

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

YSU Reserves Project

Air Force Reserve Experience

O.H. 212

RANDALL W. HENDRICKS

Interviewed

by

David S. Arms

on

February 21, 1976

RANDALL W. HENDRICKS

Randall W. Hendricks was born on November 12, 1922, the son of Martin and Margaret Hendricks. Randall graduated from Chaney High School in 1938. He now makes his home in Youngstown with his wife, the former Rita Streetman.

Mr. Hendricks enlisted in the Army in 1939 and was in active duty during World War II. After his active duty he went to work for an automobile business. Later in 1958, he began working as a technician for the United States Air Force/Civil Service until 1967. Today he's a full-time farmer.

Mr. Hendricks has received many awards, such as the Legion of Merit, EAME with five Battle Stars, Belgium Fourragere and others. Randall is a member of the Reserve Officers Association, the American Fighter Aces Association, and the Combat Pilots Association. He also enjoys horses, conservation, farming and hunting.

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INTERVIEWEE: Randall W. Hendricks

INTERVIEWER: David S. Arms

SUBJECT: World War II tour of duty; Establishment of Air Reserve in Youngstown; Air Reserve Technician Program; Weekend drills; Responsibilities of base commander; Issuing a payroll in two-dollar bills

DATE: February 21, 1976

A: This is an interview with Colonel Randall W. Hendricks of the United States Air Force, retired, for the Youngstown State University Oral History Project by David Arms. It's at the Naval Reserve Center, 315 East LaCleda Avenue, Youngstown, Ohio, February 21, 1976 at approximately 8:25 p.m.

Colonel Hendricks, could you just basically start this interview by giving me some information on your background in the Air Force?

H: I'd be happy to. Do you want background of original?

A: Yes sir, in other words, your education and your background.

H: My education is the school of hard knocks, basically. A Youngstown native, graduated from Chaney High School. And in 1939 I enlisted in the then Army. There was no Air Force at that time, but there was an Air Corps, General Headquarters Air Corps. And I enlisted in 1939 and was assigned, ultimately, to Selfridge Field at Mount Clemens, Michigan. And as an enlisted man, I went up through the ranks and was a staff sergeant at the time of my entry into the cadet corps. I went through primary and basic advanced flying schools and through Randolph Air Force Base or Randolph Field, in

those days, Texas and Victoria Field, Texas. As a matter of fact, I was at Randolph at the time of Pearl Harbor in 1941. I graduated as a pilot and received a second lieutenant's commission in March 1942. And then I instructed for approximately a year in an advanced flying school in Louisiana. From there I was transferred to the 1st Fighter Command in the northeastern part of the country, stationed at Westover Field, Massachusetts, where I taught fighter tactics in P-47 type aircrafts. And after approximately a year of that I was assigned to a tactical fighter unit and went overseas in the early winter of 1943 and arrived in England just prior to January of 1944, as an operation officer in a fighter unit, P-47 equipped.

We had no aircraft when we first got there so I went up and flew with the 8th Air Force, 56th Fighter Group, as a low knee so to speak. And about a month of that and then I went down into Italy and flew with the 12th Air Force again as a fill-in. I flew there for approximately a month during the battle of Cassino, Anzio. And they were a bit shorthanded. They apparently had taken their licks and they needed some help.

Along about April, my outfit back in England had received their aircraft and I returned to England and then started flying combat missions out of England with my own outfit. However, while we were trained in the States as a high altitude fighter unit, we ended up going into the 9th Air Force in Europe and England and that proved to be the fighter bomber force or the ground support force. So, we ended up actually being a low level, dive bomb, strafe outfit rather than a high altitude, escort, fighter outfit like the 8th Air Force.

My organization happened to be involved in the D-Day activity. As a matter of fact, my squadron was the first to land and operate out of the Normandy beachhead. As a matter of fact, we were landing there and refueling and rearming on D plus about four. We did that for approximately ten days--shuttling. We'd take off in England and go fly a combat mission and then land at just a dirt strip in Normandy, refuel and rearm and run several missions out of there and then fly over the channel back to our home base in England at night.

And then approximately ten days after D-Day, we moved to the beachhead and then were permanently on the beachhead. We followed the armies right through St. Lo and across northern France into the Ardennes and I was at

Verviers, Belgium.

At that time, having left the fighter group at the first of November, 1944, I went to the 9th Tactical Air Command as an officer in the group in General Quesada Headquarters. And we were at Verviers at the time of the breakthrough at St. Lo at the Battle of the Bulge. Subsequent to the containment of the Germans, we wrapped up with the Battle of the Bulge.

I returned to the States because I was to go back into combat activity. I had previously flown 126 missions. Then I went to command and after the tour in command I was to go back and get my squadron back and fly the duration. However, they were going to re-equip the squadron with rocket launchers which was a new type thing for combat aircraft. I was sent back to the States to learn rocketry. And I was on my way back to Europe in May of 1945 at the time of VE-Day. So, we were then frozen at the port of embarkation. And that sort of wound up my combat tour. And then I spent another year on active duty in various capacities, mostly on the training command.

