

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

YSU VETERANS PROJECT

World War II Veteran

O. H. 134

ALFRED W. TELL

Interviewed

by

Steven R. Ard

on

May 24, 1980

ALFRED W. TELL

Alfred William Tell was born on July 1, 1917, in Youngstown, Ohio, to Ralph and Ellen Tell. He grew up on the north side of Youngstown, graduating from Rayen High School in 1936. He worked for about a year at the Republic Steel Company before entering Ohio State University as a pre-med student. Many of his relatives were already in the medical profession.

The draft curtailed his studies but he was given a deferment when he began flight training for the Army Air Corps in New Jersey. He joined the Air Corps in 1942 in New York. Later, he volunteered for the glider program for troop transport. His military service took him to many spots in the United States, Europe and Northern Africa. During his enlistment, Mr. Tell earned the EAME ribbon which is equivalent to ten Bronze Stars, a Bronze Arrowhead, a Distinguished Unit Badge, and an Air Medal. He was honorably discharged in May of 1945.

Returning to Ohio State, Tell received his B.A. in 1948 and his B.S. as a pharmacist in 1951. He worked for the Gray Drug Stores from 1951 to 1955. Next, he was employed by the Paar Drug Company of Hubbard, Ohio from 1955 to 1966. Mr. Tell has operated his own pharmacy in Hubbard since 1966

Today Tell and his wife Henrietta reside in Poland, Ohio and attend the Holy Family Church. They have two

grown daughters Michele and Jacquelyn. His special interests are golf, reading and wood working.

Steven Ard

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SUBJECT: World War II

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A: This is an interview with Alfred W. Tell at 6737 Katahdin Drive in Poland for the Youngstown State University World War II Veterans Project by Steven R. Ard on May 24, 1980. The time is approximately 12:10 p.m.

Okay, do you want to tell me when you were born?

T: Yes. I was born July 1, 1917. I was born in Youngstown, Ohio. I spent the major part of my life on the north side of Youngstown. I went through Parmalee Grade School, Hayes Junior High School, graduated from Rayen High School in January of 1936. This was just about at the end of the Depression. And about in June of that year, I finally found myself a job at the Republic Steel Corporation and I worked there for about a year. I then went to Ohio State University, and I entered into a pre-medical course there.

Actually, I came from a family that was unique in this respect: I had three uncles who were doctors. I had a sister who was a nurse. And this one uncle of mine had graduated from Cornell University as a mechanical engineer and he felt that the best training that any aspiring physician could get was a background in engineering. So, I was taking an engineering course as a pre-med course, although I had no aptitude at all for mathematics.

Well, anyway I was in that up until I left to go to New Jersey after the draft had been inaugurated. And I was

deferred because supposedly, I was getting training which would equip me better to get into the Air Corps. So for better than a year, I flew out in New Jersey, the Trenton Central Airport out there. I acquired a private pilot's license and I was working on a commercial license when war was declared.

Then I went up, I think it was in February, I went up to Whitehall Street in New York City and joined the Air Corps. And I was stationed at Mitchell Field, Long Island up until the time the glider program was inaugurated. I volunteered for that. So they made me a Staff Sergeant and sent me out to Antigo, Wisconsin, where I got my primary training in light airplanes. We were sent from there down to Columbus, Ohio where they had just completed an airfield. We got our first training in light gliders there. After we had gotten our training in light gliders there, we went down to Stuttgart, Arkansas where we were initiated into the CG-4A, that's a cargo glider that they used during World War II to transport troops and jeeps and field pieces. And then we were shipped down to Texas and from Texas we took a train to Rhode Island. We got a boat out of there.

