

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH DONALD LUNDBERG

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

WORLD WAR II * KOREAN WAR * VIETNAM WAR * COLD WAR

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

David Fulvio: This begins our interview with Colonel Donald Lundberg, with David Fulvio ...

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: ... and Sandra Stewart Holyoak ...

DF: ... on April 23, 2008 ...

SH: ... In Rutherford, New Jersey. Thank you, to you and Mrs. Lundberg, for having us here today. We will begin by asking you, for the record, where and when you were born.

Donald Lundberg: Okay. I was born in Mount Jewett, Pennsylvania, it's about four hundred miles from here, and [I was born on] February 10, 1925. ... When I was six months old, we moved to Jersey City. ... The reason for that is, my father worked for the tannery, ... which closed up, and, in the small town [of] Mount Jewett, there aren't many jobs. So, we came to Jersey City, because his brother had opened up a plumbing business, and he came to work with him in Jersey City. So, I came here when I was five months old. I have five brothers and sisters.

SH: Older or younger?

DL: One younger and four older. I was the next to the youngest. [laughter] ...

SH: Can you tell us a little bit about your father and his family background?

DL: Well, my father, I don't know too much about his family background, other than he probably grew up in Mount Jewett, Pennsylvania, because his mother lived up there and [his] father died, apparently, at an early age. ... Let me see, ... he was born in the United States, I know that, but I don't know too much about his background, because I got more of my mother's background, family background. My mother's father and mother were born, and she was born, in Goteborg, Sweden.

SH: Your mother was.

DL: My mother.

SH: Was your father also Swedish?

DL: He was Swedish, too. Lundberg, that's Swedish. [laughter]

SH: I thought it was, but I wanted to make sure.

DL: But, ... she was born in 1894, in Goteborg, and she was [from] sort of a large family. ... Part of the history that I've learned is that her mother was in the aristocracy in Sweden and her father was a soldier in the Army and worked on the properties around. ... They fell in love and she ... married him, but she was disowned by her family, and that's one of the reasons I think they came from Sweden to the United States. ...

SH: What was your mother's name?

DL: My mother's name was Palmquist.

SH: What was her first name?

DL: Emilia Ruth Palmquist, and her mother's name was Anna Christina, maiden name was (Kant?), like Kent. ... I presume, because, at that time, years ago, aristocracy was the same in all your reigning countries, they were all intermarried. So, I presume it merely was part of the Kent Family, and then, where are we at now? [laughter]

SH: Can you tell us how your mother then grew up in Mount Jewett as well?

DL: Mount Jewett, right, yes.

SH: What were their mother and father's educational background?

DL: My father's [was] high school, my mother was high school, and, of course, ... college was out for ninety-nine percent of the kids, unless you were born wealthy. ...

SH: Were they from big families, your mother and father?

DL: My mother was part of, I think it was about eight of them in the family, brothers and sisters, and my father, I guess about five or six, but they're all good-sized by today's standards. [laughter]

SH: You said your father became a plumber.

DL: Right, ... when he came to Jersey City, yes.

Lillian Lundberg: And he was killed, killed in an explosion, an industrial accident.

DL: Yes, well, I'll get to that.

SH: [laughter] Did they ever say how they met, your mother and father?

DL: No, no, I never knew. ... His [my father's] brother left about 1928 and went to Texarkana, Texas. So, he got another job as superintendent of a dry cleaning place, overall dry cleaning place, and he was superintendent. ... While he was working there, there was an explosion and it tore one of the doors off one of the tumblers and severed his jugular vein and he died on the way to the hospital, left my mother with six kids and no relatives and no money. So, it was a tough time.

SH: What year was your father killed?

DL: 1930.

SH: You were only five years old and she has got five children.

DL: Besides me.

SH: Yes. What did she do? How did she make ends meet?

DL: Well, one fortunate thing [was that] she got what they called the workmen's compensation, but they gave her a hundred dollars a month until the youngest child was eighteen, and that's what she raised us on. A hundred dollars a month was worth a lot more then. Rent was thirty-five dollars a month.

SH: Were your older brothers and sisters able to help?

DL: Well, first off, the oldest sister was sixteen and she dropped out of day school and went to night school and got a job working as a bookkeeper, twelve dollars a week. [laughter] Things, they didn't pay a lot of money then, but that's why a hundred dollars, why, it sounds terrible; actually, rent was only, like, thirty, thirty-five dollars a month. So, I mean, it was tight.

SH: Were you able to stay in the same place, the same home?

DL: Well, we stayed in the same home; we just moved a few blocks, because, I remember, we lived on McAdoo Avenue then. ... I always remember, the rent was thirty-five dollars a month. I don't know why. [laughter]

SH: Probably because that was one of the main things you had to save for.

DL: That's right.

SH: What were some of the other early memories that you have of growing up on McAdoo Avenue?