A: What was your rank at this time?

H: Lieutenant Colonel.

A: Lieutenant Colonel.

H: Then I left the service, June of 1946, that is the active service, and returned to civilian life here in Youngstown. And from that time until 1956 there was very little by the way of reserve activities, correspondence courses and a center type program. As a matter of fact, we met in the 95, 33rd here at the armory.

A: At the Naval Reserve Armory?

H: At the Naval Reserve Armory, here at East La Clede for several years. And in 1956 the idea apparently was accepted that there should be an active, ready reserve flying unit in the local area. There had been none.

A: I see.

H: There was an active duty installation at the Youngstown Municipal Airport where the 79th Fighter Group had been stationed since approximately 1952. That's when the regulars moved into the Municipal Airport. They thought of the idea of a ready reserve, flying unit at the installation at the Youngstown Municipal Airport. It came into being in March of 1957 with the

activation of the 26th Fighter Bomber Squadron, jet fighter. And I was fortunate enough, though I guess, to have been selected to command and form the organization. We drew personnel and recruited and built an organization from a radius of approximately a hundred miles of Youngstown, Cleveland, Pittsburgh and Erie.

A: I see.

H: We were equipped with F86H, high altitude, fighter aircraft, but they in turn had a fighter bomber capability. The host installation, 79th Fighter Group, they maintained the installation. They saw to it that runways were clear and the firefighting equipment and so on was maintained and provided us with supplies, supports, et cetera.

And there was another organization, a regular organization, 22 34th Air Reserve Flying Center or Atract, they were called. And they had a component of approximately 125 men. And these were regular Air Force personnel. And they were a detachment with the explicit mission of providing support to the ready reserve flying organization. The Fighter Bomber Organization at that time was comprised of approximately 350 men.

A: How many pilots are there?

H: Twenty-seven pilots. Principally, we were interested in fighter pilots because the mission was fighter. And in so far as possible--jet fighter qualified. And the greater portion of the pilot strength were jet qualified. I had not been jet qualified having left in 1946 and this being 1957. And that's the period in which the jets came into being, really. However, those of us who were not jet qualified, shortly became jet qualified. As a matter of fact, the organization was really just getting on its feet when we suffered a mission change. (Laughter) I say, "suffered" because I'm an old, die-hard fighter pilot. That mission change entailed the loss of a jet fighter and the acquisition of twin-engine C119 troop carrier, reciprocating engine transport.

A: What would be the civilian counterpart of the C119? Is there one?

H: Actually, there is no civilian counterpart. There was, I think, a few civilian versions of the prior or the forerunner to the C119. That was a C82, but it's a twin-engine, twin-boom, boxcar type thing.

A: Flying boxcar?

H: The flying boxcar, that's it.

A: That's what it was called, actually?

H: That was its moniker. But it had a specific military mission of providing a drop platform for aerial resupply of equipment or personnel. So basically, our mission was, as it indicated in the title of the organization, troop carrier. We carried troops and parachuted them into drop zones and also heavy equipment, as well as being just a plain old cargo airline for whatever cargo needed to be transported, whether it was Army Reservists going to training or Naval Reservists going to their training weekend or supporting the regular Air Force, which we did a good bit of.

We flew many, many missions and numerous, large-scale exercises in various parts of the world, really. We'd take a contingent of maybe ten aircrafts and air crew and ground support personnel maybe for a ten day mission in the Panama supporting the regular forces, dropping the regular forces, equipment, regular paratroopers, 82, 141st Airborne people.

A: Now, were these people that flew these planes and that, they were all drilling reservists at the time?

H: All drilling reservists.

A: And they just did this ten day active duty as their training.

H: Fifteen day.

A: Fifteen day active duty as their training period?

H: This is correct. Now, I've gone quickly through the transition and I indicated originally that there was a regular Air Force Detachment that provided maintenance and support to us. This was the original concept back in 1957. That concept changed in 1958 and legislation had come into being to permit the establishment of what was called an ART program-- A-R-T meaning Air Reserve Technician. And basically, the intent of the ART was to replace the regular support personnel with civilian employees who had the dual responsibility of being a reservist in the tactical organization, hence, the title, Air Reserve Technician. And I became an Air Reserve Technician at that time. I believe I came aboard at about 1959 as a tech-

nician. And when the technician program came into being, then the 120 to 140 regular, military people were reassigned into the regular Air Force mission. And the technicians, then, as civilian employees, picked up the responsibilities of the day by day maintenance.

Now, our mission with the troop carrier organization became a great deal heavier, logistically. Now, I think I had indicated that the Reserve organization has a fighter bomber unit with approximately 350 men. That went to approximately 500 men with the change of mission to the troop carrier. We also had a technician strength of approximately 90.

A: This would be full-time employees?

H: Full-time employees. So, you might say that ninety technicians replaced 130 regular Air Force personnel. And I don't say that to imply any degree of proficiency or deficiency. It was merely the structuring because they felt that the reservist being a technician, basically, could do a better job. And he could, because he had the dual assignment and he could function more thoroughly.

A: Did they have GS rating and then they were reserves? How would they fit into the civil service?