It was December 21, 1942 that we took off and we were on the ocean for 42 days. We were on a ship called the Mariposa, which had been on the Hawaiian run. It had been a luxury cruiser on the Hawaiian run there before the war. And we went overseas unescorted. For days we would go around in circles out in the South Atlantic. We, as I say were on the ocean for 42 days. We went down around the Cape of Good Hope and up the east coast of Africa, and into the Red Sea and we landed in Egypt. Then we were in Egypt for, oh, I'd say, six months or better. And we followed Rommel right across the desert. We were in Tunisia and Algiers and then we took a boat from Algiers. . . well, I'll say this, first of all, part of my outfit took part in the invasion of Sicily.

At that particular time I happened to be in the Algiers on other business. So really, I didn't know anything about the invasion of Sicily until I got back to my base and as I say, part of my outfit did take part in the invasion of Sicily.

After they had invaded Sicily we flew up to Sicily at a place called Ponta Olivia, and it had an airfield there. In Sicily we were there for about five or six months. Of course we were with a troop-carrying outfit, 316th troop-carrier. So naturally we carried supplies into Italy.

They would take us in and we'd get back to the base within just a few hours after we had done our job. Of course by that time, we glider pilots were also acting as copilots in the C-47 troop-carrier plane.

We finally left Sicily, took a boat down to Algiers, and from Algiers we went to England. I was stationed at a place called Oakham in England which was an old British base and it also had an airfield. We were there for quite awhile, better than a year. And of course, we were in an area where you had an awful lot of entertainment. Nottingham, and I remember the names of the towns, Nottingham, Leicester and then there was a . . . of course we'd get up to London frequently and we had no problem getting rooms up in London because at that time the buzz bombs were coming over. Of course at the hotels, why they'd always put you on the top floor. (Laughter) You'd hear these buzz bombs come over, you'd hear them cut out. They would cut out and then their engine would come back on. They'd cut out again, come back on and then the third time it would cut out you'd hear a deep silence and all of a sudden a great big explosion. Of course you never knew just where they were going to fall. That made them very interesting.

A: Did any of them hit close to where you were?

T: Very, very close. Yes. They were hitting all over. I say it was close when it was within a block or so from where I was. Of course if you'd happen to be with a girl, she'd insist upon you going into a shelter, but actually a direct hit with one of those bombs, would have obliterated the shelter anyways.

A: What kind of a size building would they knock down?
How much area did they knock down?

T: A city block.

A: A whole city block?

T: Oh, yea. They were really, I kid you not. To me, not only were they terrifying, but they were fascinating too. Any mind that could have thought up something like that must have been out of this world. They also had their V-8. I guess they called it the V-8. These were the ones that really went up into the atmosphere. That was a rocket, the precursor to the rockets that they used to take our men to the moon now. But these rockets, they

went up into the atmosphere and you didn't even hear those coming. The only time you knew that they were there was when they hit. They were not only sending those over, but they were sending these other, V-8's, I believed they called the buzz bombs. They had a motor on them.

But actually at that time as I recall, the members of the RAF, Royal Air Force would take off in their Spitfires and they would actually go up and by nudging with their wings turn these rockets back out into the ocean or back toward Germany. I don't believe that they had enough fuel to get back to Germany, but actually they would turn them off their course by nudging with their wings.

A: Bumping them?

T: Yes. But of course many of them got through. And it was really a very, very terrifying thing. And the people of England, their courage, you had to commend them for it. I mean you couldn't see how any people could have lived through a period like that, under such pressures. Never knowing when they were going to breathe their last. But it was really something.

A: Did you ever hear of how much explosive those rockets or buzz bombs carried? Was there ever talk about that?

T: No, no, I didn't. I imagine though that there is much literature about them. Probably any World Book or any of our literature could tell us that. As I say, I might have known at one time but over the years your memory of these things becomes sort of fuzzy.

