

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

YSU Veterans Project

World War II The China Theater

O. H. 130

CHESTER A. AMEDIA

Interviewed

by

Steven R. Ard

on

June 13, 1980

CHESTER A. AMEDIA

The first biographical material on Chester A. Amedia for Youngstown State University was compiled by David S. Arms in an interview on March 1, 1976. Arms had interviewed Amedia about his experience in the Air Force. His topic had been "Active Duty and Reserve Experience."

An updating of the first biographical sketch on June 13, 1980, found that Amedia was now a part-time business and construction consultant. The interviewer, Steven R. Ard also learned that Mr. Amedia is very active in the Salvation Army, the CETA Program, and the International Institute which are all located in Youngstown, Ohio.

In this later interview, Amedia talked about his experiences as a pilot over the China-Burma-India Theater during World War II. He discussed the cargo that he carried and the problems that he encountered flying over the "Hump". Mr. Amedia also recalled his experience as a Reserve pilot during the NATO inspection tour of Europe in 1966. Much of his recollection consisted of his impression of Germany and her people.

Steven R. Ard

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INTERVIEWEE: CHESTER A. AMEDIA  
INTERVIEWER: Steven R. Ard  
SUBJECT: World War II The China Theater  
DATE: June 13, 1980

SA: This is an interview with Chester A. Amedia for the Youngstown State University World War II Veterans Project by Steven R. Ard at 661 Wick Avenue at the International House on Friday, June 13, 1980 at approximately 11:50 a.m.

Okay, I'd like to begin then by talking about your Army experience first.

CA: Well, I volunteered for the military in early July or August of 1942, and I was sworn into the Army of the United States as a volunteer September 29, 1942, at which time I took a train to Cleveland and from Cleveland down to Fort Hayes, Columbus, Ohio. I took my physical in Cleveland, was sent to the staging area at Fort Hayes for about three days and then on down to Camp Robinson, Arkansas where I went into what they call the BIRTC, Basic Infantry Training Replacement Program. It was the first six-week program that the Army was going to try. They had usually given a person a year and then they reduced it to six months, and then due to the pressing of the war they went down as low as nine weeks. My group was the first one that they were going to experiment with using six weeks where you would be trained and then shipped overseas to a division as a replacement rifleman or whatever you would be. While there apparently I displayed some leadership and they turned me into a corporal and sent me over to the noncom school, from which place I was then selected to go to Infantry Officer School. At that time it was at Fort Benning, Georgia, and it still is! I became one of the "follow-me types" and "ninety day

wonders". But again my class wasn't a ninety day class. They extended it four days for a special command post problem. So, exactly six months and seven days to the time that I went into the service I came out a Second Lieutenant. Strange enough they discharged me for the convenience of the government from my volunteer position in the Army of the United States to accept a commission. I was made a Second Lieutenant the same day I was separated, discharged. Then I was sent to the 88 Infantry Division into the famous Louisiana maneuvers, and trained with them. I had the opportunity of shaking hands with President Roosevelt one Sunday afternoon following a complete march and review because I was a brand new officer on the base, (one of seven). We had Sunday dinner with him. From there we went on maneuvers and I was out in the field one day and a runner came looking for Lieutenant Amedia. He had orders from Washington. They used to publish the orders in a book. He handed me this book and my name was well buried in it, but we found it. I was to report to the Army Air Corps for flight training. I had to get the release of the regimental commander, the battalion commander and my company commander, which I did. Then I went into what they called the Accelerated Pilot Training Program. Instead of eighteen weeks of the pre-flight flying training, I was given two weeks.

SA: What were you trained in?

CA: Well at that time, this was at what they called preflight at San Antonio, which was strictly ground school. I had not taken physics in high school. I had to take a very quick crash course and also pass all the higher math type examinations and so forth, which I did successfully. Then they sent me to Primary Flying School as a student officer. I was actually a Second Lieutenant training with flying cadets, flying the PT-19 Fairchild, open cockpit airplane. That goes back a few years, doesn't it? That was at Stanford, Texas. From Stanford, Texas I went to Sherman, Texas near Dennison, to Perrin Field where we flew the BT-13. That was a closed cockpit greenhouse type basic trainer.

SA: What do you mean greenhouse?

CA: Well, it had a canopy that looked like a greenhouse rather than a bubble. We called it the "Old Greenhouse" and Vultee Terror. From there I was sent to Twin Engine Advanced Flying School where we experienced considerable instrument flight training. I flew the AT-10, an all plywood two engine aircraft. From there then, I was

sent to Troop Carrier Transport School.

SA: Okay, let me ask you, how did those plywood planes hold up?

CA: I never had any trouble with them. They were good. We could slow-fly that airplane with the gear down and advancing prop to full low rpm. [Revolutions per minute] Throttling way back with full flaps, we could slow-fly as slow as thirty-five miles per hour. That's quite a fun experience. There you learned the discipline of flying though. You got into formation flying, where you never took your eyes off the leader. I well recall in one of our classes there was a cadet within two weeks of graduation who was washed-out! The reason appears to be ridiculous, but when you stop to think of it, it's discipline. They were night flying and he was flying the wing of another cadet and this cadet got vertigo and started into a dive. His wingman kept screaming to him, but apparently they didn't have a good radio connection between aircraft, and consequently the leader flew into the ground and the fellow flying the right wing saw the ground coming up and pulled up away from it. They washed him out because he didn't stay with his leader. That was the story that went around. I thought it was rather ridiculous because to me that would be an act of suicide to have somebody do that.

Following graduation from there I went up to Alliance, Nebraska. In the interim, they gave me a seven day leave at home. I reported to Alliance, Nebraska to Troop Carrier School where we learned to tow gliders. They transitioned us there for a while and then during the middle of the transition period they shifted our base to George Field, Illinois, down below Vincennes and the B-24's went into Alliance.

SA: What kind of gliders were you towing?

CA: We were towing what they call a CG-4A, an all plywood glider, high wing that could haul about twenty men. It could also haul about five thousand pounds with no problem, ten drums of gasoline if they had to. Later on over in the China-India-Burma Theater, I did a lot of glider towing. We also towed some of the British gliders called the "Horsa" I don't know if you recall the Horsa. The Horsa was a great big high wing monstrous thing. I towed some celebrities, including Jackie Coogan. I won't say too much about Jackie.

SA: Why not?

CA: I don't have too much favorably to say about him.

SA: In what respect?

CA: Ah, you're not going to get me trapped into that. I don't want to get into a slander suit. (Laughter)

SA: Okay, go ahead.

CA: Coogan was in my outfit overseas. Strangely enough, he was in the same outfit that I was in training command. I ended up in the China-India, Burma Theater in a very, very famous organization led by Colonel Phil Cochran of the famed "Terry and the Pirates". Phil Cochran was Flip Corkin in the funny papers, but Colonel Phil Cochran in real life was our commander. And we got involved in several operations over there. I was in five different battle campaigns. We supported the British Tenth Army. We dropped a lot of paratroopers; towed gliders into Burma, two hundred miles behind the enemy lines. We got involved into an operation that I kind of pattern to this recent operation that didn't go off successfully in Iran. Where they used helicopters, we used gliders. I remember this one night taking off from a field, thirty-five hundred feet elevation in the Imphal Valley, which in itself is a struggle for an airplane under hot conditions! We took off during the coolest part of the night with two gliders. We were towing two gliders, each aircraft. I watched my oil pressure drop into the red. I watched my oil temperature climb clear up into the red, and any second I expected my engine to seize. I had twenty-eight men in my airplane and twenty men in each glider. We were a formation of twenty C-47's towing a total of forty gliders. And we had to climb up over a range of mountains that projected better than eight-thousand feet high. As we cleared them, we formulated our formation over the valley and then started down and then it was just a steady descent down into the Burma area where we were to make our drop. Everything went well! With the first aircraft, we were right on time. We weren't allowed to break radio silence. We had radio discipline. So one of the things we had to rely upon was ground people, who had gone in, in advance. They'd check out the winds and so forth and give us signals with flashlights in Morse code. The first aircraft cut his two gliders loose and he dropped his ropes and then went on in and landed and everything was fine. The second one started in. The two gliders were cut loose. They got in. And if you would understand the

type of operation, they just can't land and be stuck in the middle of the field. They have to land in certain areas and clear the field so other aircraft following would be able to successfully manipulate. They made it well to the end of the field. And as the second C-47 started to land, lo and behold, out of the shadows came a water buffalo, right into his path and it wiped out his right prop and right landing gear and he went on a wing and his belly and scraped along. He stopped right in the middle of the field and stopped the whole operation. So you talk about the sands being unexpected in Teheran. You could go through the best of military planning and then have some unexpected item like that happen. We continued to circle. The main force of Japanese were only a mile or so away, some even closer. The men on the ground couldn't do much, but we knew that there was a jeep in aircraft number nineteen, (the two aircraft of number nineteen airplane). Somehow or another, they got word up to him. We always flew with our cargo doors off. With only three men on board however, with two jeeps instead of all those soldiers, the co-pilot and the engineer had to go back and bounce that jeep around, hook up a couple of parachutes to it and free drop it. And the pilot did an excellent job. He came in very low and the free drop acted as a brake. The jeep turned over, but the men on the ground were able to turn it back over and by using some of the two ropes which they recovered, they got the jeep running. It was badly twisted and bent but it still ran! And they pulled the dead carcass of the water buffalo off. The Water buffalo weighed about probably twelve, thirteen hundred pounds. Like a big bull only bigger. Then they were able to hook up to the disabled aircraft. And with the men pushing and the jeep pushing they were able to drag that thing off enough to make the rest of the aircraft have an opportunity with the gliders and the aircraft to land. The rest of the mission went perfect. But these things happen. While there I had the opportunity to fly over the Hump 33 trips. Saw the ground one time in that 33 times.