H: Well, we had both types, wage board and GS, but they were Federal Civil Service employees. The wage board, for instance, an aircraft mechanic would be a wage board ten or eleven. And your supervisory personnel, your salary people so to speak, were the GS, class act as they are called in civil service.

A: So you, per se, were a civil service and then Air Force Reserve?

H: Affirmative. A technician had to be by nature, a dual qualified, a dual functioning individual. And he performed, in other words, they preferred that we performed in uniform even though we were in civilian capacity. We wore the uniform, wore the title, however, I might have been paid as a civilian employee for an 8:00 to 5:00 day. I stop being a civilian employee at the close of the work day and I went down to the office and put on a flying suit and went out and flew night reserve missions because we had flying activity seven days a week and thirty days a month really. When I say, "We," I'm talking about the Reserve Organization. I, as a technician, didn't necessarily fly every single day.

- A: Now, in your retirement, did you retire from the Air Force Reserve or did you retire from the Civil Service?
- H: I retired from the Air Force Reserve. Now, the organization that I indicated, the Technician Organization, was basically geared to support the tactical mission, the troop carrier squadron which later was reorganized and enlarged into a troop carrier group. The group was as large an organization as the base has ever had. In both the case of the squadron and the group, we were responsible to our parent organization, the 149th Troop Carrier Wing which was headquartered at Andrew's Air Force Base in Washington. My wing commander was General Briggs and he had his headquarters there with a group at Andrews and a Reserve group at Pittsburgh at Greater Pittsburgh Airport and a group here.

And we functioned in that fashion throughout the remainder of the fifties and up until 1966 and in 1966 there was a reorganization in the wing structures, which transferred our group to the 302nd Troop Carrier Wing, which was headquartered at Clinton County Air Force Base down in southwestern, Ohio, commanded by Brigadier General Don Campbell. Our mission remained the same. It was merely, instead of my reporting to a wing commander in Washington, I was reporting to a wing commander at southwestern Ohio. And that's the matter in which we were at the time of my retirement in 1967.

Now, there is one additional facet that perhaps you'd be interested in and that is that I indicated the original organization, 26th Fighter Bomber Squad, was formed to function off the regular Air Force Base which was owned and operated by the 79th Fighter Group. We functioned as a tenant, so to speak, on the regular air base. However, in 1959, word came down from DOD that they were going to deactivate the 79th Fighter Group and close the base. Well, naturally, the Reserve structure at a higher level than here, felt that it would be wrong to lose the capability we had developed so they prevailed upon the Air Force to let the Reserve people take over the base. It was a brand new thought, idea, concept that had never been done before. But it was sold. And then instead of my being a Reserve ART Commander of an organization, I became a Reserve ART Commander and responsible for the installation.

So, we picked up the installation in 1960 and I then was the base commander, again in ART Reserve status. And I maintained that status until I retired in 1967.

And that is the current status. In other words, the current base commander, the current attack fighter group commander is an Air Reserve Technician and it has been that way since 1960 for sixteen years.

A: What was your relationship with the Municipal Airport?

H: I don't know quite how to phrase this because there's technical involvement. At the time of the regular installation concept in 1952, the Army Corps of Engineers came into the local area and purchased land upon which to build a military installation. So, they owned approximately 375 acres of land adjacent to the Youngstown Municipal Airport. That basically was the air base facility. Now, on those 375 acres, were not only most of the Air Force buildings, but a good portion of the main runway. As it evolved, and was later lengthened and reinforced and so on, ran over into the Air Force owned property. So, really you had two ownerships. You had a Youngstown Municipal Airport who owned 'X' number of acres and the United States Air Force who owned 375 acres.

And while the original airport was on city property, as the need to lengthen runways and to develop parallel taxiways and et cetera came into being, those runways were lengthened to the extent that two-thirds of the primary runway 1-4-3-2, actually was on Air Force property. And the Air Force in turn leased approximately 35 acres from the city upon which they built the motor pull, one of the hangars and the fire fighting facility. And they, in turn, paid the city so much rent for those 34 acres over the years.

This is the way the military first came into being at Youngstown Municipal Airport. Subsequent to my retirement, there has been an exchange of land in which the city traded those 34 acres which the Air Force was renting from the city for approximately, I don't know, 250 acres, 150 acres, something like that, upon which was built the primary runway. So that the city now owns all of the primary runway and taxiway. And the Air Force now owns all of the grounds upon which they had buildings built.

A: Originally, was the Air Force responsible for maintaining the runways? Is that it, it was on their property?

H: When the regular Air Force had the installation, they had complete responsibility for the maintenance of the primary runway and parallel taxiway. That meant sur-

facing, runway lighting, stripping, painting, marking, mowing the grass, providing all the fire fighting facilities, that is, the crash-rescue for emergency situations. And when the regular Air Force moved out and I became base commander, I picked up those same responsibilities. We maintained the same level of performance of duties to the city for approximately four years, at which time we renegotiated, well the lease actually was to run out. And it was impractical for us to provide all of the things that we were providing because the cost was quite high. We maintained a twenty-four fire fighting force and all the equipment. The city had nothing there. So, we renegotiated our lease arrangement. And while we still provided fire fighting and emergency crash rescue service, we did reduce and then ultimately eliminate our maintenance, et cetera and even snow removal. We provided all the snow removal for quite a few years.