Well anyway, we were in England there for awhile. And they were thinking of sending my group down to . . . well, in on the invasion of Normandy. So they sent us down to a place which I don't recall the name of it, in order to be checked out in British gliders. Now their gliders were made of plywood. They called them Horsa gliders. And, boy, when they hit the ground, when they crashed, they were just like match boxes. But our gliders, were of course, made of tubular aluminum and we had fabric covering the body of the plane, and so, you had more protection in our gliders than you did in the Horsa gliders. But anyway, we checked out in the Horsa gliders and we had gotten so far along the way that actually we were on the line waiting for the takeoff to be towed into Normandy. Now this happened, not once, but about three

times that I can remember. We were on the line waiting to be towed off for the invasion of Normandy and each time the mission was called off.

A: When you got there what were you supposed to do?

T: We were supposed to land troops.

A: How many troops could you carry in one of these things?

T: As I recall in the Horsa glider it was around thirty men.

A: Okay, now, when we are speaking of gliders, we're speaking of a plane without an engine, right?

T: That's right.

A: And it could haul thirty men?

T: Yes.

A: Okay.

T: See these are towed by transport planes. You have a long nylon rope which was attached to the glider. And not only could it carry men, but it also could carry fieldpieces too.

A: How large were these?

T: I would say they were about the size of, have you ever seen the C-47?

A: Yes.

T: It would be about that size. Maybe just a little shorter, not much.

A: What was the idea of using the gliders, simply so it couldn't be heard by the enemy as you came in?

T: No, probably they could hear you because you had a tow ship. The idea of the glider was you could get a lot of men down in a much, much shorter space than you could bring an airplane in. That is, you would have to have an entire runway for a transport plane to get down; however, with a glider you get down in a very, very small space.

Of course, after World War II, your helicopters performed that function, and they could come right down and that was

the whole idea of them, the use of helicopters, because you could get men right where you wanted them, pinpoint them. That was the idea behind the glider, to get a group of men down in a very, very limited space, or a fieldpiece or a jeep. And as I say, the Horsa glider couldn't get down in the space that the CG-8-4A could, that is the American glider. It just was a much larger glider than the American glider.

And another thing, they did eventually use the Horsa gliders in the invasion of Normandy. But, the Germans had prepared all the open fields there. They put stakes in the ground, that is big steel girders and whatnot. And these Horsa gliders would come in and hit those girders and just disintegrate. And as I say, they were just like match boxes. But, anyway we never did complete a mission in a Horsa glider.

We went back to our base at Oakham, and immediately began to prepare after the invasion of Normandy for the invasion of Holland. We were restricted to base. And of course, being restricted to base there was only one thing to do, and that was to play a lot of poker and a lot of craps. (Laughter) And there was many a man who went into battle wealthy and there were many who went in broke. We were restricted to field, I forget, for better than a week when we finally went on the invasion of Holland. And there were two days that I recall. The one day I sat and watched them go and the second day I went. But, it was a sight which I'll never forget. As far as you could see in a north and a south direction, you could see transport planes just towing gliders. And I mean as far as you could see. They would come in, in threes. You would have a formation of three planes and each one towing a glider. They went out the first day and then, as I recall, it was either the following day or the day after that that I went out and we were to take our group into the bridgehead. What the devil was the name? That's where you get me. I forget the names of these different places overseas.

A: That's okay. That's no problem.

T: Nijmegen, Arnhem, Eindhoven, these are a few of the towns in the Netherlands that I recall were targets for our invasion.

Well, it was just about the time, just before the Battle of the Bulge. We were to take our troops in on this side of a river. As I recall, I keep thinking of Nijmegen. Yes, Nijmegen was the place that we were supposed to go into. It was a daylight mission. We started in and they