SA: All right, before we go on to that let me ask this: when you were pulling those gliders, you talked about your oil pressure going up and down. If something went wrong in your plane, what were you supposed to do with the gliders?

CA: Well, we had right over on the co-pilot's side, back of his neck, a handle that looked much like a handle that

you would use for water skiing, and you just pulled that handle and that automatically cut the gliders loose at your end. There was a snap release hookup on our C-47 tail, at the bottom of the tail. Cut loose that put the gliders strictly on their own with the ropes dangling then they had to cut the ropes loose and it would be up to them to try to get into an area where they could successfully land. They're strictly on their own then! However, when we would take them over the field to the point where we were going to complete our mission, they would cut loose from their end, because it was strategic for them to know exactly where they should cut, playing the wind just right and how much they would have to use their spoilers and so forth. The gliders depended very heavily on spoilers and brakes and flaps to successfully slip and skid; anything they could do to hit that ground at the right spot in order to drag in and stop where they were designated to rather than... .If they didn't play that just right they could run off into the woods or be too short.

SA: What was your rank at this time of the mission?

CA: At that time I was a first lieutenant.

SA: Still a first lieutenant. What was your function on the plane?

CA: I was pilot, first pilot of the aircraft.

SA: What rank then would a co-pilot hold?

CA: A co-pilot was either a flight officer or lieutenant. . . . Believe it or not, three quarters of my flying in the China-India-Burma Theater was with an enlisted man as co-pilot, who was my mechanic. We were short of pilots there. And occasionally they would give me a fighter pilot who was not checked out in my type of aircraft, who couldn't fly because the weather was too bad so they'd put him into transports.

SA: I see. Once you got the gliders down and they unloaded the men, then what did you do with the gliders down on the ground?

CA: They stayed. Then after the ground troops had entrenched themselves and advanced, we would fly them back out. Several of them had crushed wings, broken fuselages. They were scrapped. In fact, six or seven months later



we recovered a couple of jeeps that were left there. That's strange, but we were back in that area. Of course, the Japs were far gone, but we actually recovered some of the jeeps.

SA: Did you have a value estimate of what those gliders were worth?

CA: At that time those gliders cost probably 22 to \$27,000., as I recall. Of course a DC-3 wasn't too expensive then, \$300,000. You could buy a P-51 in World War II brand new for \$68,000. Some of our combat aircraft today, comparable fighters that are jets with all their electronic equipment, run \$6,000,000. plus!! Things have advanced.

SA: Considerably. What type of instrumentation did you have on those planes?

CA: On my type?

SA: Yes.

CA: We were amongst the first to get into the VHF, Very High Frequency radio units. The British did a pretty good job over there with DF Steers. That's where you'd transmit and they would listen to your voice and turn a wheel and when the signal came in the strongest, they'd give you the reciprocal and they would give you a straight Azimuth heading to that particular station. We had the old Bendix set, what we called the "Bird Dog", which was nothing more than a low frequency set. We could tune in on any radio station, and then the needle would presumably point to it if there wasn't too much iron in the hills or interference. Sometimes you'd just watch that needle go around and around and around. For most of our flying, we had the needle ball, air speed indicator and horizon and Gyro-compass. In our later model DC-3, C-47's we had glide scopes, but we had no equipment over there to fly the glide scope into. So consequently all of our instrument approaches were mostly time and distance let-downs. If you worked your map and if you did a good job at it you were successful. If you missed, you hit a hill.

SA: Okay, all right, let's go to the flying over Burma, coming in over the Hump. What kind of supplies were you bringing in at that time?

CA: I flew just about everything you could imagine. My first assignment when I hit the China-India-Burma Theater and

I joined the outfit was up at a field called Tinkocksakan, which was in the northern sector of Burma and that's all jungle. It was a 5,000 foot strip that had been used by fighters. It had been carved out of the jungle. We slept in British pyramid tents. Six of us would sleep in these tents. And the jungle rats were horrible. They'd run all over your mosquito bars. They'd leave droppings on top of you if you shook a little bit or moved in bed. And everybody shakes when they're sleeping. If there was a rat on top of your mosquito bar in the dark, naturally it got scared and it left its droppings on it. You'd see them in the morning actually. They were so bad over there, that I took what we call the old D ration, which was a solid chocolate bar, sort of a bitter sweet type chocolate bar that would supposedly give you energy. I took one, one night and tied it to the center of a rib on top of the tent ceiling coming down that was four feet away from the center post and five feet off the ground. And I thought, well that's going to be safe. When I woke up it had actually been gnawed from suspension in air. How that rat ever got to it, I don't know. The baboons used to wake us up too! We used to have these baboons and chimps over near the strip. At four o'clock in the morning they'd start. We also had tigers. We had a tiger in a camp kill one individual. That's a story in itself.

My first assignment was flying pipe made by the Youngstown Sheet and Tube, right here in Youngstown from a strip there. We picked some of it up at Shingbwiyang, Burma and we'd also pick some of it up at Warazup. We picked some of it up at Tinkocksakan also. We were in a season where the fog was so bad that at four o'clock in the morning it would sound like rain coming down off the tent top. That is, the droplets, the fog droplets. The fog wouldn't clear out until ten o'clock. Our first airplane would go out at about seven-thirty. They'd tow us out to the take off position. We had a white line painted right down the middle of this asphalt runway, 5,000 feet long. The runway was 300 feet wide. The wing span on our DC-3's was 99 feet six inches. As a pilot, I would glue my eyes on what we call the directional gyro. Normally, I'd set that gyro to the runway heading I was taking off on. I learned a little trick on that, though. This particular heading was about 183 and I decided I was going to do it a little different. Then we all started doing it that way after we talked about it. I would set it right on zero. It was easier for me to keep it on zero than 183. Why, I don't know, and why the other guys agreed. . . That thing would

start to go to the left, I'd give it a little bit of right rudder and put it right back on zero; if she'd go to the right, a little bit of left rudder. And I just worked those rudders real stiff and I'd have to be very careful with my throttles. Throttles had to be advanced even, so that I wasn't putting more torque on one side than on the other side. I made solid instrument takeoffs! You couldn't see anything ahead of you. The co-pilot would glue his eyes down, looking down at the white line. And he'd say, "you're going right" or "You're going left." And my engineer was always afraid to tell me. So, consequently I would just watch and depend on that gyro and when I hit 100 miles per hour, I knew I had flying speed. I always liked a little more air speed on the ground. The airplane would start flying actually at 90. With a load like that, we had 87 lengths of 21 foot pipe, four inches in diameter, the entire length of that airplane. In fact, when we climbed in we had to climb up with a step ladder, crawl over the pipe on our hands and knees and down into the cockpit. That's how loaded we were. Thank God we never lost an engine of one of our airplanes there. At 300 feet, you'd climb out and you'd be in a sunshiny atmosphere. It was just like being on top of an ocean. And the sun would be shining. The sky would be blue, but that fog was under there. Thirty miles down the valley, we would run out of the fog. We'd get over to a strip like maybe Mangshih or Yun-nan-i or one of the areas in China where we were scheduled to go. They'd unload the pipes. They had coolies on both ends. The pipe was loaded at nighttime while we slept. And then when we got to our destination, there would be Chinese coolies there who would unload. And we'd sit around under a wing, talking. One of the guys had a motorcycle that he used to throw on top of his load. Sometimes he'd take off and go off into a town and bring back a basket of eggs or something. By the time we returned, after 10:00 our field would be open, the fog would be gone. We'd reload and go again!