A: And now the city does it?

H: Yes, as a matter of fact. The city provides all of the maintenance of runways, taxiways, et cetera. This is as I understand it. These things have occurred since I left. However, we did drop some of the maintenance and some of the snow removal. We were still maintaining all of the fire fighting and crash rescue facilities and personnel. Now, I know that the city has developed now, some fire fighting capability and I think the Air Force is no longer basically responsible.

See, we had the basic responsibility for the airliners and all of the track. But I understand that the Air Force has been relieved of the responsibility. However, being there and with equipment for their own needs, they certainly would. I'm sure that they'll respond in the event of a dire situation.

A: In 1959, 1960, you say you took over the facility? Part of this you just were a tenant and you only worried about your own organization?

H: One tactical organization. I was concerned only with that organization's tactical training and capability. And all of these various military things like medical services and food services, what you would eat in the regular mess halls or other officer's dining facilities were maintained by the regular establishment. However, when they moved out, we had to devise methods and facilities to service ourselves. So about 1960 on, that meant that the reservists were coming in and opening the mess hall. Every month, they'd come in and

open a mess hall that had been down for twenty-eight days and start serving meals and feed all of our people for their weekend training or for summer camp, which was two weeks out of the year.

A: During, let's say, a weekend training, how many people would you actually have there?

H: Our strength, of course, grew with the troop carrier mission and then with the advent of the reorganization into a troop carrier group and squadron, plus the fact that we had to develop then a combat support organization and so on for the base support because we had to maintain our own base facilities, civil engineering facilities and so on. So, we would end up on a weekend with 500 or 600 people.

A: In regards to before you took over as base commander there, before the ART system, you were just a going reservist type?

H: Going reservist, however, I might just elaborate on that a little. In the Air Force, there are varying degrees of reserve participation, several different types of organizations. The highest, most demanding category would be a ready reserve, AA Unit, it was referred to. This meant that we had a complete mobilization responsibility as an organization. If they needed a troop carrier squadron with sixteen airplanes and the people to take care of them, merely the call-up of a reserve organization would have it report intact ready to perform our mission. It's kind of difficult to try to explain the differences. But in the case of flying organization, in which we were, all of the ready reservists had to train, all of them, non flyers as well as flyers had to train one full weekend a month, one Saturday and one Sunday back to back. If it was 500 men, that's 500 men that had the same drill weekend.

Now, the air crew personnel, due to the requirement of maintaining proficiency and a rather technical piece of equipment that was going out and mingling with private aircrafts, commercial airliners, carrying passengers et cetera, you just can't do this going out there and crawling in a seat once a month. So, the air crew personnel were authorized 36, what were called AFTP's. And they were additional flying training periods, AFTP's. Now, they were paid for any AFTP training period the same as they were a ready reserve drill period. However, you had certain criteria that you had to meet in order to qualify for an AFTP. For instance, you had to fly a fixed number of hours and you had to

put in a fixed number of hours. And these amounts have changed with the difference in missions between a jet fighter organization and a reciprocating troop carrier organization. But generally speaking, you had to put in a minimum of four hours duty and you had to at least get airborne on a mission. You could come out and spend four hours preflighting an airplane on some miserable winter night and the aircraft didn't check out and you'd park it on the ramp and down the tubes went an AFTP.

A: It didn't count?

H: No count. (laughter) You got credit for having been there, but it was not a paid AFTP. But the air crew people were authorized these 36 additional flying training periods, which means three a month. Okay? So, you actually flew three times a month in addition to the one full weekend so that you could keep proficient.

A: Did you normally fly on this one drill weekend? In other words, if you were a pilot, you normally flew?

H: As a rule, all the crews would fly sometime on the weekend because we'd have Friday night flying, Saturday, Saturday night flying and Sunday. Of course, we'd usually try to shut things down Sunday about 3:30 in the afternoon so that people could put things away and be on their way home by 5:00 in the afternoon. It didn't always work that way. It was difficult to shut things down completely by 5:00, certain facets.

A: You say Friday night now, did the Friday night count as AFTP or was that part of the weekend drill?

H: No, the Friday night airborne activities, those people who flew on a Friday night, they would normally be in an AFTP status. Many of us, and I very seldom ever flew on a Friday night unless it was in preparation for an ORI, operational readiness inspection, or a practice mission. I would never plan on flying on a Friday night because that was the time when we would get all of the reserve commanders of the various reserve organizations within the group as well as the various heads of activities within the squadrons or within ancillary organizations, your base civil engineer, personnel officer, your supply officer, and those people. So, we would spend all Friday evening briefing them on what was needed for the weekend. What's the activity play, what do we need to accomplish?

A: Sort of like a predrill planning conference?