had pinpointed the field that we were to drop off at. And going in, they hit my tow ship. And I'll never forget, the tow ship started around and I could see an orange glow in the cockpit. He started down and of course, I immediately hit my towrope release. And we started down and I had about 24 airborne troops. I believe it was the 101st Airborne we were taking in there. And for that particular mission, they had installed parachutes on the back, by the tail of our ship, with a release in the cockpit. I came in pretty steep and pretty hot and I forgot that the parachute was back there. And this copilot of mine, a fellow by the name of Kenny White from Columbus, Ohio, said, "Let's hit that parachute!" I said, "Yes. God damn, let's hit that parachute!" (Laughter) And he hit it and honest to God it was just as if somebody had thrown on a brake. The nose of the ship just dropped almost straight down and we came in and landed with no problem at all. But immediately, a group of SS troops, [Schutzstaffel] that were in a forest that was across the field started lobbing in 88's and we were pinned down for the rest of the day. Well we had landed probably in the late afternoon and from that time until dark they kept lobbing in 88's and of course as soon as it got dark we got out of there and managed to find a group of British soldiers, a camp, and we stayed with them that night and then the following morning.. .

Our mission was not to stay and fight, ours was to get troops in and then to get back to our base in order to get ready to take more in if they needed us.

So we got a truck and started back toward Amsterdam. And of course we came down this road and as I said this pocket of SS troopers, every now and then they'd cut off the road and any trucks that happened to be going through at that time, why, they would catch hell. Fortunately, we had no problem getting through. They didn't decide to cut us off at that time and we got back to Amsterdam and then we spent a day or two there waiting for transportation back to our base and we finally were picked up and taken back to our base in England. Now that was about all of the action that I saw during the war, but it was quite an experience.

Actually going in on that mission, the flak was so tremendous that you could have almost walked on it. I don't know how the hell they ever missed my glider or for that matter any of the gliders. But, all you would see would be a puff of smoke in front of you or beside you. And as I say, they got my tow ship. They were

that close. And then of course, being shot at by the Germans on the ground, that was no fun. But, it was interesting. And I think that my life in the Army, I never resented it. I tried to see as much as I could overseas. And actually after the invasion of Holland it was just a windup you might say. From there, we went over into France. And of course we were ready to make the jump over the Rhine.

A: Now by "we", you mean the U.S. Army, now this is not you?

T: Yes, the U.S. Army, my group was ready to make the invasion of Germany and the hop over the Rhine, but we were never called upon to do that. Another outfit did that. And after we had been in France for a matter of about a month or so, why we went back to England and we were sent to a staging area where we were for about a week prior to catching a boat. We caught the boat and came home. We landed at well, where is Fort Patrick Henry, it's up in Massachusetts, I guess. From there, we were sent home for a short time and then we were sent out to the coast for rehabilitation.

A: What is rehabilitation?

T: Well actually, they felt that you had been overseas and you had been subjected to all the stresses of war so they had to get you back into fighting shape. So they sent me out to Los Angeles. God, for a month out there, they just fed us the finest foods and more or less allowed us to wind down and we were wined and dined by all the local people. Always had some kind of a program going. Either a dance or a movie or banquet of some kind.

A: Now is this basically for airmen?

T: Well that was for airmen there, but I imagine that the ground troops had much the same thing when they would be brought back to the States; I imagine they would be rehabilitated in the same way. But this particular spot that I happened to be in was primarily for the Air Force.

A: Okay, can you kind of tell me about how the procedure in terms of let's say, taking off in one of these gliders? Now you said each plane actually pulled a number of gliders.

T: The planes could tow up to a total of three gliders. Now each glider was on a towrope. And this was a nylon towrope. The nylon towrope was probably, maybe an inch and a half in circumference or in diameter, I should say.

It was probably about a hundred feet long. And of course, when you had three different gliders on the same tow, you would have to have various length towropes. One would be short, one would be intermediate and one would be longer. And usually the middle one was the longer one, and you would have two which would be out. And actually when you were on a triple tow like that, the two outside men would naturally have to maintain their distance out. It's pretty hard to describe on the tape, but actually say the middle man had a straight tow, right behind the ship, but each of the other men would have to maintain an angle from that particular rope of say, about 30 degrees and I would say, 45 degrees out. And the plane would start down the runway and it had to be a long runway, because he had an awful lot of weight to take with him. His tail would come up and of course as he went down, your tail would come up as you gathered speed and then he would get off the ground and you would all more or less get off the ground together. Usually your tow would be, oh maybe up to around 1500 feet is usually the height you'd go to. And if you were on any kind of a mission or any kind of a practice mission, why, you would come in lower.