Of course we fought an awful lot of thunderstorms! We had over the Hump, the world's worst weather area. You just can't believe the turbulence and the experiences that you would encounter. You weren't allowed to take any gasoline out of China so consequently you were always fighting head winds and trying to lean out those mixtures as much as you possibly could. If you got into a storm coming back, you couldn't go to the left because that would put you south into the Japanese area. You didn't have the aircraft that could perform to the right because

you'd get into the heavier mountain areas of the high peaks, so you just had to charge straight through it. The hail would be terrific, the rain would be thick, and oh, what turbulence!! I remember one time returning, you always picked up a load, too. Normally they would have people coming back from China that were going back for reassignment to the States. I had 28 black truck drivers who had been overseas 35 months and they were in the back end. They didn't know what was going on. I got into this storm: I knew it was going to be a violent one, because I could see as I approached it, the darkness of it. And I could tell the main portion of the thunderstorm cell was right in my path. I had a mechanic flying with me nicknamed, "Pudgy". I said, "Button up and strap up good because we're going into a bad one. Whatever you do, watch my cylinder head temperatures. Don't let them get too cold. and watch my carburetor ice." I went into that storm on solid instruments. We were taught at that time to penetrate a little slower than normal. In other words, if you could slow down the airplane and go through slow, you'd be better off than trying to go through fast. So I dropped my gear, advanced my rpm and put a little more throttle into it. That would keep your cylinder head temperatures a little warmer. And then, of course, I had him close the cowl flaps all the way. As I got into it, the rain was so violent that it just looked like we were under the ocean. My windshield was leaking a trickle of ice cold water. It came right down and hit my right knee, which made me rather uncomfortable. As I continued into this, I suddenly started descending but I had my altitude gyro showing me that I should be climbing. Eventually I had the column all the way back against my chest actually in an attitude with my nose, probably 45 degrees up, with full power on. I pulled the gear up and I was still being pushed downward at over 2,500 feet a minute. I watched my altimeter unwind from 15,000 feet. There were mountains in the area. I knew of one peak, 13,000 according to the map. I watched us go below the 13,000 foot mark, 12,000, then 11,000. I watched the altimeter continue to unwind. And suddenly at about 9,200 feet it stopped unwinding and then I started up, and I still kept the column all the way back. The rate of descent went into a rate of ascent and I started upward 2,000 feet a minute or better. All this time, I'm trying to control my air speed at about 130 knots. I say knots now: at that time we used to fly miles per hour. The Navy flew knots. It's only been in the last fifteen years that the Air Force changed to knots. But I just kept going right on up and I watched the altimeter go through 12,000, 13,000, 14,000, 15,000, 16,000 and a little bit about 17,000 feet she stopped.

I put the nose down a little bit to hold my air speed and I was still on instruments, still in solid soup, but I was stable. The air was starting to get stable and I was able to control the plane better. This time I didn't put my gear down. I kept the gear up. And I started picking up a little air speed to 140, 150 miles per hour, and then I was in solid rain for the next hour, but no turbulence. I had made a mental note on the time that we had hit this and I also told my engineer, "Pudgy" to make memory of it and write it down when he got a chance. And he had the chance to do it. Later on, on the ground, I took a look at the map and tried to calculate where I was at about that time, working some time and distance for a location. I calculated that we were right over a valley and I had been pushed down between the peaks and then back up, by a downdraft and updraft! Well, it was a hairy experience! Any second I expected to be crushed against those rocks. I really did! I wouldn't have bet a ten dollar bill on my odds. I said a few Hail Marys!

SA: Were a lot of pilots lost over the Burma-China Hump?

CA: I can tell you of an experience one night when every fifty miles I could see a fire. We were able to fly that Hump by just following the fires of airplanes that crashed. This was when they had the C-46's initially and the wings were leaking fuel and they'd explode and burn. I well recall that one night: it was a horrible experience. We also ran into some experiences where we were returning some Chinese troops and they would sometimes commandeer the aircraft, kill the crew, try to fly it, because they didn't want to go back to China.

SA: Did you run into enemy pilots, fighter pilots?

CA: I encountered one: I saw him coming after me. I escaped in my unarmed plane by flying into the clouds. One day one of my other friends was flying and he was reading some mail. He had it on automatic pilot, and his co-pilot looked out and saw this Japanese "Oscar" flying on his wing. The Jap smiled at him and then peeled off and came after him, but he got down in the valleys and he was able to stay close to the ground and the other fellow, the Jap pilot expended all of his ammunition and then took off because they had a fuel problem too. When they came after me I headed straight into a thunderstorm! I wasn't going to take

any chances. I got into that cloud. There's no way he was going to find me in there. He probably shot into the cloud.

SA: Do you suppose more pilots were lost by enemy action or by weather?

CA: Weather killed more!

SA: Weather killed more?

CA: Though we had some that were shot up. I lost one real good friend who went overseas one month before I did and he'd only been over there about three months and they were unloading an airplane and he was seated down near the airplane and this Jap formation came out of the sky and got him. His name was "Bud" DeGarmo.

SA: Were you involved in any of the political bickering between the various unit factions of who was running the whole campaign?

CA: No, I had occasion one time to fly a rather high, rather important man. We were on the invasion of Meiktila. I saw this great big tall British officer come over and he jumped on board. Didn't even ask permission. Came up and stood between us. I went down the runway. It was only a fifteen or twenty minute haul down. He got off and stayed down there. We thought he was Mountbatten! No, I didn't get involved in that. General Wingate, was one of the early leaders who got killed in one of our B-25's. I was in the famous First Air Commando group. We had a transport squadron, two fighter squadrons, a light bombardment squadron and a liaison squadron that flew L-5's. We had B-25's with the light bombardment unit. We had the P-51's, later P-47's and then went back to the bubble canopy P-51 in the fighter squadron. We had the C-47's in the transport squadron. So we had a task force all in itself. We had a very high priority given to us by President Roosevelt. At that time in the China-India-Burma Theater, (you have to know the politics of the geographic situation), the Japanese were making a very strong advance. They had come all the way across China and captured all of it. They had all of Burma. They were right there on the fringes of India. The only thing that was really going to stop them was the Imphal Valley. Once they got by those hills, they had clear sailing all the way across India. They'd have taken

India, city by city. They would have just swept down. In that type of war, railroads played an important factor: rivers played an important factor and highways and roads played an important factor. And as planned strategy had it, all you had to do was fly across India and you'd see a series of airstrips that were built as withdrawal airstrips in the event that the Japanese were successful. They would pull out from one airstrip and then continue to go west, strip by strip. Every hundred miles there was an airstrip or so. The turning around point was with Japan in the CBI Theater. Well, actually, the plan was, if you recall, the Germans had invaded Greece and Crete and they were going to try to get in and control the oil in the areas which was then Persia and now called Iran; but if you get into the early history of it, Roosevelt and his advisors knew that they had to stop the Japanese and so he selected Colonel Phil Cochran and gave him the mission. He had priority for anything he wanted. He made his selection of men. And his mission was to come in with these gliders and so forth and stun the Japanese and recapture areas that they had already either by-passed or were confronted with. And this was done successfully. The British Tenth Army did a tremendous job over there on the ground. We did an awful lot of supplying for them. You asked me what I flew: I flew everything from pipe to mules and sacrificial goats. I remember taking off with a plane load of goats one day and the stink, (it was 110 degrees outside) and those goats all had to relieve themselves on takeoff. When they heard those engines roar, consequently we had a lot of goat manure. And when they tried to remove it after we got back, they tried to wash it out. They didn't have hoses; they just had buckets. The water seeped down underneath the cracks in the floor into the lower part of the fuselage. And that airplane stunk so bad, I finally had to send it back into Fourth or Fifth Echelon Maintenance, way back into India where they could take the whole floor out and steam it out, because it smelled so bad. We'd be flying those goats on one mission and then turn right around and pick up wounded personnel and set up litters and fly wounded back to a base hospital.

Peanuts! One time I had a complete plane load of peanuts. I couldn't understand what those peanuts were for. When I asked the Chinese interpreter after I had made an instrument landing at Lashio. Lashio has mountains all around it. I remember breaking through

just a couple of hundred feet off the ground and the runway was there. Everything worked fine. My calculations were right. And I got to thinking, boy, these peanuts must play an important part in this war. Then I had to wait for about an hour to get unloaded because there were so many other airplanes on the ground. I asked this one interpreter, "What will you do with all those peanuts?" He said, "I don't know, probably take them into town and trade them off for something." There we risked the lives of three good American boys and an airplane and used a lot of gasoline, for peanuts for the Chinese to trade off?

SA: Did you ever come in contact with Stilwell?

CA: We supplied Stilwell and also Merrill's Marauders. I used to make a lot of air drops.

SA: What did you supply to those two?

CA: Gasoline, food, mail, ammunition, beer rations and other supplies. You name it, we dropped it. They'd load up our airplane and we'd have so much stuff in there and they'd give us a jump master. Usually the jump master was a Canadian. And when we hit the area where they told us by coordinates that they were supposed to be at on a map, I would signal them. We'd go into a circle and when I gave them the signal, there was a bell that would ring. When I'd hit that toggle switch and ring that bell that's when they'd kick it out. We used to supply all the listening posts throughout all of China with gasoline.

SA: Now, what do you mean listening posts? Do you want to describe that?

CA: Well, the Allied Forces had an air warning service. It was comprised of nothing more than a group of observers on a hilltop. And they had radio stations and they would watch for Japanese aircraft. And if the Japanese aircraft were in the area they would relay this by radio to a ground station. Consequently, it would end up back in a command post and the command post would then either dispatch or advise all of the Allied aircraft. We had certain ways we kept corresponding. We knew when there were enemy aircraft presumably in the area. These air warning people were placed on these hills. Many of them were dropped in with their equipment. And they'd stay there two or three years. I was given one mission one day when I



had to get to one such post; I was the last airplane. If we could not successfully drop, they weren't going to have anymore fuel. They were running out of gasoline. I actually made several drops on instruments. On the first clear pass, I set my radio altimeter, which told me how high I was directly above the object. A red light told me if I was low. I set that thing at, in this particular case, at 8,500 feet. If I was at 8,600 feet, I had a green light. (I wanted to be fifty feet above the terrain.) If I was exactly fifty feet above it I would get a yellow light. If I was 25 feet below my designated altitude, 85 plus 25, I would get a red light. So the first pass I made I made sure and properly set my proper altitude.

