

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Reserve History in Youngstown, Ohio

Active Duty and Reserve Experience

O.H. 72

WILLIAM S. HALL

Interviewed

by

David S. Arms

on

February 27, 1976

WILLIAM S. HALL

William S. Hall was born in Meadville, Pennsylvania, on July 18, 1925. His family was very active in the Air Force, with his father a pilot during World War I, and both of his older brothers also Air Force pilots.

Hall enlisted in the Aviation Cadet Program in April of 1943, and went into active duty in August of that same year. Making his first solo flight on his 19th birthday, Hall went on to graduate from Flight School in class 45-A. Although he never went overseas, Hall was an actively flying pilot until he was honorably discharged on October 25, 1945. In 1946 he joined the Reserve Program in Pittsburgh, in the 14th Night Fighter Squadron. Hall retired from a successful career in the Air Force as a Reserve Officer in 1971.

During the course of his career, Hall married, and is the father of a son and a daughter, both of whom hold the rank of captain in the military.

Asked how he sees the future of the Air Force Reserve, Hall is very optimistic. He feels the Air Force Reserve is a very viable, combat-ready part of the U.S. Military triad of land, sea, and air forces. Hall feels that there is indeed a "good future in the Air Force Reserve."

ELIZABETH A. REITZEL
MAY 15, 1978

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Air Force Reserve Project

INTERVIEWEE: WILLIAM S. HALL
INTERVIEWER: David Arms
SUBJECT: Early Air Force Reserve History
DATE: February 27, 1976

A: Mr. Hall, could you give me an idea of your personal background?

H: Dave, I was born in Meadville, Pennsylvania, and I still live in Meadville. I drive back and forth to Vienna everyday. My father was a pilot in World War I. I'm the youngest of three brothers who are all airplane pilots. My oldest brother, Dick, is one of the high time flying people in the country and probably has accumulated forty thousand flying hours. My brother, Jim, flew P-47's in Europe. Incidentally, Dick flew in the Air Transport Command; DC-4's and C-87's across the South Atlantic and DC-4's across the North Atlantic. Later he flew for the Trans Ocean Airlines around the world for many years, and now he runs Air Central, Inc., an executive aircraft transportation company in Kansas City, Missouri. My brother, Jim, as I said, was a P-47 pilot in Europe and flew one hundred missions against the German ground support and air to air combat. I graduated from flying school in 1945 but never went overseas. I had been actively flying until I retired from the Reserve Program as a Reserve Officer about five years ago, in 1971. I quit flying because we changed airplanes here at the base, and I have held various jobs here since then. I'm married and have two children; one other son died. Both of my children are in the military. My son, Stephen, is a captain in JAG Corps and my daughter, Barbara, is a nurse and captain in the Army Nurse Corps. I'm fifty years old.

A: Could you give me a little bit of your military background? For example, when did you join active duty, and why?

H: I enlisted in the Aviation Cadet Program in April of 1943, and went through basic training in Greensboro, North Carolina, and then went on to College Training Attachment at Lynchburg College, in Lynchburg, Virginia. I was classified as a pilot candidate at Nashville Army Aviation Cadet Center in Nashville, Tennessee, in about February of 1944. Then I went to what they call a Pilot Pool or "on the line" training in Marianna, Florida. I went from there to pre-flight school in Maxwell Field, Alabama. I went to primary flight school in Clarksdale, Mississippi at Fletcher Field and soloed on my nineteenth birthday. I went to basic flight school in Greenville, Mississippi at Greenville Army Airfield, and then went to Craig Field, Selma, Alabama, where I graduated in class 45-A. Shortly after that time, I checked out in the P-40, went to gunnery at Eglin Field, Florida, and while I was at Eglin Field, V-E day arrived. We celebrated that and then went back home to Craig to wait for assignment.

Of course, the war started winding rapidly to a close. I got out of the service on October 25, 1945. I joined the Reserve Program in Pittsburgh at the Greater Pittsburgh Airport, which at that time was called Moon Run Squadron. That unit went through a series of organizational changes. The aircraft we had at that time were called the T-6; they're out of service now, and also T-11's and T-7's, which are now called C-45's. At the time, the program was purely voluntary. There was no pay or benefits accruing from that participation.