DL: ... Well, first of all, it was the Depression and the Depression affected everybody. Everybody was poor, nobody was rich, [laughter] and everybody was, ... I shouldn't say frugal, but they were very careful. Like, my mother used to do the laundry with Fels-Naptha soap chips on the thing, on the stove, and we used to, you know, recycle. ... We had a lot of potatoes, a lot of macaroni [laughter] and things like that, you know. ... We only had a roast on Sunday and that was after church. She had the roast on Sunday, and then, the rest of the week was [the other foods], you know

SH: Were your father's brothers and his family able to help at all?

DL: No, she got no help from anybody. She got a little help from my Aunt Esther, who lived up in Manchester, Massachusetts, but the help consisted of [food], because they owned a fishery and a chicken farm, and she used to send us dried cod fish. [Editor's Note: Colonel Lundberg makes a disgusted noise.] My mother used to make; what do you call that stuff? It smelled terrible and tasted just as bad, creamed codfish. [laughter]

SH: I guess not a family favorite.

DL: No.

SH: Was this Aunt Esther your mother's sister or your father's sister?

DL: It was my mother's sister, Aunt Esther.

SH: Are there any jobs that you remember having at an early age? What do you remember about the neighborhood? We have had people say that, because everybody was poor and affected by the Depression, they really did not know that it was the Depression.

DL: Right, that's true, and we all were in the same boat. ... In the neighborhoods then, everybody knew everybody, knew everybody down the street, up the street, and the kids played together. We had baseball. We played the kids from lower Van Nostrand Avenue, versus the top, but we had gloves that were really just gloves and the baseballs had about three rolls of tape on it and the bats had about a half dozen nails in it, to keep them from [falling apart]. [laughter] So, you know, but we played and we had good times, but all our games, we made up ourselves. We didn't get anything that was pre-made or manufactured. Everything was ingenuity, you know, stickball and Johnny-Chase-The-White-Horse, [a street and sidewalk game popular in urban areas during this time period], and, you know, a lot of games, really, you know. ... The thing [that was] different then, too, there's no cars parked on the street. There was only one car per family at the most and, if they had a car, they parked it in the driveway, so that we could play out in the streets all we wanted without worrying, you know, box ball, and we had good times, really. ... Oh, one thing, too, we had, like, a yard and there's, like, a little cement area just before the garage, with a grate in it. ... We used to get a hose and cover the grate and fill it up with water, for an inch or two, and that was our swimming pool, [laughter] the hose in there. So, it was ingenuity, you know. We made the most of what we had.

SH: Was your mother fortunate enough to have a car?

DL: She got a car in 1933, because the doctor said, she ... had a nervous breakdown, that she had to get out. So, she bought a 1933 Plymouth with some funds that she had, that cost 620 dollars, and they gave her a full tank of gas, taught her how to drive. ... We used to put all the six kids and her in the car and we used to go [to] Warinanco Lake and Park in Newark and Elizabeth, New Jersey, and this park and go row boating and we had a good time.

SH: Was your mom able to get medical care?

DL: Well, she did go to a Dr. Front, and he used to take care of her, ... but it wasn't anything, you know, sophisticated, let's put it that way.

DF: Besides the worker's compensation, did she have a job?

DL: My mother never worked a day in her life. [laughter] It was because of the accident.

DF: Was your family active in the church?

DL: Yes, yes, we were, because we used to go to [the] Lutheran church and I got pinned for ... attending every day for a year. I was confirmed and everything else and we were close to the church activity.

DF: Was your mother always into the church or did the death of your father motivate her to be more involved with her religion?

DL: Well, I'll tell you, when my father died, she didn't have time for anything but to take care of the kids and feed them. [laughter]

SH: You said your mother never worked a day in her life; I think, with six kids, that was plenty of work.

DL: Yes, she did. I didn't mention, [that] she didn't have a conventional job.

LL: She was active in the church until she died.

DL: Yes.

LL: She was.

DL: And she was also the Republican Committee woman for our district. [laughter]

SH: Was she really?

DL: Yes.

SH: In a very Democratic area.

DL: And Jersey City is strictly Democratic, [laughter] but, [in] those times, people got together. There wasn't the question, "I hate you and you hate me." ... They all worked together. We used to go on boat rides up to Rye Beach, you know, and we'd get free tickets from the politicians.

DF: I take it she was not a fan of Franklin Roosevelt.

DL: I think she was. No, she didn't have any political animosity. It was just, if you were a Democrat, you were a Democrat; if you're Republican, you're a Republican. You were born that, you know, ... but it was just local politics. National politics didn't bother her at all.

DF: Everyone seemed to rally behind the President during the times of the Depression.

DL: That was the one time in my life when everybody was on the same side. Everybody worked together. We used to go out, and the kids [would] go out and pick up scrap metal, and

they had air wardens who used to go out, watch, but the only time there was no animosity between groups, everybody worked together and everybody worked for the war effort.

SH: You are talking about the war effort then, not the Depression.

DL: Yes. ...

SH: Okay. Where did you go to school, grade school?