SA: All right, you were talking about your first pass.

CA: On my first pass I made a mental note of the exact altitude of the mountain and I set my altimeter so that I couldn't make an error, because this great big cloud was hanging right above it. As I made my circle around, the cloud settled down. On the ground, they kept telling me, "I hear you coming, I hear you coming, you're there." That's when I rang the bell. That's when they kicked the fuel out. We dropped ten drums of gasoline to them. We only lost one drum down the side of the mountain. All the rest hit down in their camp. I also dropped beer, all their PX rations, their mail for four or five months. This place had been socked in solid and they just couldn't get anything to them. They were running out of everything from food to . . . Gasoline was a very critical item for them for their power generator.

SA: Okay, I was going to ask you what they did with the gas.

CA: They had a power generator there to run their radio equipment. Those were some of the interesting missions. I had some that were very boring.

I got involved in the liberation of Rangoon down on Elephant Point where we had 48 airplanes drop paratroopers that we had previously trained. We gave them actually about two weeks of training. And these were Gerka's (of Nepal). Strangely enough these Gerkas didn't want to jump from the designated, the 1,000 feet. They said they'd jump from 300, but they didn't want to jump from 1,000. And so we told them we were dropping them at 300. We dropped them from 1,250 feet. But on that mission I lost an engine and had to leave the

formation. Consequently I couldn't go back because I knew I was a dead duck. We made our drop and we knew there would be enemy fighters after us. So we took another course and went out into a storm at sea. And again my radio altimeter saved me. I just set that thing at 500 feet above sea level and flew it all the way up to an island called Ramree Island. And Ramree was open. There again, there's a little touch of home because Ramree Island had an all steel landing mat type runway and the British had been operating their spitfire fighters out of it. It was raining. It's amazing how slippery steel can get. But I had the experience. I had landed on many runways of steel mat over there, previous to it. But as I say, it had a little home touch to it. That was the landing mat material made by the Youngstown Sheet and Tube and Youngstown Pressed Steel Company right up here by Girard. My father-in-law used to work there.

I ended up with 153 combat missions in the China-India-Burma Theater for which they gave me some decorations. I got the Distinguished Flying Cross twice, Air medal three times, Five Battle Stars, the Presidential Unit Citation and some other medals.

SA: What was the highest rank you achieved there?

CA: I came home a first lieutenant. Well, while there, I got to fly for Office of Strategic Services, which was sort of like the CIA today. I flew a lot of missions to this day that are still classified. We used to fly into what was then called Indochina, which today is Vietnam, land on enemy held airstrips, unload personnel, unload demolition equipment, etc.

SA: Now, by enemy held airstrips, what do you mean?

CA: Japanese held airstrips.

SA: You were flying into Japanese airstrips?

CA: I would fly out of Rangoon at night on sometimes, twelve hour missions with an eight hour aircraft. Our aircraft ranges were only normally eight hours, but we had special fuel tanks, special flame arrestors, and so forth.

SA: What's a flame arrestor?

CA: That's where you won't see the exhaust flame from the ground or in the air at night.

SA: I see.

CA: If you have ever seen an old propeller job airplane with a reciprocating engine, sitting by a window you can see the blue flame coming out of it and the manifold turning cherry red.

SA: Yes.

CA: Well, you couldn't see any of that. The flame arrestors were built right around it so that none of that was prevalent. And again we used to fully land by signals from the guy on the ground; no landing lights. You got in, you got out, quick.

SA: The Japanese were there though, right?

CA: Maybe they were there, maybe they were on the edge of the field, maybe they had bypassed. When you conquer as much territory that the Japanese conquered, you have to bypass an awful lot of airfields or cities. You just don't have forces that you could keep there to keep them. Some of these were six to eight hundred miles behind the line. It's a strange feeling when you're that far away and you know all it takes is one flat tire and you're a dead duck. Then you have to run and go into the hills and hide and hope. We had pretty good intelligence on the situation. Though we had certain things we could do and couldn't do.

SA: What do you mean by that now?

CA: Well, I'm not going to get into that.

SA: No but, okay.

CA: Well, let's put it this way. There was always friendly forces to help you. Many of them were civilian natives. We had people who you could rely upon. They were subversive to the Japanese. We always wore money belts. We carried opium, silver rupees, trading items in these money packets. They were big wide canvass belts. And inside our jackets we had the American flag with a whole series of languages all in nylon. Some of them were silk. The early ones were silk then later nylon. In essence they read, "I am an American fighter, I have come to help you. I need help. If you will help me, my government will reward you." French was then the prevailing language of the general area. It was also in Kachin, Hindu, Burmese, Thai, etc. All these were written in these little squares. And then in the top

left hand corner was the big American flag that they recognized immediately. You wore that inside your jacket, sewn in.

SA: What other experiences did you have there?

CA: Well, I was in a very bad air crash. I had my orders to come home. I was sitting up in India waiting to take a plane down to Calcutta when the operations officer said, "Hey, Amedia," I forget the guy's name now, "So-and-so is pretty sick, he can't fly this mission, would you like to go down to Rangoon for me?" I said, "Yes, I'm just laying around here, I won't be leaving until tomorrow." So he says, "Hey, 'Fireball,' do you want to go too?" "Fireball" was a fighter pilot. His name was actually Friewald. He said, "Yes, I wouldn't mind going down there." He says, "I'd like to see Rangoon from the ground. I never landed there. I've shot it up from the air." So our mission was to go down to a strip, Alipore, A-L-I-P-O-R-E, which was right down on the bend of the River below Barrackpore and Dum-Dum Airstrip near Calcutta. We had two big strips there at Calcutta. Alipore was a British field and my job was to pick up some strategic supplies for an OSI mission. Consequently that happened and I was to bring this into a strip called Mingaladon airstrip at Rangoon. This airstrip had only been reopened three days. It had been badly bombed by our B-24's. I say our B-24's. The Allied B-24's and the British Lancaster bombers worked it prior to this liberation of Rangoon, where the Japs had a prison camp for Allied prisoners. The Japanese would only take you prisoner if you were a lieutenant colonel or higher. They didn't take low ranking prisoners, nor did the British. The British didn't take very many prisoners at all. Consequently, a lot of us used to carry lieutenant colonel insignia. I used to always have lieutenant colonel insignia in my pockets. If I ever went down in Japanese territory, believe me I was going to become a lieutenant colonel right now!

Well, we flew on down to Alipore. They started loading up the airplane. I didn't think too much of it, until I got in and looked at it. I had 4,500 pounds of demolition supplies, what you call today the plastics, Composition C and dynamite. I had flown an awful lot of ammunition and stuff like this. It didn't bother me at all. I made sure this stuff was tied down properly with nets and rope. I got into a pretty good storm on the way down, which kind of gave "Fireball" a little bit of experience. He said, "Boy, you guys," he said, "We never flew in this kind of weather." Well, we got down

towards Rangoon and it cleared up nicely and I started down towards town to the airport. He said, "You know, I've never seen the pagoda down there. How about taking a pass at it? I want to take a picture of it." So I said, "Okay." I went over the town about 300 feet altitude and probably 170 miles per hour out of a dive, right by the pagoda. He took a beautiful picture of this big golden pagoda down there. I headed back on up to the airstrip and got into the traffic pattern. There was a B-25 at the end of the runway waiting to take off. I got on the downwind leg and I transmitted to them, but I couldn't make radio contact. I wiggled my wings and they shot back a green signal, what was what we called "by the biscuit gun". Had it been red, it would have been "don't land", but green gave me clearance to land. I turned on my base leg and again I wiggled my wings and again I got a green light from the tower. I went through my prelanding check. Got everything set. I'm on final approach and again I wiggled my wings and again I got the green light. I set it down three point: that's the way I used to try to make all my landings. I like three point landings. We then had the tail wheel! As I started rolling up the runway I could see a truck coming on a right angle and on both sides of this runway were Dakotas, (Canadian Dakotas, which were C-47's) and I'm landing in between them. Through this strip of airplanes, I could see a truck coming. I said, "My God, I hope that guy isn't going in front of me." My air speed was down to about fifty miles per hour and I did not have enough runway to pour the power to it and go around. So, I started braking and I went as far to the left as I could go. In fact my left wing tip clipped a pilot tube right off of a Dakota. And this fellow kept coming right on out. I saw a body fly by. The truck hit my right prop. I reached out and first I cut my mixtures and then reached up and cut all of my electrical switches by the master switch. I went through the emergency procedures, and I said, "Good-bye Cel," (which is my wife, because I figured any second that airplane was going to blow up.) We went on our nose and right wing and by this time, this was right at the intersection of a runway. My plane started to veer to the right towards a group of Hurricanes and Spitfires which the British were working on by an old hangar that had been all shot up. I was headed straight for this one Spitfire. By reaction, I hit my right rudder figuring I'd try to whip it around. Fortunately there was a ditch there and it spun us around and we stopped. I hollered for everybody to get out of the airplane. Incidentally I had about seven passengers in the back end. Fellows who had never been to Rangoon and

wanted to ride down. I got them out. "Fireball" jumped out of the top emergency hatch where I showed him how to get out. The back doors were sprung so I had to get everybody out through the front. One kid sprained his ankle. We all got out, and as I ran by, I could see the gasoline coming right out of the ripped tank on the right wing side. And just two feet away from it was this real hot engine manifold, but there was no fire. The British came running up; they were the tower people and they had a jeep that they had hooked up as a fire truck. It had a lot of hose on it and they squirted that engine and foamed it. I ran a little ways and I came across one body. One leg was off. It almost looked like a ham. The head had blonde hair. Later on I found out it was a British nurse that was sitting on the truck running board tool box. I saw a Hindu head laying nearby. These are gruesome things to talk about. An arm cut off, with a wristwatch on it, but it was a woman's wristwatch. A little further on up, I saw another arm. It was gruesome!

