- my brother then met me at that point. Because he was a pilot that had not finished his training before he was sent overseas. And he met me.

And we met with the FAA. And I showed them the design. I showed them where I had had success with that in Europe. And it actually worked and so forth.

And the half hour meeting turned into four hours. The whole afternoon was taken. At the end they said, look, we know-- we're pretty sure that this would probably save 95% of our collisions. He says, but unless you get to 100%, there's no way we can ever get it through Congress, get it approved.

So then I also met with people at Magnavox Corporation, a big electronics firm. They had also designed a system. So I had communications with them, and they had the same luck. Eventually I made a revelation, or I made a disclosure to Bendix Aircraft. And I says, here, I'm disclosing this. What can you do with it? You have more power than any little one person.

Well, they had the same results. They said, yes, it would work. And so all I got was the satisfaction of knowing the thing would work.

Oh.

Beyond that I got into my own business. I joined as chairman of a public electronics firm that made specialized cathode ray tubes, the display device that they use in air traffic control. We designed little tiny tubes that they use on helicopter pilot sights, gun sights.

And we designed-- we also designed a ground radar type of system that would cut the earth down, I don't remember how many feet, but then show the side of it in layers for finding oil.

Wow.

And that was a sale. We made a sale of that device to Brown & Root, a division of Bechtel And that-- let's see.

I lost my train of thought. What was the last--

Well, you were talking about some of the business ventures and--

Oh yes, I was talking about that one. And this had to have a silver oxide type of paper that flowed past a heater. The heater design was it had to be very even heat over a stretch of a heater element. And the paper flowed over it and it was heat developed.

And the fact that I had worked at two specialized heat manufacturers as vice president of new product design and so

forth, two separate ones, I had a lot of knowledge about that particular part. And we were able to solve that problem. And that was sold to Brown & Root. Where it went from there, that's where my memory trailed off. I don't know.

Did you make-- so it sounds like you were both in business ventures and also inventing.

Well, inventing was kind of, again, a side product of-- for the heat companies, I invented a couple of devices for boats. One to guard against a reversal of the polarity of the power coming into the boat from the dock, because if there's a wrong reverse, it would eat up the prop and everything else. It had to be the right polarity. And I designed the device that would automatically reverse it in the device rather than have the damage.

The other one was-- what the heck was it? The other one was pretty interesting, but I can't remember the details.

It's OK. If you do, we'll talk about it. Those two compressed years that you were in Europe. If I recall, you had two sons and a daughter?

Yes.

OK, did you ever talk to them about what you had experienced, what had gone on there? Did you ever talk about these things?

Not during their-- because again, we didn't want to talk much about it. Little pieces didn't mean anything to us. My little job, what's interesting about having a little radar job? So I couldn't say I was a big hero.

By the way, one of my clients was Audie Murphy when I was in the radio-television business. And also, the Ace of South Pacific, Pappy Boyington, and also General Chennault. These were all customers of mine, as well as virtually the entire film industry.

But then, again I didn't think it was important enough to talk about it. I was no hero.

But the various events. I mean, kids are always interested in what their dad did. And for them, their dad is the hero no matter what.

Well, of course. You could be any.

Yeah. But then you said that until recently, many things had been classified.

That's exactly right. I couldn't talk about so much, so I just learned not to talk. Especially the South Pacific-- no, the southern France invasion. That was top, top secret. I was with-- Douglas Fairbanks Jr. was in charge of a PT squadron in the South Pacific.

And this was-- as part of the invasion of our aircraft, and gliders, and paratroopers, they had to have certain locations marked with no deviation so they could make their turns to the new direction. So they could make their turns, in my case, over the last marker to hit the area in southern France that the bombers had pulverized, so that they could go in with the least chance of being shot down.

Well, I was assigned to his squadron to operate their radar, to locate that spot in the middle of the Mediterranean.

Can you repeat this? Excuse me. I think you said that he was in charge of a squadron in the South Pacific. You mean--

No, I meant to southern France.

OK, so, Douglas Fairbanks was in charge of such a squadron in southern France?

He was thought of at the time as a playboy with a degree of the lieutenant rank. It was just playing around, but that guy

was a hero.

Was he?

He was marvelous. And there was so much to tell, but couldn't. His whole operation was top secret until after the Vietnam War.

No kidding.

So during that time, I could not talk.

Well, what can you tell us now about it?

I can tell you everything now, but I just started to memorialize it. So I can't-- I don't want to publicize anything yet until I've got it in a better form. And you'll get it as soon as I do. That was going to be one of the chapters in my book.

OK. Well, is there anything else that you would want to share with us today about what it was that you experienced, what you'd want people to know?

The biggest subject that I wanted people to know was obvious at the meeting yesterday. It was the fact that the 90th Troop Carrier Squadron got a very, very bad rap from the author of Band of Brothers, name of Stephen Ambrose.

He wrote that entire supposed to be truthful series all about the paratroopers, the 101st and 82nd, which were marvelous, and they thought the world of us, all about that. But he never interviewed one troop carrier pilot to get the story of who carried them in and what happened on some of their problems.

He interviewed people that had been on aircraft that weren't as trained as the 438th. And they dropped their paratroopers at the wrong spot, in the marshes. And they're the people-- the paratroopers are interviewed. But I have something I want to read into the record about what a paratrooper said about us.

And my biggest goal of this entire operation is to focus on the fact that the 90th Troop Carrier Squadron of four forces-- I'm saying forces, incidents or whatever-- four of the most important things in World War II, one of them was the 90th troop carrier command. And they've been downgraded, and kicked, and so forth. I wanted to restore the truth about that squadron of 1,000 planes.

OK, hang on a second. What time are we at right now?

It's after 12:00. Let me check for you.

All right.

When we had our little chat with the lady, we were at 12:0-something. 12:24, 12:25.

12:24. I would suggest, do you-- let's cut right now.

OK.