DL: I went to Number Twenty School in Jersey City and the Number Thirty-Four School in Jersey City, and then, into Henry Snyder Junior High School, and we were the last class to graduate from it as a junior high school and it became a high school. [Editor's Note: Henry Snyder Junior High School joined with Lincoln High School in the 1930s, becoming the Henry Snyder High School.] So, I spent seven years in the same school [laughter] and graduated from Henry Snyder High School in 1942, and then, I was sixteen then. ... No, I was just seventeen. So, I had a year to wait to be drafted, and then, I went in the service and my re-education started after I came back.

SH: Okay. Let us back up and talk a little bit about your siblings; you talked about your older sister, who dropped out of school to go to school at night and work during the day. There were four other children, right?

DL: But, they were younger.

SH: They were younger.

DL: See, ... at that stage, my older sister was sixteen, my next sister was fifteen, then, my next brother was, oh, about twelve. I was five and my one brother was ten and I had a younger sister who was two-and-a-half.

SH: Did any of those older siblings go to work, as well as your sister?

DL: No, no, just the oldest one could, until they [were older], like I, myself, when I was in grammar school, I used to work in a grocery store. They used to have these storefront grocery stores, and I made five dollars a week, working every day after school and Saturday, ... packaging the groceries and delivering the groceries, and that was a lot of money for a kid. ...

SH: All of your sisters and brothers were doing that as well.

DL: Something similar, and then, when I ... reached sixteen, I was in high school, I got a job working in an ice cream parlor, because you could work, if you were sixteen, in ... a regular place. ... I was making ten dollars a week, working in an ice cream parlor, and they lost money on me. [laughter] ... Oh, I'll tell you, yes, I used to eat a lot of ice cream. [laughter]

DF: How many hours a week did you work at the ice cream parlor?

DL: Well, [at the] ice cream parlor, I used to work at least twenty hours a week, or more, and we used to sell a ... double-dipped ice cream cone, with two flavors, for a nickel. ... On Saturday night, we had it lined five deep ... at the cone counter. ... We used to make two hundred dollars. Now, that, on ice cream cones, now, that's a lot of ice cream cones. [laughter]

SH: A lot of nickels.

DL: Yes.

SH: When you were in high school, what course were you taking? What did you hope to do?

DL: Well, the thing is, I knew we were poor, so, I took up what they called a commercial course, ... because I wanted to, you know, get a job in business. ... They taught you bookkeeping, basic arithmetic, and I also thought, "Well, maybe I might be a male stenographer." I took two years of shorthand and two years of typing, ... because they got good money, the male stenographers. ... Then, because of that, when I got graduated from high school, I decided I wanted to go to college and I knew I didn't have enough academic credits. So, I went to evening high school, for one year, before I was drafted, to get my academic credits.

SH: Did you really?

DL: Yes.

SH: Congratulations.

DL: Thank you. [laughter]

SH: Were there sports or activities that you were involved in at school?

DL: Well, the only thing I was involved in [at] the school, I was in the high school band.

SH: What did you play?

DL: The clarinet, and one of the reasons I was in the band is because we'd get into all the games for nothing. [laughter] I wasn't that good, I'll tell you, and a lot of us in the band were, I would say, just "people," to fill up the ranks, you know. I mean, I played, but I wouldn't consider myself a genius or anything. ... There were three of us in the neighborhood, Freddie, Buddy and myself. We were buddies and we did everything together, including high school band. [laughter]

SH: Did any of your siblings play a musical instrument?

DL: My sister, Helen, played the piano, because, years ago, entertainment, ... Saturday night, was somebody played the piano, and my oldest sister used to play the piano.

LL: Didn't your mother play in the theater?

DH: Oh, yes, my mother played the piano ... when they had silent movies. She used to play the piano in the silent movies. [laughter]

SH: In Jersey City?

DL: No, up in Mount Jewett. My father was also very talented. He played the piano by ear, and he played harmonica, too. [laughter]

SH: That is amazing.

DL: Yes.

SH: I just wondered if anybody else had followed through with that. That is a great story.

DL: No.

SH: When you decided that you wanted to go to college, had the Pearl Harbor attack already happened?

DL: Yes; well, see, but I was only sixteen when that happened.

SH: Tell us about that, if you would.

DL: That, you mean how I found out?

SH: About Pearl Harbor.

DL: Okay. My mother had our Plymouth out and we were out and we decided to stop in [for] doughnuts and a bakery shop. ... We're on Frelinghuysen Avenue in Newark and I remember going in the store. I was elected to go in and buy them. ... They're very cheap, and the girl in there was [saying], "Pearl Harbor's been bombed," you know, and she was screaming in there, you know. ... As soon as I got my doughnuts, of course, I went out and told my mother, and we had a deluxe car that had a radio and she turned it on. ... Sure enough, they said about how they attacked Pearl Harbor and they'd sunk all the battleships and everything else, and we were out there and we went home right away, of course, and listened to it on the radio. There's no TV then. [laughter]

DF: When she said, "Pearl Harbor has been bombed," were you aware of where Pearl Harbor was?