What happened was there was a British sergeant who was a guard, standing at the runway intersection trying to stop the truck. The truck was coming down the runway at high speed. He thought he was on a highway. He struck the British guard who was trying to flag him down and broke his leg. That's the body I saw flying through the air and then the truck ran right into my right prop. By this time I was quite sick. A British brigadier came out on the field. That's equivalent to one of our one star generals. He wanted to talk to the pilot of the airplane. It was me and I started answering his questions and he said, "Well, we'll set an inquest up tomorrow afternoon." He gave me the name of a house on Seven Mile Road on something. It was way on out. It was in a wealthy area of Rangoon. So, I was feeling at this time pretty despondent. Naturally anybody would.

A fellow in a green flying suit, well they were actually fatigued came up and I looked down and there was a full colonel and I saw his name patch, Smith, and he was wearing pilot's wings. He said, "Where's the pilot of this 'goonie bird'?" And I said, "Right here, sir." He came over and stuck his hand out and he said, "I'm Colonel Smith. I'm the Theater Commander for communications. I was in that B-25. I remarked to my co-pilot what a beautiful landing you made. I saw that truck coming. I saw your actions, you did everything I would have done." He said, "Write down this." He gave me his outfit where

he could be reached. I said, "I certainly would appreciate if you could leave that message with the tower officer here because they're going to have an inquest tomorrow." He said, "They are?" I replied, "Yes sir." He said, "Well, better yet, we'll just hang around awhile." So in the meantime the liaison person for the unit I was hauling this material, arrived. He drove off, got to a radio and they, within an hour, brought up a sedan automobile with an American sergeant who could type, a photographer and one of their demolition experts to see what they could recover. We got statements from the tower control officer. We went to the hospital, a little field hospital, and got a statement from that sergeant. Colonel Smith gave us a statement right away. I got statements from anybody that was involved, including my crew. The next day, at the inquest, they called us each in separately. I was the last one in. The British brigadier said, "Lieutenant, we have made a determination that it was not your fault. You're completely exonerated." Naturally, I was relieved! I had to fly back to Calcutta as a passenger, then back to Anansol as a passenger. It was a terrible thing. I got all kinds of pictures of that accident, of the situation. But you never know when something like that's going to happen. I was very fortunate. I expected that airplane to blow up any second. That was one experience. I could name lots of them.

SA: Is there anything else we should know about the China-Burma Theater?

CA: Well, it was harder to get a can of paint or a spare tire than it was a new airplane in the latter part of the war. The supply situation was such that we were having tires blow out because they were being vulcanized and repatched by Indian labor. I had a friend that was going down a runway and I watched him just reach about seventy miles an hour, tire blew and he lost control and went off the runway into the ditch. There was a big cloud of dust and when all was settled, that airplane was scrapped all because of one tire. Yet back on the docks at Calcutta, they had hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of new tires, stocked and piled.

We had an old B-25 in our outfit that we used as a liaison airplane towards the end of the war. One of my friends told me later that they had brand new B-25's, H-models, that they were breaking apart, chopping up down in Bangalore, India. He took this one down to try to trade; it was a B-model, which would have been a very

early model. They wouldn't give him a new one. He had to stay with the old one. One day they were taking mail in it somewhere, and it lost an engine. They had a crash landing. These were strange things. It was easier, in fact, Chennault used to say this, "It was easier for him to get a brand new airplane than a pint or quart of paint to paint his insignia on in China."

We had some very famous people come out of that theater, LeMay was in that theater, and so was McNamara. McNamara was a major when I was a lieutenant. One of my roommates in the infantry was Melvin Douglas when he was a private. Due to someone accusing him of belonging to a subversive organization that he paid dues to when he was in the Motion Picture Guild, they wouldn't give him a commission; but then he got himself cleared and when I arrived back from China one day, I walked into the officer's club to eat; there sat Melvin Douglas! I walked over and he knew me immediately, which made me a hero with my buddies. He was a major. He was theater commander for all of the Special Services, (recreational activities.)

It was an important theater of war, but it was a forgotten theater of war. Bob Hope never got there to entertain us, though Pat O'Brien came over. It was a very hard theater of war with regard to keeping up with laundry. I lived in one flying suit for three straight months. That's all we had. At nighttime we'd take a bucket and drain some gasoline out of the bottom wing sump of the airplane. We used to sleep in our airplanes a lot, on a lot of our missions. Well, you'd be here one day and three days later we'd move 200 miles further into China as we kept pushing the Japanese back, we'd keep advancing. We had a permanent base back in India. I used to fly around with a couple thousand dollars in my pocket. I'd crave a cigar and there were no cigars to be had. So it taught me something; money's nothing. Money is not worth a thing when you don't have a commodity to buy. We used to do a lot of poker playing.

SA: What was the biggest pot you ever won?

CA: Oh, probably \$1,500., \$1,800. at Black Jack.

SA: What was the biggest you ever lost?

CA: Probably \$1,500., \$1,800. (Laughter) That was the only way you could kill your time. You'd write you wife a letter. You were always out there in the boondocks so far away. If you ever got into Calcutta everything was off limits and you didn't want any part of that anyway.



So consequently, you saw the area from the air. I buzzed every pagoda. I got into places like Mandalay. I used to take off once in awhile on a side mission and try to find eggs and strawberries. I landed on this one road there in China one time, not too far from Burma.

SA: What were you flying?

CA: DC-3's, (C-47's.)

SA: Okay, you just put this down on the road?

CA: Put it down on the road. If there was a cow patch down there, I'd put it down on the cow patch. We had a squadron fund. All the officers would put, I think it was only something like a dollar and a half or two dollars a month. And once in awhile we'd go out and try to find eggs or something other than those damn canned rations we used to have. We used to eat what they called a ten and one ration. So this one day I took off to the north, up through this little valley, and zigzagged and saw this town and landed rather reasonably close. You didn't have to worry about going to the people, because something like that would attract the people to you. I knew very little Chinese, but I flashed monies and I flashed some other things like salt. Salt was a very rare commodity for those people. And a lot of them had goiters as a result of it. And they'd come bringing their vegetables and wares. Boy, this one guy had one great big ox cart full of strawberries. We wheeled and dealed and took every strawberry that he had. Chickens, they had more chickens in China than they had in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania used to be the biggest chicken raiser in the world. Eggs, I'd take a whole planeload of eggs back. I just let the cook and mess sergeant worry about what he was going to do with them, but we got them! Boy, we would have omelets! You ate eggs in every menu. One time I stole a load of Australian beef from a British outfit. I was hauling all day long. So, I figured we ought to have a couple crates of that frozen beef. I almost got court-martialed for it, but I was quite a hero with my men.

SA: How did you get out of the court-martial?

CA: Just common sense. I turned to this major and I said, "Now tell me something, did you eat any of that steak?" He said, "Yes, I ate it." "Did you like it?" "Sure I liked it!" "Then what the hell are you giving me hell

for! I was hauling 110 cases each load and we took five cases. So is there anything too wrong with that?" "Well, I guess our boys are worth the effort." He said, "I could court-martial you for this, you know that." I said, "I know it. Go ahead, go ahead, court-martial me for it." "Awe," he said, "We'll let you go."

SA: Did you run into any of the feeling in terms of who supported Chiang Kai-Shek as opposed to Mae Tse-tung?

CA: In the latter part of the war when I came home, later on one of my friends Colonel Al Kaufman was the SQ operations officer. Al was telling me that the communists were then starting to show their true colors. He was way up in Northern China and this one particular night they had a couple of aircraft burned by communists. Another night the company clerk heard a rip in the canvass. He turned around and he saw a hand reaching for his carbine and he went over and kicked it and took the carbine and then shot through the tent and killed this Chinese. This caused quite a bit of trouble. I guess the equivalent of the mayor of the village had to be bought off, but it was starting to show up then.

SA: Did we fly supplies into Chiang Kai-Shek and Mao Tse-tung?

CA: Most of our supplies were for Chiang Kai-Shek to my knowledge. Anything that may have filtered over, I don't have that knowledge.

SA: Were you aware of any of the controversies between Chiang Kai-Shek and our government?

CA: At that time, no. There was no way we could keep up with it because if I saw a newspaper it would be five, six months old. Occasionally, if we got the mail run into Calcutta, you read what the British would want printed anyway. We had one newspaper called the C-B-I Roundup, which was equivalent to the Stars and Stripes. That would get distributed, but normally it showed the fronts. It showed a map of the war and so forth.