I remember when we were in Africa, actually there were nights that we'd go up and we would come in low and land on fields that weren't even lighted, come in by the reflection of the moon.

As I said, we followed Rommel across the desert and we were located in Tunisia there, on the edge of the desert. And you had two different squadrons. One would be on one side of the field and one would be on the other, that is, our tent areas would be in two different locations. And you'd have one landing strip right down the middle of the field. They would tow us up to 3,000 feet. This was a fun thing, we'd cut loose up there and then we'd start down, come screaming, from 3,000 feet you'd come in and you'd come in over that tent area at about maybe 100, 150 feet above the tent area; and actually you create such a vacuum that you could see the sides of the tents balloon as you went over them. And then you chandelle up and come around and you'd hit that runway doing maybe 125, 30 miles an hour. Just go screaming down. It was really . . . I mean if you love speed that was the thing to do. We really enjoyed it.

A: How dangerous was the takeoff itself?

T: I didn't feel the takeoff was dangerous at all.

A: Never had any problems?

T: No. The only problem that you would have, I mean the real danger would be in missing your field. That is in undershooting your field. See, you had no engine. There's no way that if you misjudged your landing, you could say, put on your power and pull yourself in. It was a matter of judging, making the right judgment, and coming in correctly. For instance, just to sight an example, when we were in Africa, we were checking out some British pilots in landing and in flying our CG-4A's, and it was at night. And what we would usually have were two British glider pilots. You'd have a pilot and a copilot, and you'd stand behind them and give them instructions. And they would take off and make a left-hand turn along the end of the field and then you'd make another left-hand turn along the side of the field and you'd come on down and at a certain spot along the way, you'd cut loose from your tow ship and then the British pilot was supposed to lay his pattern for a landing, which would consist of another left-hand turn and another left-hand turn and then come in for a landing. When he made the second left-hand turn he should be in a position where he was lined up with the runway and would be able to come in. And I'll never forget this night, this pilot was sitting there and we had cut loose from our tow ship and he kept going and going and going and I kept saying, "You'd better turn." He didn't turn. So, I said, finally, "Get the hell out of there!" (Laughter) I literally dragged him out, jumped into the pilot's seat and I racked it over and I actually came around at a 45 degree angle trying to angle my way back into the field. But actually we ran out of air and we crashed, oh, I would say about 25, 30 yards from the end of the runway. And we really wiped out that glider. And as I recall those gliders were worth around \$50,000. each.

A: Did he panic or freeze up?

T: I don't know what he was thinking about. I don't know what he was thinking about to this day, but he kept holding it out. And I kept saying, "You'd better start laying your base leg and he kept holding out." And finally I could see that he was way, way past where he should have turned. I don't know whether he just froze at the controls or what.

A: How far could you actually glide in one of those? Was there a limit?

- T: I'll tell you, it had a three to one ratio. In other words, for every three foot forward, you dropped a foot. And you couldn't glide very far at all.
- A: So in other words, without your tow plane, you were literally going down into a landing pattern immediately.
- T: That's right.
- A: When you did crash, going over and you talked about the parachute, now what exactly did this parachute do?
- T: Well, when you released the parachute it ballooned out.
- A: Behind the plane?
- T: Behind the glider.
- A: Okay, the parachute ballooned out behind?
- T: And it acted as a brake. It was a big parachute and the air caught it and it acted like a big brake. I think you've seen it on . . . Have you ever watched TV and seen these ground runs that they make, and at the end of the run these chutes open up and act as a big brake?
- A: Now were you supposed to use that every time you landed or was it just in your particular case?
- T: In this particular case. We had never had them installed on our gliders before those missions. But before the invasion that's what they did because they wanted to make sure that we got down into the space which was allotted to us.
- A: Now after down, then what did you do with the plane?
- T: The plane was expendable and also believe it or not the pilot was expendable too. Now they did and they could retrieve them. They had what they called a glider pick-up. Now a glider pick-up consisted of this: What they would do is put two poles up and they would put the tow-rope between them, that is a loop of the towrope between the two poles and a tow plane would come buzzing in and he'd probably be doing 150 miles an hour. And in this tow plane there was a big reel, and there was a hook on the end of the tow plane. And he would come in with this hook and he'd come low enough so that this hook would catch this loop of towrope. And of course the glider pilot would be sitting behind his controls. And he would