DL: I didn't really realize where it was until they said it was in Hawaii. When they said, "In Hawaii," then, I knew where it was.

DF: What was your initial reaction?

DL: Unbelievable, you know, like, things like that don't happen. [laughter]

SH: How aware were you, in 1939, of what was going on in Europe?

DL: Well, we were aware of it, because, even before the war started, actually, ... we'd do a lot of conservation, so-to-speak. We used to, you know, salvage stuff. ... The United States was getting involved in supporting the war, you know, and logistics really won the war, that we were able to build thousands of ... ships to supply and we ... had the best armament, the best guns. We supplied our men with the best of everything, and that's one of the reasons we were able to win.

SH: Were your brothers still at home, your older brothers? Were they still home?

DL: Yes. They were home, but ... my oldest brother got married very young, had children, and he got a job working [in] the Federal Shipyard. So, he was draft exempt. [Editor's Note: Federal Shipyard in Kearny, New Jersey, built ships for the US Navy from 1917 through the end of World War II.] My other brother, as soon as he graduated from high school, he was drafted. He went in the Air Force. He was a truck driver and he went overseas, too, to the South Pacific.

DF: Prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, was there a feeling that America was eventually going to have to fight in the war or did people just assume the situation would stay the way it was?

DL: Well, at that time, ... everybody said, "It's not our problem," that, ... you know, we'd stay out of it, you know, but, still, we supported the British, lock, stock and barrel, with all kinds of equipment and everything else. We were really backing them. Even though we said we weren't in the war, I think Roosevelt really wanted to get in, and my feeling is, Roosevelt knew that they were going to attack Pearl Harbor and he let it happen. ... The reason [is], I landed ... over in Hawaii when we flew our B-29 over and I don't see how they could have come all these thousands of miles from Japan without being detected by somebody, because we have all these ships out there, we had planes and how they got that close without being detected, somebody had to drop the gun, so-to-speak. ... So, I think he knew it and he let it happen, so [that] we could get in the war. That's my personal feeling.

SH: As a young man, though, in high school, you would have just been a freshman when Hitler invaded Poland. Was that discussed at all, in your neighborhood or in your school?

DL: Let me say, it was on when you went to the movies, they had the newsreels, but it wasn't an emphasized factor, let's put it that way.

SH: When they began to attack England, was there a heightened sense of it then?

DL: Oh, yes, yes. Dunkirk, you know, ... in the newsreels, you saw the Tommies [slang for British soldiers] being evacuated from Dunkirk, you know, in the boats. ... There definitely was a feeling of brotherhood between us and the British.

SH: Did either one of your parents have family still in Europe at that time?

DL: No. They're all over here, yes.

SH: Before we started the machine, you said that you went out and bought all the newspapers. Was that right after you picked up the doughnuts?

DL: Oh, I picked up the doughnuts because I wanted to go the next day, when the newspapers were out. The newspapers wouldn't be out until the next day. So, I went first thing in the morning and picked up one of every newspaper I could find. I still have, you know, many of them.

SH: You had this sense that this was a very momentous ...

DL: Oh, that [was] a momentous decision, that it would be something that would be important the rest of my life.

SH: Your brother did not join the military until after the attack on Pearl Harbor, is that correct?

DL: Right.

SH: When you went to school the next day, how was that handled?

DL: Well, it was Sunday. We didn't go to school until Monday.

SH: No, I said the next day.

DL: Oh. [laughter]

SH: How was that handled in school?

DL: I really don't remember, other than, you know, they talked about it, but it wasn't, like, the end of the world, so-to-speak. It was brought up, and, of course, kids were treated differently then. "Kids should be seen and not heard," let's face it, [laughter] and so, it was an adult thing, mostly, but the kids got involved. ... We knew what was happening and we had a great sense of patriotism.

SH: Did you listen to the speech that Roosevelt gave that day?

DL: Yes, on the radio, yes.

SH: Did you listen to it at home or at school?

DL: At home.

SH: What was the discussion around your family table? What was your mother counseling?

DL: Well, you know, she was concerned, having three boys, [laughter] and, ... if it happened, it happened. You know, there's nothing you can do about it. You have to live with it, you know, and people had a great resiliency then. They were used to adverse things.

SH: Had your brother already married at that point, in 1941?

DL: No, no.

SH: He married shortly after.

DL: Shortly after.

SH: Where was he working at that point, when this happened, in 1941?

DL: Well, he was working at odd jobs, ... because there weren't any steady jobs. He worked for a blind place, you know, made Venetian blinds. He worked for a caterer that rented out tents and chairs and he did, you know, all odd jobs. ... Then, when the war started, he got a job as an electrician over in the Federal Shipyards in Kearny.

SH: In Kearny, okay.

DL: It's amazing. They turned out ships like they were just an automobile, I'll tell you, [Editor's Note: Colonel Lundberg makes the sound of multiple ships sliding down the ways during launching], down there. ... They actually built about a couple hundred, probably, over in Kearny.

SH: Did your afterschool job change at that point?