SA: Did you ever run into any propaganda from the enemy asking you to surrender or anything like that?

CA: Oh, I flew the Hump one day and heard my name called out by Tokyo Rose on the radio.

SA: And what did she say?

CA: She said, "Lieutenant Amedia, you live in Girard."

She said, "Gee-ard, Ohio. We want you to know that your family is all right now, but anything can happen." That's all she said. She was trying to plant something in my mind. My wife was working as a nurse at the time. I wasn't too much concerned about the Japanese getting to my family.

SA: How do you suppose she got hold of your name?

CA: Probably picked it up from a set of orders. There were always flight orders cut, leave orders, etc. Occasionally they would give a period for rest. And you could go into a place called Srinagar which was over in the Pakistani area. There were other fields like Sylet and up in the mountains where they had these old resorts. There you had to get orders to get through and I'm sure that they had spies infiltrated in the headquarters down at what was then known as Hasting Mills. This was a great big old factory that the United States took over in Calcutta and which became our headquarters for the whole theater. They had spies here and occasionally, I'm sure that there was a piece of paper that showed pilots' names and so forth. And her broadcast would just pick names at random and say these things.

SA: Now, were you aware of these spies at the time or is this something you . . .

CA: No, I was never aware of any. We were very cautious, those of us who were close to the front, we were always cautious. On one trip near the front, here comes a guy in a British uniform, but he's Burmese and he wants a ride back to Calcutta. It was on a mission down in the Meiktila area. It was pretty hot down there. I mean, when I say hot, there were mortars and ground fire! The Japanese had half of the strip captured for three days and we're landing on the other half. Parallel runways which were nothing more than cow pastures with tracks made back and forth. They were dirt. I hauled a lot of ammunition. We actually helped unload there. We were unloading grenades and ammunition for the British and the Indians who were part of the British Army. Then they would throw wounded on our airplanes and I noticed this one guy, he didn't fit the picture at all. He wasn't dirty. He wasn't scarred up, no blood, no bandages. He came aboard, so we buttoned up the door. We got airborne and this particular day, I did have a co-pilot, but "Pudgy" wasn't here! I put it on automatic pilot and told him I was going to the back a minute. I went back and I'm looking all these wounded over and I came back to this guy. And of course, I always had a

.45 caliber in a holster right under my armpit, exposed. This particular day, I'm looking around and something told me about this guy looked phoney. I walked up to him and I looked at him. I said, "Chinese?" He went like this, waving no. I said, "Burmese?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Credentials?" So he opened up his flap pocket. He had a bush jacket on. And he took out some papers. Of course, I wasn't too familiar with Burmese credentials, and I couldn't read Burmese. So I smiled. I put my hand out and shook it. Took his confidence so that he thought everything was all right. Prior to landing at Imphal, our destination base, I got on the radio and in code, which they deciphered, told them, "Possible spy on board." So I exercised caution, upon unloading. They were pretty sharp. They let everybody get out. This guy got out but I'm three quarters of the way out, ahead of everybody else when I spotted the British Intelligence people that were to meet me. I told them which guy I thought it was. They ran right over there and grabbed him. And later on I found out that he was a spy. He was trying to work his way back into India. But those things happen.

SA: All right, do you want to tell me then what happened?

CA: Well, I got orders then: I had the orders. I took a boat ride home that took thirty days down through Ceylon on a little C-2 carrier type ship called the SS Sirocco. I had a very pleasant journey back to New York. I passed through Youngstown on out to Indiana where I was processed and then back to Youngstown for 45 days leave. Following that I proceeded to Greensboro, North Carolina where I was given the choice of either staying in or coming out. I decided I'd come out of the service. Incidentally, I was offered, while I was overseas, the opportunity to become a Captain if I stayed three more weeks. I said, "I want my orders: send me home." After that accident, I just felt I was stretching my luck a little bit. Your odds of coming back, probably were one out of four. So I figured why stretch my luck. Anyway I got into a Reserve program, flew AT-6's. One of my instructors was, now, General David Jones, who's the Joint Chief of Staff. He was in the National Guard, incidentally. We flew AT-6's. That's all we had there at the end of the war. Then I get into the C-46 program, down at Pittsburg and later was assigned to a VARTU-- Volunteer Air Reserve Training Unit--taking summer tours, mostly at Mitchell Field, New York. When Youngstown Reserve Center opened at the airport, I became one of the pioneers out there and worked my way up to Squadron

Commander and then later Deputy Group Commander. I got too much rank, when I made Full Colonel. I ended up my career by going down to Air Force Systems Command, in Washington, D.C. where I had a worldwide assignment, as comptroller for Headquarter Air Force System Command. I was the Reserve Comptroller. Back in 1966, I was chosen, given the honor of going on an overseas staff visit of NATO, [North Atlantic Treaty Organization]. This was by direct orders, by invitation of the Air Force Chief of Staff. I was one of seventeen officers from around the country. The gentleman who was going to be in charge of us for this tour was also selected, Brigadier General Frederick Wengar, who was with the Ohio Air National Guard; the rest of the people came from all over the country. Twin Falls, Idaho, Portland, Oregon, Omaha, SAC, [Strategic Air Command], Alabama National Guard, etc. We were given the requirement of having all of our shots. Naturally being a combat ready pilot, I was always combat ready for all shots worldwide.

Our itinerary called for us to go to Washington for a briefing. From Washington, we went by commercial air up to New York. Incidentally that commercial flight out of New York to Paris was the 25th anniversary crossing of TWA crossing the Atlantic. They rolled out a red carpet for us. I've got a complete slide presentation that shows this. When we got to Paris we found out that things were rather shaky with the French and at that time NATO headquarters was in Paris. They had a beautiful headquarters building with all of the NATO units. Our itinerary called for briefings at the Headquarters United States European Command called EUCOM, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers called SHAPE, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, naturally NATO. We left from Paris and flew direct to Wiesbaden. There we visited our headquarters of the United States Air Force in Europe and we received a complete briefing. Many things were classified as top secret and to this day I still can't talk about some of these items which we were briefed on. We then left Wiesbaden by auto for Ramstein Air Force Base. There we visited the Seventeenth Air Force and the Fourth Allied Tactical Air Force, which were operational units in the Ramstein area. Then we departed for Berlin and spent two days of briefings in the tour of West Berlin and East Berlin. We left East Berlin for a Canadian base in Germany. From there we flew on down to Chateauroux in France to the 322nd Air Division and then into England. We reported in at London and from London we left for units in Southern England and Northern England. It was a very good inspection tour. We asked an awful lot

of questions.

I came back very satisfied that NATO was doing a tremendous job with what they had in Europe. I think they are a very effective deterrent of keeping Russia from attacking. Bear in mind this was 1966, the Berlin Wall sprung up in 1961, so it was shortly after that. So here we are now in 1980, and the Berlin Wall is still there. We toured that wall. I had a very excellent tour on Lincoln's Birthday of 1966 of the complete area of West Berlin and we flew the wall in a helicopter. I got some beautiful slides. I've got pictures of the old burned out buildings from very low level.

I'd like to talk to you about what I saw in Germany, my impressions. I saw divided people. Some were active, cheerful and healthy and others looked very sad and sick to me. I saw the city of Berlin as an isolated island, surrounded by a sea of Communism, which is actually what it is when you study the history of what brought about the East-West situation, separating West Berlin from East Berlin. I saw that wall. I stood on that wall on a platform in West Berlin looking over the wall into East Berlin. And I could honestly say, my heart ached for those German people. For there was an obstacle that restricted the freedom of many Germans to communicate with their families and friends. Today, there's two distinct Germanys. There is East Germany and West Germany. And the people live in two distinct worlds because of a lousy wall eight feet high which zigzags for about twenty miles through streets, buildings and even homes. In West Berlin I saw a very modern, productive city of color, gaiety, lots of spirit. It greatly resembles our large, bustling, American cities with many automobiles and people hurrying about their businesses. The presence of freedom was evident everywhere in West Berlin. But as I said, on the Lincoln's Birthday, I then got to spend five and one half hours in East Berlin and I can honestly say I saw fewer than 500 people in a city of 1,100,000. And incidentally, West Berlin had a population then of about 2,200,000. And I saw less than 200 automobiles in that whole five and a half hours in East Berlin. On the faces of the people I did see, I could see signs of remorse, harassment, anxiety, fear. I saw some human beings that appeared to be walking around like robots that were fearful and spiritless. They just were afraid to even talk to you because they recognized you as an American.

In front of the Brandenburg Gate, I saw the wall and that Red Flag of Despotism and many, many places along that wall

I saw towers manned by East Berlin soldiers with machine guns, whose purpose was to stop anyone who tried to escape. At one spot I saw a shrine where a young man named Peter Fetcher was honored day in and day out with fresh flowers. This was a young East German boy who managed to swim across the canal in darkness and he got within two feet of being to freedom when the machine guns opened up and got him and killed him. He was a victim of communist tyranny, no doubt about it. And up till then, that was 1966, there had been 22,000 East Germans who had outwitted the Communists and escaped to the West. Just recently we heard where there was a balloon that they escaped in. Just every inconceivable way that you can imagine. Some of those very dramatic escapes occurred shortly after the wall was built. There were tunnels, sewers and so forth that the Russians didn't know about. People were coming through. Whole families jumped from upper stories of houses along the wall into fire nets that people on the other side put up. But that method of escape no longer exists because of the Russians' surveillance. All the houses on the border have been torn down or the windows have been filled in with masonry. By contrast you see the people of West Berlin still enjoying freedom.