go from zero miles an hour to about 110 miles an hour in just a few seconds. And when that hook caught the tow line it would begin to pay out some towrope and then gradually this big drum would break and then they would begin pulling it in again. And of course by this time the glider would be in the air. And they could retrieve their gliders like that, but for the most part they didn't.

A: Let's go back to some of the training that you had. You had the light training in Wisconsin.

T: Yes.

A: Can you describe that to me, what did they teach you there?

T: Okay, in light training we used these, oh, let's see, what kind of a plane did we use, it was a tandem type of plane; it was a cub. You've heard of the cub airplane, practically all wing, but they had an engine. And this was at Antigo, Wisconsin. We'd go up with our instructor and we'd be flying along and all of a sudden he would cut out the engine. And we would immediately begin to pick a field and lay a pattern on that field. And of course, we would simulate an approach and a landing. And just as we were about ready to go in, why, he'd flick on the engine again, and it would lift you, and the engine would catch and we would take off again. This was what the primary glider training consisted of. I guess we spent about a month up there. Each day we'd go up and we would simulate these landings. You never knew when he was going to cut the engine and you never knew where you would be when he did cut it. And that was what made it a fun thing. You must remember, at that time, I was in my early twenties and this type of thing was a daring thing. (Laughter)

Then we went down to Columbus and that was at Lockbourne Army Air Base. They had just completed that field. And there were no heavy engine aircraft there, at that time. So they were using it as a secondary glider training spot for us. And there we got into the German Sweitzer gliders. Our training in the German Sweitzer glider amounted to this: they would take a short towrope and hook it up to a jeep and hook it to the glider and these gliders sat on the ground and they had only one wheel. That is one single wheel in the middle of the fuselage and we would be towed down the runway, and when the speed got enough, why, of course, we'd be up over the jeep and of course,

the length of one of those runways is pretty long. You go out to the Youngstown Airport here and take a look from one end of it to the other, and it's a long strip. So we would fly this glider above this jeep, maybe three-quarters of the way down that runway. And then we'd cut loose and land, at the farther end of the runway.

After we got used to doing this, then they used to tow us up to around two or 3,000 feet and cut us loose. And then we would soar around as much as we wanted. You'd go along until your wing tip would suddenly rise and you'd know that this was a thermal. It might be over a freshly plowed field or over a field of wheat or something. And once your wing would tip up, why you'd dig that wing into the thermal and start spiraling, and you could gain height. Maybe you'd go up to four or 5,000 feet, and then you'd cut loose and you'd start down again until you hit another thermal and you could do that again. And of course you never lost sight of your field. And you made sure that when you finally ran out of air, why you were at the field, period. And as I say, we were there for maybe a month or more until we got used to that.

Then we went down to Stuttgart, Arkansas, where we were introduced to the CG-4A, and it was huge in comparison with these single place jobs that we had been flying, and we were taken up and checked out on those. And it was quite an experience because they had no glide angle to them at all. Once you cut loose from those, well, if you cut loose from your tow ship you were on your way down. You had to make sure that you knew where the hell you were headed.

A: Did you have a radio on those?

T: No, we didn't have any radio.

A: How did they signal you to let you know that here's where you cut loose at?