H: Just a staff meeting basically. That thing usually ran four hours on a Friday evening. So people would come in from Erie, Pennsylvania and get off work at 5:00 and be down here by 7:00. I picked Erie; that's just a good illustration because there were several commanders that came from the Erie area. But we normally convened about 7:00 or 7:30 and wind it up at 11:00. Sort of have a meeting of the minds as to who would have what responsibility to get what particular thing done. In other words, such things as maintaining medical records in current status.

This weekend we got a series of shots that we've got to run to get everybody's immunization record up to snuff. It takes quite a bit of coordination to get all of the military requirements because you had commander call, messages to get across and you had legal officer briefings and the medical officer, the health bit, treatment for the gals in town type thing. (laughter) So, we had to meet all those same requirements and maintain the records. So, there was a lot of coordination involved.

A: Now, the people who'd usually come in on a Friday night from out of town and spend the night there?

H: Any who came from any distance normally would drive in on a Friday night, even those who did not have to report until Saturday morning.

A: I see. And they spent the night there at the base?

H: And they could spend the night at the base, let's put it that way. The facilities were there. We had barracks and officer quarters and so on to put people up.

A: Did you serve meals like on a Friday or was that strictly on the weekend?

H: No, no meals on Friday because the mess hall itself couldn't get open and start cooking food until Saturday morning.

A: But you did serve breakfast Saturday?

H: Yes, we served breakfast Saturday. However, we seldom served dinner, supper on Saturday evening because the new meal on Sunday normally was the line-up of the mess room activity and then the mess personnel would have the task of preparing the facility to close it.

A: You normally secured prior to supper on Sunday night?

H: So that Ray could leave at 5:00. In other words, we'd gear everything to try to dismiss at 5:00 in the afternoon.

A: Now, did they have like a BOQ [bachelor officer's quarters] for the officers?

H: We had a BOQ. We did not have at that time an officer's club, however. There is now an officer's club arrangement. But due to the existing regulations, all of which had to be changed to even permit an officer's club . . . Under the regulations that existed back at the time we picked the installation up, you could not operate an officer's mess without having a board of governors who were, by regulation, active duty personnel. If you had no active duty personnel, basically, you could not have an officer's club.

A: When you took over the facility up there, or maybe you can go back even further than that when the base was open, was there housing on the base for personnel attached or did they live out in town?

H: Are you talking about the regular organization?

A: Yes.

H: In 1952, when the 79th Fighter Group first came to the Youngstown area as a regular military organization, they built a regular military facility with barracks and the whole ball of wax, guard house and the whole bit. And they functioned as such until 1960. Basically, they were here eight years. We followed them, as I said earlier, four years after they set things up, so to speak. And we were a tenant. They were big daddy. They supplied the mess hall and so on as I had indicated. And then when they moved out, we had to pick it up as reservers.

Now when I told you that we had approximately ninety Air Reserve technicians, that was at the time we were a tenant organization. When we picked up the base, there were many, many base responsibilities that had to be operated that a reserve tactical organization is not expected to maintain or operate. So, when we picked up the base, we also picked up about 140 additional, civilian, full-time employees. However, they were not technicians. They were straight, civil service employees.

A good illustration was that all the buildings at the installation, they were all coal fired. In other words,

heated with coal fire boilers. So, the base civil engineer had a boiler firemen force of approximately fourteen personnel in order to have people around the clock making their rounds and making sure that the various boilers were fired. Also were the roads and grounds people just to maintain the electrical facilities, to maintain the streets, mow the grass, plow snow so that people could get in and go to work, clean the ramps, and to move the aircraft--when I say "to clean the ramps," clean the snow off the ramps--to man the fire department in order to be able to man a crash fire rescue crew. This meant a fire fighting force of 12 to 15 people on a 24 hour basis. So, we picked up approximately 140 additional people just to man the facility. So, between the base civilian personnel and the Air Reserve technicians, who were civilian employees also, we had approximately 240 to 250 people. I don't know what the current manpower is, however, I would assume that it's not too different from that.

A: Was there a commissary there?

H: There was a commissary there when the regulars had it. But that like the base exchange, and the attack hospital . . . They had a hospital there.

A: Was it a full-fledged hospital?

H: It wasn't a full-fledged general hospital; it was a dispensary-type thing, but it was manned full-time. Well, we lost all those full-time activities like the BX and the commissary or the hospital. However, we did pick up the hospital building and certain hospital equipment so that we could operate a reserve dispensary. And our reserve flight surgeon then picked up the responsibility of doing all of the reserves' immunizations and sick call and so on. And we did run those things. We operated it actually, whereas before when we were a tenant, our reserve flight surgeon would merely go up and sit in with the regular medics who manned the facility.

But we opened the dispensary on a weekend just like we opened the mess hall on a weekend for training. And we provided our medical services, not anything of a serious injury. Naturally, we couldn't cope with it, of course, even when the regulars were there we couldn't cope with surgical matters. We'd take them into one of the local hospitals. We had a contract arrangement.

A: Now did you use Warren hospitals or Youngstown hospitals?

H: We used both. We had arrangements with both.

A: Now, the base is physically located on the north end of the Municipal Airport there. Did you find that most of your people lived in Warren or down in Youngstown or out in the townships around there?