I can tell you a little bit about NATO. Do you want to hear a little bit about it? Well, the organization was not simply a Military Alliance. It is a framework for broad cooperation among its member nations. Since then we've had a couple nations drop out. It was set up to form a security policy based on the inherent right to collective self-defense, which was an objective consistent with Article Fifty-One of the Charter of the United Nations. And it was through NATO that the United States and the other signatory nations seek to preserve peace and security in a joint area of interest. During the years of NATO's existence there hasn't been an acre of land lost to the Communists in Europe. Stop and think about that. Yet the Russian capabilities as we know it today, is more formidable as ever. And the year that I was there, they had 26 combat ready Soviet tank or motorized divisions in East Germany, Poland and Hungary. The Russians had about 50,000 paratroopers of which about 12,000 could be air-dropped in one operation. I've been an air-drop man. Later in the Reserve, I did an awful lot of paratroop dropping and a lot of missions. When you stop to think, dropping 12,000 paratroopers in one air-drop operation, that's an awful lot of people you put up there. Besides the number of Divisions they had there, they have better than 90 reserve, Red Divisions,

west of the Urals and another 30 in the East at the back door of Russia. Their satellites have another 60 divisions. The Russians have got an awful lot of combat potentiality. And they still maintain about 12,000 combat support type aircrafts. Their satellites could probably come up with a couple thousand more. Their Navy now has exceeded ours. At that time in 1966, they had 400 submarines, mostly World War II type. When you stop to think that in World War II, Germany only had 64 ocean going submarines. They did an awful lot of damage to our Allied fleets and we knew then in 1966 that they had hundreds of missiles located in Western Europe and they've certainly compounded that today.

But it's against this Soviet threat that NATO built that unified force that they have. That's a defensive alliance determined to preserve peace by discouraging aggression. We're hoping that it's powerful enough today to do this effectively. They have to deal with the Russians and the Communists both politically and as an economic threat. I sometimes think that the economic threat is probably greater than that of total war, although we may be physically a little safer now than during the East Berlin crisis. Do you remember the Berlin crisis? Some of our NATO representatives showed concern because it's hard for them to sell their folks back home on a need for major budgetary commitments to support their efforts.

And I might say this, at Supreme Allied Headquarters, that's at SHAPE in Europe, I was especially impressed by the singleness of purpose and confidence that was shown by the people in command there. And of course, Alexander Haig has recently been the chief. He is being replaced now. In fact, I don't even know who his replacement is. But in Europe at the time I was there we had about 250,000 troops. We've got considerably less there now. We've got a tremendous logistics situation. The strategy that's starting to arise now is bring our boys home, and just stockpile equipment and tanks in warehouses. With our airlift capability, we can have people there within a day. I don't know whether Russia could overrun our warehouses in a day or not. Personally I feel, we should continue to have soldiers there if we're going to play our part.

We flew to Berlin through a twenty-mile wide southern corridor and we passed over East German airfields on which we could see stationed Russian combat aircraft.



It's not impossible to be struck by the proximity of our forces and theirs at the same time and it's comforting to witness the reaction time of our fighters and bombers during a test alert, which I got to see quite a few of. So far as the crew knows, it could be the real thing. They don't know. They take off, they're ready to go. One bomber of ours today, can carry more destructive power than all of that dropped by all the bombers in World War II. So this becomes a threat.

When we got into East Berlin, we went in as military officers, with a military driver and unlike civilians we did not have to undergo the control of East Berlin authorities. In fact, I was challenged by a Communist soldier there and I told him to bring--I was then a lieutenant colonel--and I told him to bring a lieutenant colonel and I'd answer his challenge and I was prepared that if he brought the Lieutenant Colonel, standing next to me was General Wenger, I was going to then say, "We want a general." In fact, we were not subject to questioning even or showing of papers except to the Russian officer who asked to see our identification papers, just as we could ask to see his.

But after a trip such as that it's hard to choose few impressions passed along in a short time; but I would surely say that the Berlin Wall would have an impact on anyone who would see it. And it's hard to accept the existence of such a barrier and somehow even harder to fully grasp its purpose, its significance! And they say that occasionally they'll hear shots in the night and nobody ever learns the story behind them, but there's lots of propaganda purposes of the wall. It seems to have backfired on the Russians and they keep it there. Strange thing though, I saw people going from East to West and West to East through gates at different areas. And at Check Point Charlie the one we went through, they have it set up as a maze type affair, it's not a straight pass. And the reason for it is, I guess, they've had sport cars actually go screaming through there 80, 90 miles an hour. So now they got the brick wall serpentine like so that you've got this maze that you have to transverse around. I also saw Russians looking from buildings, I saw either Americans or English looking down on the Russians coming through from the East with binoculars. So it's a game that they must be playing.

Basically it was a tremendous tour. I had some very fine slides that I made. I took an awful lot of photographs,

thirteen or fourteen rolls of 35 exposures each, and weeded them all out. The Kaiser-Wilhelm Church in East Berlin got an awful lot of our attention. All they left was the bell tower, the rest is all new. You could see the old part of the church. It was a beautiful stone cathedral. And around this they came in with this all glass octagon shaped tower, almost the height of the original entrance of the cathedral and of course the sanctuary is about a three story, all glass type building too. Very beautiful.

That's about it, if you have any questions, I'll be very glad to try to answer them.

SA: You talked about an inspection tour. What do you look for in an inspection tour? What does that mean?

CA: Well, we were trying to pick up areas of weaknesses and areas of effectiveness to see that the taxpayers' dollars were being properly guarded and spent. At the particular time, it was highly classified. The Russians know it now. There's an awful lot of nuclear arms in Western Germany and Europe. The Russians know this.

SA: The city, has more rebuilding been done on our side as opposed to the Russian's side?

CA: Yes and no. There's areas there that the Russians will not let the East German people forget that they were in a war. For instance, between East and West Berlin I just saw field after field of rubble. I couldn't get over that and then as we drove on through, we actually went past, they would not let us stop in the East German sector, Hitler's tomb. That is where he reportedly died. It's a mound. Through the steam windows, I was able to take two quick pictures. It was Hitler's bunker where he actually is supposed to have died. They won't let them forget about that either. But as you go up and down that wall you certainly see an awful lot of bombed out buildings that still remain like the old Opera House. And I'd be able to show you as interviewer the various pictures that I have. Some are very impressive.

SA: You said that they didn't let the German people forget what happened. Did you get a feeling of animosity between the Russian soldier and the German people?

CA: Yes, I could see that. For instance, an experience we had with an old woman. I walked into a butcher shop and I was surprised at how clean this butcher shop was and you could smell the meat. And looking in the showcase,

all you could see was a hog's head and the fat cuts of the meats and none of the good cuts. The good cuts weren't just there. And as I walked out, there was an old woman carrying a shopping bag and she looked up at me and she could tell I was American by my uniform. She said, "Americana?" And I said, "Americana, Luftwaffe." Meaning, I'm an American pilot. And she looked at me and she said, "Americana good, Americana good." There was a fellow standing there looking in this window, smoking a cigarette and I knew he was a surveillance man because he had been following us. He just turned and gave her the dirtiest look. I, at that time was in my civilian capacity, director of the Youngstown Metropolitan Housing Authority and I was actually interested in looking to see what the German housing was like after the war. And I walked in off of the main street. The main street there incidentally, is Karl Marx's Alley. It used to be called Stalin Alley and then they changed it to Lenin Alley. It's a big wide, beautiful boulevard. The sidewalks must be fifteen to eighteen feet wide. I have pictures taken at two o'clock in the afternoon where you can only count eight people the entire length of that street on that one side. You just wonder where the people are; they don't come out. They just stay hidden in.

I walked back into this one alley to this housing court and there was a little foreign car there. It wasn't a Volkswagan, though, it was more like a Fiat. It was a pre-World War II type car and there were two little kids playing there. Naturally the American soldiers always have chewing gum. I had a couple packs of chewing gum. I opened up this chewing gum. These kids were actually afraid to come over. So I took a stick out and threw it at them. One kid looked at it. He peeled it and he put it in his mouth and then they came running over and I gave them the pack. And I didn't ask them any questions because I didn't want to get them in trouble, but you could tell that they were scared. General Wenger and I, we went charging around. We weren't afraid to walk through because they respect rank for some reason or another. And he had the rank. Then I was a lieutenant colonel and he was a general. Maybe we were going to start an international incident or not?

Speaking of international incidents, I mentioned gates, where various people came through, East to West and visa-versa. At one time there were two guards standing with a machine gun and one of our men got close and he began taking pictures and apparently he got a little too close. I thought something was going to happen because this one

guard ran and he immediately came back. I thought, "Oh my God, we're going to have an international incident here." And lo and behold, what he had was a movie camera and he started taking moving camera pictures of us. So again it was a cat and mouse thing. I've got oodles and oodles of things I could talk to you about.