T: Usually they would flick their lights or some such thing as that.

A: And then you were on your own?

T: Yes. Now you're looking for interesting things that happened while I was in the Air Force? One of the things I'll never forget: we were stationed in Tunisia and they were sending over the new gliders. And they would assemble

them in Oran, and they would take us in to fly them back to our field. Well, on one of those trips we went down and we picked up the glider and we were headed back to our base. Now we flew over very rugged terrain down there because the Atlas Mountains are through North Africa there and we would fly over them. And the thermals there, they were vicious. You would be up above your ship, to the side of your ship, that is in relation to your tow ship. You'd be all over the sky. You'd be down below them looking up at them. You never knew exactly where you would be because the air currents were so violent. And we were going along and all of a sudden lo and behold the towrope came loose from the tow ship and there we were out in the middle of no place with a long towrope dangling from our nose and no tow ship. So I cut loose the towrope and immediately picked a field. And they say that once you pick your field, never change your mind. I headed in for this field and I had a young fellow with me whose name was Giuseppe Capete. Giuseppe was a timid fellow who always carried a bandolier of ammunition with him and a forty-five on his hip. He never went anyplace without it, away from the field. And incidently when he went in, he was one of those who went in on the invasion of Sicily. And the night they went in on the invasion of Sicily, they had high winds, off of Sicily, blowing away from the shore. And a lot of the gliders never did make the shore. Well, Giuseppe went in with all his bandoliers and everything and he happened to be in a glider that never got in, and I guess when he hit that water he went down like a rock, because with all the ammunition he had on him he just didn't stand a chance.

But anyway we came in on this approach to this field after we had lost our tow ship and we came in high, and up ahead of us there's a real high fence. And Guiseppe's sitting there and he's my copilot and he said, "You're going to hit it! You're going to hit it!" And I pulled back on the stick and we eased over the fence and as we went over I looked over at Guiseppe and I said, "With me at the wheel there's nothing to worry about!" And I set it down on the other side. And we were met by all these Arabs who had seen us coming down and, of course, Guiseppe with his forty-five kept them at a distance. But they were very, very friendly people. Finally a fellow who owned a farm, he was a Frenchman, he owned a beautiful farm there, came down and he took us back to his farm. Actually he took me back because Guiseppe had to stay and watch the plane. And we had dinner there that night and then they sent a tow ship out and jerked the glider out of there.

But they took us back to the base in the commanding officer's own car. It was one of the few times, I had a ride in a car when I was in the service. But it was just an aside thing. But it was really a lot of fun, really. As I say, I wasn't one that fought my years in the service. I enjoyed it. I had no ties back here. I was unmarried, and as I say, I had been in school. I had spent the year before that just flying and I was doing what I liked to do.

A: You mentioned on the way overseas, you had no escort for your ship. Why was that? Most of them were escorted.

T: In many instances they sent ships out that were fast. I mean, this was a fast ship and they felt that if a ship was fast enough, why it didn't have to go in a squadron convoy. I guess, as I say, many and many a day, we would just go in circles because evidently they would have been wired the fact that there were submarines ahead or something. And they always used a zigzag course. But it was a fast ship and it had been a luxury ship. That was the reason that it went unescorted.

A: Did you see any enemy planes, ships?

T: No, nothing.

A: How did you like traveling on the sea? Did that bother you?

T: I always enjoyed it. I really did. There was only one thing I didn't like about traveling on the ocean and that was the fact that there was nothing to do except play poker or craps. And usually by the second day I was broke, (Laughter) and I never had a chance to really come off a millionaire. Actually on those trips, it seemed that the money would become bunched before the end of the trip, and some of these individuals would have an awful lot of money and they would actually hire other soldiers to protect them, because you know how people are. And they could be quite vicious.