H: When you say most of the people . . . ?

A: Your full-time employees.

H: The full-time, civilian employees? No, I would not say that most lived in Warren. I would say that about a third of the people would live in the Youngstown area, a third of the people lived in the Warren area and a third of the full-time people lived in various places, rural and in between.

A: So, I mean, it didn't create a housing thing for Vienna Township or anything like that necessarily?

H: As a matter of fact, the closing of the base probably hurt Vienna because there were several motels and limited apartment-type facilities in the Vienna area that had grown because of the base and the base personnel who lived off base, the military people.

A: How much on-base housing was there?

H: Five units.

A: Just five units?

H: Now, we're talking about married on-base housing. The base commander had a house and there were four other quarters for married families. We did maintain those, when we picked up the installation. However, there was no requirement for me as the commander to have to move out there.

A: You say you are from Youngstown originally. What did you do after you got out of World War II and prior to?

H: I was in the automobile business primarily.

A: I see. And you just drilled on the weekends then. And you left the automobile business to come back into the Air Force?

H: Into the technician program.

A: So, you ended up with twenty years of active duty in the Reserve program, is that it?

- H: Twenty-nine. I had over twenty-nine combined active duty during World War II and Reserve.
- A: So, did you have over twenty years active duty?
- H: No, active duty I only had seven years. I came off active duty as a lieutenant colonel in 1946 and never went back on active duty.
- A: I see. I was just counting your Air Reserve technician time as active duty, but that isn't really an active duty time?
- H: No, there's a difference. it's a different category entirely.
- A: You don't qualify for medical privileges or anything like that like the active military does?
- H: No sir.
- A: Your family doesn't get commissary privileges or anything like that?
- H: Now, when a reservist retires as a reservist, not on extended active duty, basically he retains a reserve call-up of requirement. So my reserve ID card is still a reserve ID card. It's not retired ID card. Now, the magic word in the reserve is age sixty. You can have thirty years and retire at 48 years of age if you were 18 when you went in. You can have thirty years of military service and be considered retired at age 48, but get no reserve retired pay or no reserve retired privileges until you are sixty. Then you would trade in your reserve ID card for an actual retired ID card. And at that time, age sixty and beyond, then you are entitled to commissary privileges and various other military benefits as a retired member of the service. Now, I have a title retired. I just am not yet sixty, (laughter) But I'm not trying to rush it. (laughter)
- A: In regards to some of the people that you worked with do you recall anybody that is prominent in the area that worked with you while you were up there or anything like that?
- H: Now by prominent you mean folks that I worked with as reservists there or folks that I work with here in the local community?
- A: No, as reservists.

- H: Oh, gosh yes, dozens and dozens of well-known folks. Probably the best known in the local area is Chester Amedia. Chet and I have flown this whole world over in those flying boxcars. We've been on many troop drop missions and exercises together. Of course, Chet Amedia retired about, I think it was a couple of years ago. Of course, he was a flying reservist the same as I was. As a matter of fact, he commanded the reserve's squadron for quite awhile. Colonel McClelland, a rather well-known businessman in the Greenville, Pennsylvania area, was very active in flying capacity. Colonel Tracy, who last I knew was still building homes and developing home sites in the area. Colonel Price, who just retired as a salesman at Barrett Cadillac a few days ago, I believe.
- A: I think I saw something in the paper.
- H: David Ives, an instructor at Youngstown State.
- A: Was he a reservist?
- H: He was a reservist. He was not a flying reservist, but I suspect he was in the organization for eight years maybe more than that before his retirement. Of course, he retired a little before I did.
- A: Did you participate, you mentioned working in the community project? I mean, was it a big part of the organization or did they just kind of participate as they came around?
- H: I think we played a very active part in community affairs, and activities for various fund raising activities, or charitable organizations, or speaker's bureau, or we had representation on the Chamber of Commerce Airport Committee and Military Affairs Committee. And we had a good bit of activity with city administrations and the negotiations and lease arrangement and this type of thing with of course, city officials. We got to know city engineers; as a matter of fact, Phil Richley, who was originally city engineer, and then county engineer and state department of transportation director. We worked very close with numerous people. Or when you are talking about runway maintenance or snow removal, frequently there were requirement crossovers because we were performing services for the city and they were performing services for us, and both of us were using other Federal agencies, FAA and the control tower people and the U.S. Water Service where there was a need.

A: I always like to ask one question and I seem to get very different reactions. Why did you join the Armed Services and then the Air Corps? What was your drive and goal?

H: You mean in my original?

A: Well then your original must have changed. Why do you think it changed?

H: I don't think I enlisted in the military for any single, one thing. If it was for a single one thing, it was to provide me with a stepping stone or a facility to obtain a pilot's capability. However, at the time I left high school, that was at the tail end of the Depression and money was not very abundant. I mean, no where was it abundant. (laughter) And no way could I have afforded a civilian pilot training course. I looked into it and at the age of eighteen and in 1938 it would have cost me something like \$5,000 and that's more than a house would have cost in those days. And that's a life-time worth of activity. And I knew that there was a cadet program and I also could see some handwriting on the wall that there was going to be some military activity worldwide. So, I felt that by enlisting in the Army, I could perhaps do two things--this was in 1939--one, I could possibly obtain flying training that I was desirous of. But in any event, I was going to be better equipped to cope with what I felt was going to be a wartime situation. If I got in and learned something, I was in a position to know what was going on.