Pittsburgh satellited a unit here at Youngstown Airport in 1947. I was reassigned here. They utilized a room in the Terminal Building. Before it was expanded, it would have been in the southeast corner of the building, just as you enter the main door, by the circular driveway. We kept our parachutes in there. We had one active duty man who took care of the records, and the sargeant's name was Herbert Sauls, whom I met here many years later. He later became a warrant officer. We had one officer in charge and two mechanics. We had four airplanes; three T-6's and one T-11, and I've forgotten the unit designation at the time. Chester Amedia may be able to give you that designation. I know that the commander was Major Fred Altieri at the time. He was an old Youngstown man. We had about 58 pilots, we flew for free, and we

flew to keep our participation up, to keep our hands in. The airplanes were only preflighted, and had fuel change and very minor maintenance done here. Maintenance or inspections were performed. When they were ready for their 25 or 50 hour inspections, we flew the planes back to Pittsburgh, traded for a fresh airplane, and brought them up. I flew until 1949, here at Youngstown Municipal Airport, and then the satellite program was discontinued. I transferred back to Pittsburgh and by that stage of the game, Pittsburgh had C-46's and we continued through a number of different organizational changes, ending up with the 375th troop carrier wing with four squadrons; 56, 57, and 58.

Let me backtrack a little bit here. We were at summer camp in Memphis, Tennessee, with a number of reserve units on our final day of summer camp. June 26, 1950, the North Koreans invaded South Korea. At the time we were on our way home. We thought that maybe we wouldn't get out of there. We did come home, and in August of 1950, we were given notice that we would be recalled to active duty in September of 1950. Because we had many more reserve participants than we could handle, with one squadron of airplanes and four squadrons of pilots, one squadron flew the airplanes each weekend. The active duty wing structure at the time was three squadrons per wing. When they called us up, they called up the first three squadrons by number. We all got a telegram to report. When my brother and I reported, everyone said, "What are you doing here? You're in the 58th squadron. That squadron was not called." I then had a choice to be a filler in one of the other squadrons or to remain at home to be called up in my primary skill, which was as a fighter pilot. So along with my brother, Jim, I chose to be individually recalled in a fighter pilot category instead of flying the C-82. The C-82 was the twin tailed original flying box car which the unit was going to fly on active duty.

We encountered a very extreme circumstance in that they packaged up all of our field files. In those times the army called it a "201 file," and our specialty was MOS or Military Occupational Specialty. Now the Air Force calls it AFSC-Air Force Specialty Code. At any rate, they packaged up all of the records of the pilots who were not going and were to be recalled in their MOS. Then they sent them to First Air Reserve region headquarters, which was at Langley Field, Virginia. At the same time, the region headquarters moved to Mitchell Field, Long Island, and they lost our records in the transfer. Because I had been re-

called, I lost my civilian job. So did my brother. We waited a year for recall, maybe a year and a half. Finally we received word in February of 1952, that we were re-assigned to the non-affiliated reserve. They had found the records and intended to recall us, but someone got the Congressmen in the act and they said, "We've called too many people from western Pennsylvania, and we're not going to recall those people, they have enough trouble." So I was not actively recalled, but I maintained my reserve participation through that time by taking extension courses. Then in December of 1952 they reactivated the 375th Troop Carrier Wing of the Reserve unit at Pittsburgh, although we had no airplanes. We got airplanes seven months later, and again they were C-46's. We flew those for about two years, and in December of 1954 we were the first unit in the country to receive C-119's. Our actual airplanes, incidently, were the airplanes which were used by the French in the support of Dien Bien Phu, in southeast Asia. They came back with French markings and rice. We finally got them flying over a period of a few months.

I'll backtrack a bit here. In November of 1957, they instigated the reserve unit here, the 26th fighter bomber squadron, in spring of 1957. I immediately applied, but because I had no jet experience, I was not accepted. In the fall of 1957 I did finally manage to get assigned from Pittsburgh to Youngstown, which was only half as far as my home in Meadville.

As I arrived on the base, so did the first C-119. The unit had been changed from the 26th Fighter Bomber Squadron to the 757th Tactical Air Lift Squadron. The F-86's that they had received but had never flown, while they were going through acceptance checks, and the T-33's, which they were flying, were taken out and replaced by C-119's. They wanted an instructor pilot in the C-119 at the time, and because I was already qualified in the aircraft, I fit right into the program and continued to fly here.