SA: Okay, do you want to explain some of the pictures and get the explanation on?

CA: Well, this picture right here, shows General Montgomery, who was Chief of Air Staff at Wiesbaden at this particular time. And what impressed me about this picture more than anything was when we arrived we were told to take our overcoats off. We did. We left them inside a vestibule. We immediately walked out to a set of steps in a foyer and we lined up. As you can see there we lined up according to protocol with the tall good-looking general in the middle. This is General Wenger. These are full colonels down through here. These are lieutenant colonels up here. He said, "We're going to pose for a picture." A cameraman snapped our picture. "All right, gentlemen, follow me to our briefing room." We walked through the entry out of this foyer, up a set of steps, down a hall, into a large briefing room. He said, "Gentlemen, take your chairs." We sat in our chairs. The lights went out and on the screen appeared this picture that was just taken. No more than, I'd say a minute and a half elapsed from the time we left to the time we sat down and that thing flashed on. He said, "We believe in doing things in a hurry." And he certainly did.

This is a picture of me in a Phantom jet. The Phantom was rather brand new then. I was getting a full explanation from this young captain. And incidentally I was the only qualified pilot in this total group that went overseas. I was still on combat ready status. So, anytime there was a weapon system or something that involved aircraft and flying, I got high priority into seeing it.

Here you see what was then the Seventeenth Air Force at Ramstein Air Force Base. They were flying then the F-100. This was a North American Aviation, Pratt and Whitney with a J-57 afterburner. It was armed with four M-39, twenty-millimeter cannons and could carry bombs externally. It was a very good airplane for close air support of ground forces. It had a forward thrust of 10,000 pounds or more. Here, I am with the representative of NATO of the top attache to NATO from the French

government in Paris, Mr. Jose de Faria.

SA: Can you spell his last name please?

CA: Yes, I'll spell his last name and I'll spell his first name. J-O-S-E d-e F-A-R-I-A. He was from Portugal, but assigned to NATO. This is a picture of a group of us in front of SHAPE. This is a picture of me standing in front of the wall. And this is an interesting story about this one, just, you see; they hadn't blocked this wall window in yet. This side of the wall is West Germany that I'm standing on. On the other side of the wall is East Germany. So this original window was in East Germany. And a whole family escaped on Christmas Day by coming through this building and climbing down that wall, that second story wall. Almost looks like a bank building, doesn't it or one of our corner bars?

The SHAPE insignia, that's Supreme Headquarters of Allied Powers of Europe, I could briefly describe to you. It's two gold swords, unsheathed, superimposed on a gold scroll. There is the inscription, and I'm not good in Latin, "Vigilia Pretium Libertatis, vigilance is the price of liberty." Two sprays of olive leaves in gold at the bottom of the scroll indicate dedication of the NATO powers to peace while the swords themselves indicate the necessity of arm strength in order to preserve that peace. The positions of the swords produce the letter "A" standing for Allied Powers and within the scroll and behind the swords twelve silver fronds stem from the olive sprays. And these fronds represent the original signatories of the North Atlantic Treaty and produce by their position, rays of hope. The whole design is imposed on a shield of dark green. The shield itself, representing the crusading nature of SHAPE's mission and it's color signifying the peaceful woods in the fields of Europe. That's rather interesting, isn't it?

SA: Yes.

CA: A lot of work and thought probably went into that. This was one of the aircraft that we got to fly around in, the C-124. I'm standing here with a group of officers. The rest are fighter pictures of the various fighter aircraft.

SA: Okay, were these fighter aircrafts and things, you were looking in terms of . . .

CA: Yes, this was the B-66, the RB-66 called the Destroyer, nickname. It too was at Ramstein. The mission was an electronic reconnaissance ferreting out and analyzing

hostile electronic signals both radar and communications airborne. This aircraft was first flown in 1954, carried a crew of seven men in its mission. That's one of the jets they used to start with a shotgun shell. They put a shotgun shell in it to start the engine.

SA: Really?

CA: One of the early ways they used to start jet engines.

SA: What happens if you lost an engine in flight, then you couldn't start it. Is that right?

CA: I believe so. If you lost that engine in flight, you had no way of restarting that one. I used to fly jets; I was flying jets here at Youngstown back in the early days, 1957, the T-33. If you had a flame-out (that's what you call a jet engine going out), if you had a flame-out, you had to dive it and pick up better than 300 knots and go into an abrupt steep climb immediately to drain out of the stack, any fuel that would be pumping in. Then you had a cook switch. You'd hit the cook switch, you'd put a very high voltage into one spark plug and you'd hear a slight explosion and if it caught, your fire started again in your tail and you were all right; if it didn't then you had to make a decision! You either bailed out or went in dead-stick.

SA: You mentioned that when you got to Paris, things were a little shaky, what did you mean by that?

CA: Well, if you recall, Paris made NATO move to Brussels. Back in the early stages of the war after it was rather apparent that we were going to whip the Nazis, the big question came up as to the occupation of Europe and who's going to do what. And in Franklin D. Roosevelt we truly had a great leader. It's too bad that the man was so sick at the end of his career. But he kept his finger on things and we were the great Allies; we bailed Britain out and basically the French saw the handwriting on the wall so they jumped in and then of course along came the Russians fighting the Eastern Front. We really didn't even need them to help us end the Japanese war. They knew it, but they were going to get into it! But the big thing was that there were several conferences held. Some in Canada and later on at the very end, Potsdam, [Germany] but the decision was made. The decision was made on which way Europe was going to be divided up with regards to the division of Germany. And the division lines were made, well before the war ended. And on this map here, as you can easily see, the division

of Germany is well to the west of the city of Berlin which is only maybe 60 miles from the Poland boarder. It was decided that this would be the dividing line, down the Elbe River from the north through Büchen and then on down to Rùhen with a zigzag line, on over towards the Hanover region. I'm not very good at pronouncing German names, but down near Kassel and Nuremburg and München, and then it swung on up to Probstzella and then into Topen and on over again to the Elbe River to the south and east. They decided that there would be three corridors. Well, the big question came up, "What do we do with Berlin?" So it was determined that Berlin would be an open city! However, they drew a line down through Berlin and divided it up into four sectors. The south sector would be the American sector, the western sector would be the French and the northwestern sector, the English and everything to the east would be the Russian. So consequently your city has four different forces in it. And that's where East Berlin comes into effect. When this line was drawn, as you see this map, it's probably the most irregular line you'd ever want to see. In dividing this, certainly they must have taken into consideration, canals, the transportation routes, railroads and I'm sure factories entered into it because you see some portions of factories taken and other portions not. The wall goes right through it.

And Russia was really hurting. They had no raw goods left, no hardware left. Everything was bombed out, burned out by the Germans so consequently to the victors goes the spoils and they went into East Berlin and they took anything they could take--doorknobs, mailboxes, lamp posts, anything, lathes, whatever equipment they could remove and take back to Russia. And they moved it while we got our boys home right away! This was the philosophy that we had. But you could see by this wall, how it zigzags. The burned out Reichstag, I've got a photograph that I took from fifty feet of altitude in a helicopter, probably the best picture of the Reichstag burned out that you'd ever want to see. To this day, the Russians still leave that there, as a memory of Hitler. The opera station or the opera house in Berlin still stands all bombed out. The main railroad station, just one wall standing, the clock is there, everything else bombed out. They won't allow them to touch it. The rubble is still there. They want to remind those people of war. Maybe it's a good idea, and maybe it isn't, I don't know, but it still stands!

SA: You said you also wanted to take a look at the housing. How did you find the housing?

CA: The new housing that they have is strictly stereotyped; it all looks alike. The buildings were big; huge, five, six, seven stories high, sloped roofs. You could see gun towers on some of the roofs of some of their housing. I've got pictures of one building that all of the wooden scaffolding was rotting on it. I don't know why, somebody stopped it from going up. The wood scaffolding was just absolutely rotted on it.

Tempelhof Airport is worth a visit by anyone. This is a great big airport. I stood and faced the center of it, did a ninety degree turn to my left, took one picture, then turned to the center, ninety degrees, took that picture and then ninety degrees to the right. And I have this great, big huge arc. It was built and shaped like an eagle. Actually when we arrived, we taxied our airplane right inside of it. It had not been bombed. There was an aircraft factory in the basement of it. They were making, I think it was, JU-188's.

SA: Did you go down into the basement?

CA: No, we didn't get to the basement. But, this gives you an idea now, this is all Russian to the south and you could see the restricted area all the way around it.

Here's a good picture. I was telling you about Karl Marx Alley. Here's a good picture of it right there. You see nothing. You see a few buses and a few trucks. This is the Brandenburg Gate and it shows some of the wall. . . And this little building in the front of it is where President Kennedy stood there before 1,000,000 Germans and made that famous speech. And there are signs all over the place, "You are leaving the American sector." And of course these are in various languages.

What I'm showing you here is a newspaper reporter's account. We had one reporter go over with us. He wrote quite a bit of what I told you transpired. This is a pretty good map showing the European situation with East Germany and Western Germany and how the three air corridors are located. The corridors start at 10,000 feet or above. They can't restrict us from it. We can't fly below 10,000 feet into the three corridors.

END OF INTERVIEW