And as good fortune followed me, I was able to take the mental exam, which in those days a noncollege type individual could take. They didn't give you many odds on passing it, but you could take it. And I guess I crossed my fingers the right way and closed my eyes and made some of the right X's because I managed to pass the mental exam and then the flight physical. And then I went to the Cadet Corps from the enlisted ranks. And I'm sure that I did not enlist thinking in terms of a full military career. I'm sure that that was not it, if that was the heart of your question. (laughter)

A: Well, my second part of the question is: Why did you take it up in 1960 or 1959 when you went back full-time basically, working for the Air Force, whether in a civilian capacity or not?

H: Well, that proved to be a bit of evolution. I left the regular establishment in 1946, because I did not feel that I wanted a regular career. I felt that I

wanted to come back home and get married and not knock around the world. I felt that I wanted to raise a family in the grass roots, hometown atmosphere rather than bouncing around. And this is the reason I left the Air Force. As a matter of fact, I turned down a regular commission in 1946 and left, yet to many, that was a foolish move. And I don't feel that now and I didn't feel that then. But as a kid 25 years old and a lieutenant colonel, that's not a bad place to start. (laughter)

A: No, it isn't.

H: But I chose to not. However, I did not leave because I was mad at the Army. I just felt that the war was over and there was going to be a reduction and phasing down, a lot of shuffling and maneuvering and things that I didn't feel that I wanted to be a part of. And then I wanted to put my feet, maybe, in one place. I did not have any bad feelings about the service, which basically, I guess means that I would want to continue associating to the extent I could. And this I did. However, there was no ready reserve organization. We'd come over here and meet on a Thursday night, maybe once a month I guess, or something like that. I'd go through some manuals and it was a way of maintaining kind of a military association with individuals, other reservers. Maybe just to get together and commiserate, I don't know. (laughter) No, I didn't leave because I was mad at the service.

And then when the opportunity presented itself to build a ready going organization, which I think the first ripples started sometime in 1956, there was the idea of organizing a reserve organization. Well, I feel that the ripples were a little before that, because I think by 1956 that they had some pretty firm ideas. When I say, "They," the Air Force, that they would like to have a ready reserve flying organization here. Because when the organization was actually formed, I was the first person named the commander. Then I had to form a recruit and build the organization. When that happened in 1957 in March, we had a reserve hangar about three-quarters built out at the air base. So, they built the hangars strictly for the reserves. And a supply facility and a few other buildings, just strictly to house this reserve organization.

So it was just a natural thing. I loved to fly and if there was going to be a flying outfit in the area, I was going to be a part of it if at all possible. And then when they came in with this technician program, I really did not care to become the technician

commander. I would have preferred to be the reserve commander and let somebody else be the civilian full-time counterpart. However, the way the organization was distained to be, it was either, I'd be the commander both ways or neither way. As a matter of fact, I have a copy of the letter that I signed to the wing commander in which I resigned as the reserve commander so that there would be no question in his mind about selecting a good technician commander. Well, they tried, I think, for about a year to find that individual. And after a year, well, the two just never came together. And I then succumbed to . . . I shouldn't say succumbed; it makes it sound wrong.

A: (laughter)

H: I suppose I had a change of heart. Number one, because I had put a lot of sweat into building the organization and felt that perhaps if I did take the technician commander's position that I could continue to do for the organization what I thought I had done. In retrospect, I think it was a good decision for me. I hope that the organization has found it that way, because we had a real fine organization. I flew for eleven years and it was completely accident free, never lost a single individual to injury.

A: That's a good record.

H: Sure is.

A: Well, I want to thank you for coming in and talking with me. We've been rambling on here for about an hour and ten minutes.

H: Has it been that long?

A: About an hour and fifteen minutes.

H: Feels like about ten minutes. (laughter)

A: No, we've gone through one side of the tape already and half way through the other. And like I say, I can't remember any questions that I have. The two that I had written down, you've answered for me. One that crossed my mind there when you were talking about World War II, you went to England, but there was no aircraft. Was this a common thing not to have aircrafts even though the squadron was sent over?

H: At that time, I think it probably was. Now, whether that was always the case, I don't know. But I was in England before the first of January in 1944 and my organization did not get aircrafts until late in March.

And then only a few. Really, when I went up to fly with the 8th Air Force, it was really to my benefit. I got my flying time in and I was able to get some combat flying experience that I have to conceive was invaluable to me.

A: Did you ever get shot at?

H: Shot at constantly. (laughter)

A: Were you hit, I mean?

H: Oh yes, frequently. Never to the extent that I couldn't get back, but sometimes pretty badly crippled up. Me personally, the worst I ever encountered, I think, was getting the windshield shot out in my face, a few glass slivers or something like that, and some superficial cuts. And I guess the most severe injury I encountered, I got shot up pretty badly right before the Battle of the Bulge.