DL: No, ... still worked for the grocery store. [laughter]

SH: Did you start to see young men in your neighborhood joining the military?

DL: Well, see, in my age group, we weren't old enough to join.

SH: Did you see the older boys going off?

DL: I saw the older boys, yes. A lot of them, they'd go in and enlist.

SH: You knew that you were going to be drafted.

DL: Definitely.

SH: The draft had started in 1940.

DL: Yes.

SH: Did you want to go in the Army or did you want to go in the Navy or the Air Force? What was attractive to you?

DL: Well, I had hoped to get in the Air Force, [to] be honest with you, because I felt it had the greatest potential, you know, for advancement and you didn't have to walk. [laughter] That's a consideration. [laughter] ... Next, to the Navy, the Navy always had a bed and food to eat at all times, whereas that didn't happen to the soldiers.

SH: Did you have any kind of romantic sense about the Air Force, flying or airplanes?

DL: I always remember my brother asking me, you know, "What do you want to do when you get in the service?" I said, "I'd like to be a pilot or fly," and my brother laughed at me. He said, "You're chicken. You will never do that," and he went in as a truck driver and I became a navigator.

SH: Was he hoping to be a pilot as well?

DL: Well, he thought he was a real hotshot. He's one of those guys, you know, liked drag racing and stuff like that. He thought he had the ability to be a fighter pilot, but he never made it. [laughter]

SH: He tried.

DL: He tried, yes.

SH: What was it like to have your brother go into the military?

DL: It was, you know, sort of; we used to get gas rationing at the time. My mother had, you know, the '33 Plymouth and we used to get a gallon-and-a-half of gasoline, but, if we told him we were going down to visit my brother, he got a coupon to get two more gallons, or something. ... We used to load up the car and go down to see him at Camp Kilmer, and then, he went overseas. ... He was my older brother and older brothers are always your ideal, [laughter] you know, and we were sorry to see him go.

SH: Did you write?

DL: Of course, yes.

SH: Did your mom put the little banner in the window?

DL: Oh, yes, with the star, the little flag with the star.

SH: What were some of the other things that were going on in the neighborhood at that point? You talked about some of the war effort.

DL: Yes. Well, you know, at that time, first of all, there was conservation of electricity and everything, but they were always afraid of German subs ... coming out. ... [If it was] too illuminated, they'd give them ... an idea where they were and ... [we had] to do something. So, they used to paint the tops of the headlights black, so that only it would shine down. You'd ... pull down all the shades at night, and they used to turn off the street lights at night and we had air raid wardens'd go around and check to see if you did it, and it was quite different.

SH: Did you ever participate in any of the scrap drives?

DL: Well, they weren't organized, but we'd go out and go down [to] the dumps and, actually, we went down there looking for any scrap metal or anything, rubber tires, everything, you know, and we'd bring them in and turn them in.

SH: Where did you turn them in to?

DL: I really don't remember, [laughter] but I know they had ... a central place where we brought them.

SH: How did the rationing of things like sugar and coffee affect your family?

DL: Well, it affected everybody the same way. You only got a little bit of meat and that was for Sunday, and then, most of the time, we had macaroni and spaghetti and mashed potatoes and things. ... Potatoes and pasta were two main staples, right, Lil?

DF: Since your family had six children, were you able to get more than other families that had, say, one or two?

DL: Yes, you got so much per person.

DF: Per person, okay.

DL: ... Everybody had a ration book and you had stamps for this and stamps for that and for meat, you know, and you'd go to the store and use your ration book and [buy] what you could, were allowed to get.

SH: What about shoes? I understand they were rationed as well.

DL: Oh, yes.

SH: Was that hard for your mom?

DL: No, because we only had one pair of good shoes and one pair of sneakers, [laughter] because that's all that we could afford, and you wore sneakers at play. You wore the shoes to school and you took them off when you come home and put on your sneakers. ... I always remember, they were Keds, and you're the same, right, Lil?

SH: Are there any activities that you remember in your church that were for the war effort?

DL: I don't remember anything in the church, other than mention of it at services, and, you know, say a prayer for the people in the service and things like that, but that's the only thing I remember.

SH: Had anyone been killed on your street before you enlisted or were drafted?

DL: No. The only one I remember, ... a guy I went to high school with was killed. He was a navigator on B-17s [Flying Fortresses], but he was older than me, so, he went in before me and he was shot down over Germany.

SH: You heard about it before you joined.

DL: Before I went in, right; still remember the name, (Teddy Gilson?).

SH: Were you able to go to the same high school to get your academic night school credit?

DL: No. ... I lived in Jersey City and they had a Dickinson Evening High School. [Editor's Note: Dickinson High School began a continuing education program that hosted an evening school during this time period.] That's where my sister went when she dropped out of school, and I went there for a whole year and I got four academic credits.

SH: What were you doing during the day?

DL: I was working in an ice cream parlor.

SH: Okay. You were working full-time then.

DL: Full-time, right.

SH: That is amazing that it was still going full-time.