But actually so far as the ocean trip was concerned, I always enjoyed the ocean and coming back from Europe we came by way of the North Atlantic which is very, very rough. Going over, why, the sea was very, very calm, but coming back the North Atlantic is very rough. Actually I don't believe there's no sensation like being in a rough ocean at either end of your ship and especially the front end, where that bow would come up and come back down.

What a sensation! (Laughter) And that's where you'd find me. I'd always seek out either end. I never got seasick, fortunately.

A: Let's go back to the time when you were in England waiting to make the invasion of Norway. Let's go back to the buzz bomb again and the rockets. Did you ever go inspect any of the damage afterwards to see what it was like?

T: Well, the damage was evident. I mean, it was all over. So a buzz bomb happened to hit at a particular time that you were there, however, maybe just a few days before, it had hit right across the street. So, it was there and you could see it. And these buildings were gutted and mowed down.

A: How constantly were these rockets and buzz bombs coming across?

T: Oh, you could hear maybe two or three every hour.

A: Every hour?

T: Yes.

A: And this kept up the whole time?

T: For the most part, yes. And they had their own particular sound. I imagine you might liken it to a lawn mower, actually. And then of course, all of a sudden you'd hear it miss, and then it would catch again, and then it would miss and you wouldn't hear it until you heard the explosion. I don't know. Have you ever seen one? It looked like a big, well, it was shaped like a big porpoise. And then behind at the back end, it seemed to have a --well, you've seen these megaphones that they've used at football games by cheerleaders, that's what it looked like, a big megaphone in the back; but it was raised and that was where the engine was in the rear. And you could see them.

A: Did you ever feel the shock waves from it going off somewhere by you?

T: Oh, yes. You could feel it.

A: How was that? What did it feel like when that shock wave hit you?

T: It would just be like any concussion. And it would be like a blast, you might say.

A: Did they come over at night too?

T: At night, especially at night.

A: Did you sleep through them? Did you get used to it to where it didn't bother you at night or did you wake up every time one went off?

T: I got to the point where I'd sleep right through it. Because as I say, they were coming over so frequently that if you were running for shelter every time you heard one, why you'd be running from here on in. You'd spend all your time in the shelter. We had no trouble getting comfortable beds, right on the top floor. You got to the point where you got used to them and you developed a fatalistic type of attitude. Now I don't know whether my attitude would be like that now or not. You know, at twenty your attitude changed.

The English people were really something. I don't believe that the people here at home realize for the most part those who weren't overseas and experienced this, I don't believe that they realized just what these people did go through. And by the same token, I don't believe they realize just how horrible it must have been for the German people to be bombed as they were. Anyone who's been in a war realizes just how horrible it can be. It's just a damn shame that here we were fighting to make the world safe for democracy and here we are sweating out another one now.

So are there any other questions you have there?

A: No, that kind of sums it up. Is there anything else you would like to just mention in the way of passing? Anything you can recall, other experiences that you think might be worth recording here?

T: No, I can't think of any. Although I will mention this: I was pleasantly surprised to discover that they had made a . . . well, they have a glider organization now, that is a World War II glider pilot's organization. I didn't know that they had organized them until back a few years ago, and I joined the organization. And they have frequent get-togethers, reunions; but I have as yet been unable to attend one being a pharmacist and working as I do why, my time is so tied up I never get a chance to. But they do have an organization.

A: Okay.

T: As I recall, there was one fellow who as time went on became more and more squeamish about being a glider pilot and when we were in Sicily, he decided that he was going to get out evidently one way or another. And he started complaining to the doctor there that he was losing his appetite and just couldn't eat. He said he had a blockage.

Well, I ate dinner with him everyday and, my God, he ate more than I could eat and several other people together! (Laughter) But you know, he kept insisting and finally convinced the doctors that he was unable to eat and he got transferred out of the gliders. And I understand that he went into some type of a ferrying service, light plane. But he pursued it right to the end until he got out. But I don't know, if he was losing his appetite, I'd have hated to see him when he did have an appetite! (Laughter)

A: All right, okay.

END OF INTERVIEW