In 1961 I came to work here on a full time basis as the Base Operations Officer. Primarily I ran the base support Aircraft Program. We had two C-47's including the oldest C-47 that the Air Force had on active duty at the time. 42-23354 was its serial number, and it was in excellent condition. We supported twenty-three pilots from ROTC detachments, recruiting officers, people from the contracting service, and all the active duty people who were rated. That means as a pilot or navigator. We

supported that program. At the same time I maintained my reserve affiliation in the 757th as a C-119 instructor pilot, so I flew both the C-119 and the C-47 at the same time, not on the same flight, of course.

I should backtrack and say that at the time that I arrived here, the entire reserve installation on the base consisted of the brand new hanger 305, the ramp in front of it, and the brand new warehouse building 408. They were joined also by a small power house and heating plant for those two units, an ancillary building that included the deluge system, and the pumps for hangar 305. The active duty unit which was the host unit at the base was the 79th fighter group or the 86th; I'm sure one of the other people could tell you about that. By the time 1960 rolled around, just before I started to work here, the 79th fighter group was the unit that ran the base, and they were deactivated as the need for ADC decreased. The Air Force Reserve was given control of the base and took over the base. The host unit was the 757th Tactical Air Lift.

Soon we expanded into some of the base buildings and took over the base functions, which was why they needed a base operations officer. I replaced Major John C. McKibben, who worked from the Base Operations Officer job into what we called an ART position or Air Reserve Technician. An Air Reserve Technician is one who holds a civilian civil service job that is the same as his military job would be in the unit he belonged to if recalled. I maintained my position as Base Operations Officer for about five years, and we changed aircraft from the C-47 to the U-3 at that stage of the game. Then the base support program was eliminated as flying waivers were granted as an economy measure to all those rated officers who had remote assignments, such as ROTC assignment. I moved into an ART position and became an ART instructor pilot. We were equipped with the C-119-C model with the R-4360 engines, which were 28 cylinder radial engines. We changed airplanes in 1968 to the C-119-C, which had the R-3350 engines and nine cylinder correction, 18 cylinder engines, and two rows of 9 cylinders rather than four rows of seven. It was turbo compounded; it utilized exhaust-driven turbine compressors to super charge the engine and add the same power as a 4360 engine. Purportedly, it was more reliable.

The aircraft, with that exception, was nearly identical. It had a little longer range and could stay in the air a little longer because it could cruise at a lower horse

power. We did cruise it at a lower horse power because the compound engines wouldn't take the higher horse power continuously, whereas the 4360 would. In 1969 the unit was changed from the Tactical Air Lift unit to the Tactical Air Support unit. Experience in Vietnam proved the value of forward air control, that's a "FAC". They had used FAC's over the years back through and including World War I. As we got out of each war, the need for FAC's always seemed to be lost sight of, and there weren't any. So the idea at that time in 1969, was to make a repository of skills and knowledge in the Reserve forces in what a FAC had to do and how it was done. We were to be given the Cessna O-2 twin-engine. This was a two person observation aircraft that had an engine forward and back, one pushing and one pulling. However, because they were all being used in Vietnam, we were given an interim aircraft for training purposes. This was a light twin-engine aircraft built by Cessna, called the U-3A. There were two models of the U-3, the U-3A and the U-3B. The U-3B had a swept tail and fuel injected engines. The A had carburated engines, a straight tail, and went a little bit slower. It was built by Cessna and we had seventeen of those aircraft here. We were going to use those for training as an FAC. We had problems due to the fact that we had only one radio. It was VHF, very high frequency, which was a range of from 100 or 200 megacycles. Today they call them megahertz.

After many months we were able to get a frequency of our own right in the middle of the VHF band, and that helped us somewhat. Training was a problem. We did go to AGOS, the Air Ground Operational Training School at Eglin Field, Florida. The whole unit, all the pilots, went. It was a very, very comprehensive school because a forward air controller is, in effect, the air borne commander and can, in fact, be the ground commander from his position in the air. So this school covers a wide variety of things. It covers the Navy, the Army, the Air Force, and a very complicated but useful system which is now the heart of air combat, called TACS/AGS, which stands for Tactical Air Control Systems/Air Ground System.