DL: Well, I worked there until 1942, I think it was, and I got a job at Metropolitan Life, because my older sister got a job there. ... It was quite an honor to be considered, to be called for the Metropolitan; like, many were called, but few were chosen, you know. ... You put in an application and hoped they called you and, if you went over, you went over for an interview and it was quite [a good job]. ... Sixteen dollars a week, I started at. [laughter]

DF: What type of work did you do with them?

DL: ... When I went in, I was just, you know, out of high school, I started off as an information clerk, and that was because I was six feet tall. ... All the information clerks were six feet tall and wore beautiful red uniforms. [laughter] So, I used to be downstairs in the lobby, welcoming people, showing them around, and it was sort of cushy job [laughter] and I did that until I went in [the] service. [When] I was drafted, I was still working on the information desk.

SH: Did anyone ever look at you and wonder why such a specimen was still walking around? Did you have to explain to people, "Look, I'm only seventeen?"

DL: It's possible, because, you know, I did look much older than seventeen, ... even though I was only sixteen when I graduated, but, no, I don't remember anybody saying anything.

SH: Okay, I was just curious about that. Did you have any idea that you might enlist, rather than wait to be drafted?

DL: Nope. I had no desire to enlist. I was thinking, "I'm going to be drafted. I'll take my chances," and I got the chance when I went in. My IQ was high enough that I could apply for cadet training and, of course, that ... didn't mean I would be in cadet training. It means I'd [be] eligible to take the test, and, out of about two hundred of us who met that criteria, only about twenty of us made it to commissioning.

SH: A great attrition rate.

DL: Yes.

SH: Can you tell us when and where you were inducted?

DL: Sure. Now, [I] remember, you went up to Number Twenty School, the school that I was going to when I was a kid, and very apprehensive, I must say. ... They had a bus waiting for us and they put us on the bus, took us to Newark, put us on a train, and the train took us to Fort Dix. ... When we get off at Fort Dix, they gave us a dried sandwich and an orange and, I don't know, I think a container of milk or something, you know. ... That's the original [contact], and then, when I was in Fort Dix, one of my first jobs was on the medical [detail], where they're giving people the shots. My job was to watch to make sure they got a shot in both arms, you know, because some of them tried to cheat, and, in doing that, I noticed, first off, the ones you had to worry about started getting white, then, they started sweating, then, they passed out, and, you know, just [from] the thoughts of getting a shot. So, we'd be ready to grab them, you know, ... [laughter] but it was interesting.

SH: Where did you take the exam for the cadet corps?

DL: ... I'm trying to think. We went to California.

SH: No, was it at Dix that you took the exam?

DL: ... Oh, everybody took a test when you come in, General Classification test and a physical, and a hundred is average, 110 is above average and 140 is borderline genius, etc., and I'm proud I come out 140, but ... you had to have at least 110 to even be considered to take the test. So, that cut out a lot of people, ... and we went out to Denver, Colorado.

SH: They sent you from Dix to Denver, Colorado.

DL: Right, to take the preliminary tests, and then, there was tests after that, ... in California, and what the heck was that? Santa Ana Army Air Base, where they did more screening. See, it was a constant screening.

SH: Okay. From Dix, did you get any kind of leave to come home? Did you see your family again or did you go straight to Colorado?

DL: When I was in service, I got home only twice, once after I graduated from navigation school and one just before I went overseas. That was it. [laughter]

SH: Let us just walk through chronologically.

DL: Sure.

SH: When you left Dix, you were on a troop train.

DL: Yes.

SH: Was everybody going to the same place?

DL: Oh, yes, everybody was going to the same place. It was interesting. There were two kinds of troop trains, converted boxcars or old Pullmans, [luxury railroad sleeping cars], and we were lucky, once, to get Pullmans, where you had actually a bed, whereas the other ones, they had the hammocks out in the boxcars, [laughter] but it was interesting. I'll tell you, I saw more of the United States on a troop train. You're looking out. We went through Royal Gorge, [a canyon on the Arkansas River in Colorado], you know, through the Rockies, and I saw more of the United States than I had in my whole lifetime.

SH: I was going to ask, had you done any traveling, other than your Sunday adventures with your mother in the car?

DL: No, that's as far as we could go, and then, when ... gasoline rationing [came], forget it, didn't even go out of the garage. [laughter]

SH: One thing we did not ask, were you guys involved in Boy Scouts or anything like that?

DL: No, I wasn't.

SH: Okay. When you went across the country, what was the makeup of the people that were in your group?

DL: They're all, basically, eighteen-year-olds who just got out of high school, and we got along well. [laughter]

DF: Were they mostly New Jerseyans?

DL: Yes. ... We were still being kept together as a group, yes.

SH: Right straight to Denver?

DL: Yes. ...

SH: How long were you in Denver then?

DL: Oh, I went to basic training there, you know, and we went out on the Plains and ... [they] took us on hikes. ... You know, they tested us for, you know, hygiene and everything, put you through all these marches and drills and that was our basic training. I was there about six weeks.

SH: However, you did go up in a plane.