I was on a strafing mission at Marshall Yards near Frankfurt, Germany and they hit me pretty good. They took part of the engine off, but I managed to limp home. I lost a good bit of oil. Of course, I was flying a single engine fighter, single engine, single seat. Of course, we were operating from a strip in Belgium, so my base was the closest place. And I managed to get back to home base and landed. And rolling down the runway, they called me on the radio and told me that the aircraft was on fire. Of course, I knew I had a lot of oil, because it was all over and I couldn't see out of the cab anymore. But there was not a thing in the world you were going to do about it. You were already on the ground and everything is cut off. It's just a matter of waiting out the time till it stops rolling. But I did get out of . . . unhooked all the shoulder harness and seat belt and I slid out of my parachute. I didn't dare open the canopy because there was a lot of hot oil coming back. Well, I had slowed down to probably about fifteen miles an hour and then I slipped the canopy back and jumped out on the wing. And of course, the way that aircraft was built, the wing was at an angle. So naturally, I just slid out the wing and hit on my can on the runway and rolled down the runway as the airplane just rolled off the runway onto the grass. And by the time I picked myself up, the fire had gone out. Probably the most serious injury I got was rolling down that runway and scraping my butt a little bit. (laughter)

A: Well, is there anything that you wanted to add, colonel, that I've forgotten to ask you or that you might think

important?

H: Well, probably I would be remiss to not recognize the tremendous support that we received. We, the reserve organization and the reserve base, received from the Navy, Army the Marine Corps Reserve, and various chamber and municipal authorities during the early to mid-1960's. I think it was along about 1963 we'd been there as a reserve organization and a reserve base for approximately three years when Secretary of Defense, McNamara, had come out with one of his numerous budget cut activities. And one of them was to eliminate the base and to kill the reserve organization. And it was publicized and we had a closing date, which I think was 1965. It was two or three years down the road, but the various reserve organizations joined with my organization along with Reserve Officer's Association, VFW, United Veterans Council and the Chamber, as I indicated, and various groups and we all petitioned the powers that be--legislative and other ones I guess. And I guess persistence prevailed, because we were removed from the base closure list approximately two years after we had been publicized for closure.

Now, it did hurt us organizationally because by being on the list as a base to close, that set our civilian personnel, whether they be ART or straight civilian, set them into the reassignment machinery as scheduled surplus. So, it caused considerable difficulties to me and the organization because we lost many, very well-qualified and well-trained people to other organizations.

My ART's officer went to Alaska and he's now Senior Air Guard officer up there. And my information officer went down to Georgia. My executive officer went down to Macon, Georgia. Of course, those are just a few. We lost probably 30 percent of our supervisory people in a year's time. This is hard to try and fill them. And then in two year's time we probably lost 60 or 70 percent of our people. But we did maintain a viable organization throughout.

Well, we wouldn't have maintained the installation without the support we had gotten from the many organizations here in town, civic as well as reserve and military for a veteran. So, I surely would not want to close this discussion or dissertation not recognizing that effort.

And on one occasion--and this is just a sidelight--when the regulars were going out, and of course, the

news media said that the air base was closing, well, very narrowly speaking, that phase of it was. But for years, I'd run into people who'd say, "You mean there's still an air base out there? Hey, I thought they closed three years ago."

Well, at one point, in order to emphasize the importance of the 245 civilians and 500 reservers, I had attempted to arrange for a civilian payroll and the military payroll to be provided to us all in silver dollars. In those days, there were silver dollars. Well, it got to be, I guess, a pretty heavy request. And it got in some pretty high channels and they thought that it was not necessary. So as a substitute, we arranged to have the payroll provided in two dollar bills, which was legal tender, but seldom used. So, we made one month's pay in two dollar bills. And in thirty day's time, the word was pretty well around the valley that there was an organization out there. (laughter)

A: I can imagine. Those two dollar bills really got around town. I could imagine.

H: Oh, they got around town. I heard about them for a year. The Mrs. would be in the supermarket or something and someone would say, "Well, where in the world did all these two dollar bills come from?" And somebody else would say, "Well--," and they'd give them the word.

It wasn't my idea. The original idea came from my information officer, a fellow from out Columbiana a way--John Ekhart. He said, "Why don't we pay in silver dollars?" Well, of course we couldn't get the silver dollars. Well, immediately it sounded good. So, we tried and we couldn't get them. So, when we couldn't get the silver dollars, I said, "The next best thing is to try for two dollar bills." And in a way, they may have been more effective than silver dollars.

A: That's a good idea. I'd have to remember that one myself some day. (laughter)

H: Well, I'll tell you, when you put out about \$250,000 in two dollar bills, they are sure going to make a lot of ripples in a lot of areas, because I think our payroll at that time was a little better than \$250,000.

A: Holy mackerel!

H: That was just the civilian payroll. I think our impact on the area was something like two million dollars a year, total--civilian and military. I think probably it's a little more than that now. Well, of course, wages are up some.

END OF INTERVIEW