We were given extensive training in that area, and about the time we utilized that to some extent, the Air Force discovered they had too many of the Tactical Air Support and FAC units. The decision was then made to utilize the FAC squadrons only with the Air National Guard. The Air National Guard at that time had all the fighters, or the

majority of the fighters because just at the same time, the fighter weapons came back into the Air Force Reserve. Incidentally, the Air Force Reserve had no fighter aircraft from the fall of 1957 until the fall of 1970. The 434th Tactical Air Lift wing at Bakalar Air Force Base, Indiana, was moved to Grissom Air Force Base, Indiana, and became the 434th Tactical Fighter Wing. We were assigned A-37's and became part of the 434th Tactical Fighter Wing. The actual changeover date was early in 1971.

We got our first aircraft on June 29, 1971. Prior to that time all the pilots went to ground school on the aircraft systems and procedures at England Air Force Base, Louisiana. Before the aircraft came, we sent ten people; five guys who were five pilots that remained from the old squadron, and five new fighter pilots or recruits. We sent them to Grissom Air Force Base for the last two weeks in June. They were checked out "Phase I", which is initial qualification in the aircraft, but not it's tactical use. They arrived here on the last day of summer camp, June 29, 1971, with ten A-37's in two formations, and we had a big welcome for them. Some A-37's had been on base before, but were just flown in and out by wing personnel in preparation for the changeover.

At that time a decision was made by the Air Force Reserve Headquarters that people who had three years of service left until retirement would not be checked out in the aircraft, and inasmuch as I was in that category, I was not checked out in the A-37. I flew my last U-3, and incidentally the U-3's were reassigned to various government agencies. The Air Force declared them surplus to their needs and they were given to various places. I flew one to Charleston, West Virginia to be used by the Forestry Service, which was under HEW, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. I flew the last one to Kent State University and I presented that to them on behalf of the Air Force. I believe it was late August of 1971. That was my last official flight as a military pilot. In the meantime, the commander and the operations officer were checking out in the airplanes and I was kind of left running the show. I did ride considerably in the airplanes as we went TDY to Alpina, Michigan, and England Air Force Base, although I never flew officially.

To backtrack on the unit, it is the 757th Tactical Fighter Squadron, the flying part of the 910th Tactical Fighter group. It was the 26th Fighter Bomber Squadron which

became the 757th Tactical Air Lift Squadron, then the 910th Tactical Air Lift Group, which is the 757th squadron, plus its supporting units of maintenance, supply, personnel, security police, clinic, and that type of thing. About 1962 we gradually expanded and became the Tactical Air Lift Group.

When we first got the A-37, we were designated the 910th Special Operations Group. All special operations groups are designed to help other countries and aid small military operations on whatever continent, operations from outside this country to within the country. The unit designation was changed in 1973, I believe, to more accurately reflect the mission which the unit actually performed with the A-37B, which is close support of troops in contact with the enemy, and became the 910th Tactical Fighter Group. Until the end of last year our unit included about 800 Reservists, of which 115 Air Reserve technicians are part of the 325 base employees.

- A: We are going over the history of the base itself. Would you go over that briefly for me and give me an idea of how it came about?
- H: Just a couple of weeks prior to this interview I clipped an article from the Youngstown Vindicator of 40 years ago, which reported that 800 acres were under option in Vienna Township to build a new airport, and that they hoped to have an Army air base put on one side of the field. It also made the comment that the land was under option at \$70 an acre. Certainly it is worth considerably more than that today. I'm not sure exactly when the field was built, but I will say it was built in the mid to late 1930's. It was a WPA project and consisted of four 3600-foot runways; one north-south, one east-west, one northeast-southwest, and one southwest-northeast, plus a terminal building on the east side of the field along what is now Ohio State Route 193 and was at that time Route 90. It later became Route 190.

When the Korean War started, the military wanted to get a base as close to the north as they could and still be located in the United States. For Air Defense Command uses the military bought the land to the northwest, north and west of the airport. I would judge it was roughly about 600 or 700 acres. They extended runway 14/32 to the northwest from 3600 feet to 7500 feet. They built a

parallel taxi strip leading from runway 18 northeast-southwest to the northwest end of runway 14; that would be the approach end to 14. They built the air base on the north side of that runway, and this consisted of a large ramp and the air base itself. I think the land was all purchased shortly after 1950.