DL: No.

SH: Okay, I thought you said ...

DL: I didn't get to a plane until much, much later. [laughter]

SH: Okay, I misunderstood. I thought you said something about a plane before.

DL: No.

SH: Do you know how long you were in Denver?

DL: Only a couple months, and then, we went to Santa Ana, California, and that's where we got the real testing. ... They gave you aptitude tests and the maximum Stanine was nine and they gave you, what was that for? bombardier, pilot or navigator, and the Stanine you'd have to achieve to make any of these would be six. Well, I made all three, [laughter] but, at that time, there was a surplus of pilots and my only alternative was to go into navigation school, and I took it, because I was good at math.

SH: What year and month was this?

DL: It's about 1943, I guess.

SH: It was in the summer.

DL: It was in the summer. I remember, it was hot. [laughter]

SH: How long were you at Santa Ana then?

DL: Oh, about six months. You know, one other thing they did, sort of ... before going to Santa Ana, they sent us to college. I went to a college training detachment in Cedar City, Utah.

SH: From Denver?

DL: Yes, and they gave us an intensive training, brought us from basic mathematics to higher mathematics, engineering. They gave us a college course in four months, in order to take the test so that we'd have a better chance of passing. ...

SH: That is interesting that they would do that.

DL: The college training was Cedar City, Utah. Well, see, the college had nobody going there, because all the young men were in the service. So, it gave the college a chance to stay in business, so-to-speak, and function, and we got a lot of good teaching there.

SH: Were they civilian professors that were teaching you?

DL: Mostly women.

SH: Really?

DL: Yes. [laughter]

SH: Where is Cedar ...

DL: Cedar City, Utah, is the entrance to Bryce [Canyon] National Park, out by the Grand Canyon, and we stayed in the Hotel [El] Escalante and Cedar City had, I think, a population of fifteen hundred. They were all Mormons and they're all wonderful people, because, at Christmastime and holiday time, ... everybody took a cadet in. None of them had to stay in the camp. They were invited out.

SH: Really?

DL: Yes. Oh, they were wonderful people, the Mormons.

SH: When you were at Denver, were you stationed right in Denver?

DL: No, out in Buckley Field. It's a town outside, [Aurora, Colorado].

SH: Did you get into Denver?

DL: Oh, yes, oh, yes.

SH: How did they treat servicemen?

DL: Servicemen, basically, were treated very well. Everybody tried to be nice to you and be good to you, so-to-speak, and you always felt like a special person.

SH: Good, because, obviously, they did the same thing in Cedar City.

DL: Cedar City, yes, but, see, we weren't allowed out of the hotel, except on weekends, and that's from Saturday afternoon until Sunday morning. Otherwise, we were not allowed out of the hotel.

SH: They did the teaching in the hotel as well.

DL: No. You'd go from the hotel to the college. We'd walk up there and we did our PT [physical training] and everything up there, and then, we'd walk back, do our drills up there and come back. Oh, incidentally, when I was there, too, we got ten hours of pilot training, every cadet, on those little L-5s, you know, the little, like, Piper Cubs. [Editor's Note: The Stinson L-5 Sentinel was a two-seat, single-engine, unarmed observation aircraft, similar to the famous Piper Cub.] We got ten hours of pilot training.

SH: That was at Cedar City.

DL: At Cedar City.

SH: Who were your instructors there, civilians or Army?

DL: Well, the ones on the pilot training were military. We had military cadre running ... the hotel, El Escalante. They were military, but, outside of that, you know, it was all civilians.

DF: How did you feel the first time you got into an airplane?

DL: It was thrilling. [laughter] The only time I got scared [was] when they taught us the stall and the spin. Now, you may not know what that is, but a stall and a spin is, you take [the aircraft] and you go straight up until it stops, actually stops, and, when you stall, the airplane just falls, just drops, and that sensation is still with me, to go down and the plane starts spinning around. ... You had to learn how to control it and bring it out of it, but that was exciting. [laughter]

DF: It just seems like something that is so difficult to do, probably, the first time.

DL: Yes.

DF: How did they make up for that margin of error, the person trying to do it for the first time?

DL: Well, they gave you a manual, you know, oral instructions on what to do, that, "When you get up there, just push the thing forward, lower the nose. It'll go around, and then, you try to straighten it out. ... Then, when you got it straightened out, you pull the handle back, and then, you come out of it."

SH: Was somebody in the plane with you?

DL: Oh, the instructor. [laughter] ... They had what they called gosports. They were like telephones, but they were just tubes from the back to the front, and he spoke into it and you had earphones and he'd tell you what to do. Gosports were the means of communicating between the students and the instructors. It was hollow tubing to carry your voice.

SH: He must have had nerves of steel.

DL: He did. [laughter] I got, with him, say, passing grades, you know, not outstanding, but average or better, but a lot of them didn't even make that. ...

DF: Were there any instances where fellow students would actually crash or get into any accidents or malfunctions?