Construction started in 1951, and it was basically completed in the fall of 1952. The Air Reserve hangar complex was contracted for sometime in 1955, and construction started in 1956, reaching completion in the summer of 1957. The air base had not changed much since that time, except that now some of the buildings are being torn down to make room for new barracks if needed, and because they haven't been used, maintained, or were in bad condition. They were originally ten year buildings, built in 1952. This is 1976, so they have been located 24 years in ten year buildings, and they have done very well. These buildings were maintained in good order.

We have demolished the officers' barracks building #200. There were two different sized barracks, and there were three of each size. We have demolished two of the three smaller barracks, 114 and 115, and building 116 is about two-thirds down at this time. Also, destruction has started in the original hangar, 411, which is reputed in somebody's record magazine to be the largest wood and truss hangar remaining. It was heated by a floor heat with radiant heat, and over the years the subterranean freezing and the water table between it and the layers of rocks that exist about eight to ten feet down here finally shifted the floor slabs. We repaired it once, but it lasted less than a year and the Air Force engineering people determined that it was beyond economical repair. We've used it for a shelter for equipment and aircraft, being unheated in the last several years. It was used for several years by the Mahoning Valley Vocational School, which is something you might want to know about, for a couple of years as an auto shop. Now it's being razed and there's a proposal of building a new fire station on that site, although that has not been confirmed.

- A: Are they going to move this building, or are they going to demolish it?
- H: The hangar is being demolished right now.

A: It's not to be moved?

H: It's going to be moved. The contractor bid on demolishing all the buildings for a small fee. He paid \$300 for all the buildings. However, he has to provide all the manpower and has to take all the material away. I understand that he has subcontracted out the removal of that building to someone who feels that he can move it economically enough that they can modify and use it for something.

A: What do you see as the future of the Youngstown Air Force Reserve?

H: It looks good to me. I say this for a number of reasons. For a long time our national defense has rested on the triad of sea and air launched nuclear weapons and the ground forces. The triad is supported by what the Secretary of Defense, Schlesinger, reaffirmed the Total Force Policy, under which there is no draft and the Reserve forces will be called up if there's a need to expand our military forces in case of war or limited war. The Air Force Reserve is a viable part of that Total Force Policy and the unit here is combat ready with the A-37. The A-37 was developed from the T-37 trainer as a quick answer to close support aircraft. It does the job very well. However, it has some problems, such as it is short-legged. In other words, it only flies for two and one half hours. It is capable of air-to-air refueling. It is one of the very few aircraft in the world that can lift its own weight in fuel and ordinance. However, in spite of its success, in the need for more capable close support aircraft, the Air Force held an extensive design competition for close support aircraft.

That design was won by North American Aviation with the A-10. The A-10 is a twin jet, low wing airplane that is capable of carrying a large load of ordinance, and it carries a 30 millimeter gatling gun, which is capable of destroying a Soviet main battle tank with a two second burst. Those aircraft are now being flown. The production rate has been announced to be fifteen planes a month. Secretary of Defense Schlesinger pointed out that the Air Force will be equipped with the A-10.

Inasmuch as the Air Force Reserve 434th Tactical Fighter Wing of which we are a part, is the only close support wing in the Air Force Reserve, and incidentally I must

include the fact that the Air Reserve forces include the Air Force Reserve and the Air National Guard, we feel that our opportunity to get the A-10 is very, very good. The aircraft will operate nicely out of Youngstown. We are hampered now by the fact that now we do not have a gunnery and bombing range to practice on, which we can get to and back from in one flight. We usually use the range near Bakalar, Indiana. We have to refuel in the air and that takes a lot of coordination. Or, we go to the range and land at Grissom Air Force Base, and refuel at wing headquarters, and then come back to Youngstown. The A-10 will permit us to go a long way to other ranges, perform the range missions, and come right back here. I feel that we have a good future in the Air Force Reserve.

A: Thank you. That concludes our interview. You have been very informative and have given me good background information. Thank you very much.

H: You're welcome.

End of Interview