DL: Well, see, one of these things is, in a process, washing out. They tried to get everybody who couldn't make it to quit. They all say, "You don't like it, Mister? Quit." ... Really, they put it to you, "You want to stay, you stay, but, [if] you're going to stay, you've got to do it," and it was a constant thing all the time. "If you don't like it, quit," and there were a lot of washouts. Each step we went, we washed out maybe thirty, forty, maybe even fifty percent, ... before we went to the next stop.

SH: Were there training accidents, as Dave was asking? Was anyone ever hurt?

DL: I didn't see any training accidents. Another thing is, Cedar City was six thousand feet high, which means you're a mile high before you even get off the ground and those buggers really had to struggle to get up to a thousand feet. [laughter]

DF: Did they teach you parachuting or ejecting?

DL: Yes, yes. They used to take us out and put us in a harness and have a big rope and you'd come down and come real fast and they'd pull the thing. ... You just dropped, and you learned, ... when you hit, you roll, roll over one shoulder, so [that] you don't get hurt, and that was fun. [laughter]

SH: Where was that training? Was that at Cedar City?

DL: No, that wasn't in Cedar City. That was in Santa Ana.

SH: When you would come back to the hotel for the evening, was that mostly studying?

DL: Mostly studying, yes. You didn't have too much time to horse around. ...

DF: What kind of sleep schedule did you have?

DL: Well, I think lights out [was] at ten and up at six, you know, and then, you go to breakfast, and then, you did some marching, you know, and you had to march all the way up to the college, too, you know, and it was wintertime then, too.

SH: Was it?

DL: Yes, I remember, in the snow. [laughter]

SH: There is the potential for a lot of snow there, I think.

DL: Yes.

SH: Then, you take the train and go from Cedar City back to Denver, or do you go on to Santa Ana?

DL: I went on to Santa Ana from [there]. See, El Escalante was on the Union Pacific, [which] owned, practically, the whole town, and the hotel. ... The El Escalante was a tourist stop on the Union Pacific, and so, they didn't have any tourists. So, the Army used it and everybody made out from it. Another thing, ... they don't drink. The Mormons don't drink. They had no alcoholic beverages available out there and there was one store and you had to get a card from the state. ... You had to be over twenty-one and you had to be positively identified before you could get anything.

SH: You lost out on that one.

DL: Yes. [laughter] Luckily, I'm not a drinker. So, it didn't matter to me. I'm a soda drinker. [laughter]

SH: Was there an ice cream parlor there?

DL: Yes, they did. You're right. They had an ice cream parlor. That's where we went on Saturday nights. [laughter] They did have dances, too, you know.

SH: Did they? Were they USO-type dances?

DL: Yes, we'd go, you know, and the local girls would come and a lot of the girls were trying to marry the guys, because they wanted to get out of Cedar City. No, really, they made no bones about it. They wanted to go to California and they're willing to marry you.

SH: Did you know you were going to California from there?

DL: Well, we hoped. [laughter]

SH: When someone washed out at that stage, where did they go?

DL: They went back to replacement centers, Army replacement centers, and it wasn't a bright future for them. [laughter]

SH: Did you keep in contact with anyone who did washout?

DL: Not really, because you didn't get that close to somebody for that long, you know. It was short intervals, four months here, two months here, you know.

SH: At this stage, is your brother already in the Pacific?

DL: Yes, ... he was in the Pacific.

SH: Were you writing to him?

DL: Oh, yes, I wrote to him regularly.

SH: Were you writing back home as well?

DL: Yes.

SH: Was there anybody special that you were writing back home to at that point?

DL: No. [laughter]

SH: You must have been quite elated to know that you had made it and, now, you were going to get to go to California.

DL: Right, because that was the last step. If you made that, then, you would go into some sort of training. ... I always remember, I was out there in February. Now, February, ... you don't know it, but it's the rainy season in Los Angeles. ... They have the Los Angeles River. That's the only time it gets filled with water, and they used to put us on guard duty, with a gun with no bullets, out in the rain, walking back and forth, pouring rain. I said, "This is stupid," [laughter] but that was part of our training. You do what you're told.

DF: With the gun not having bullets, was it just for show, so that it looked intimidating?

DL: All it was was a training thing. It's really just a training thing to me. I really wasn't guarding anything. I just had to walk this [perimeter] and they'd come out ... and you say, "Stop. Advance and be recognized," you know, the usual stuff, and you had to be alert, because, if they caught you sleeping, you could washout.

SH: What were you patrolling?

DL: Just walking back and forth next to a fence.

SH: By the river.

DL: No, no river. The river was in Los Angeles. I was in Santa Ana. I was in Orange County. [laughter]

SH: You lost me there. You had spoke about the river filling up with water.

DL: No, but, if you went into Los Angeles, you could see the Los Angeles River. They had a lot of movies [filmed] in there, you know, the cement things, you know. That's the Los Angeles River and that's built because, in the rainy season, to drain off the water, so [that] it doesn't cause problems.

SH: What was your training like there? You had done well in Cedar City now.

DL: Taking tests, but, mostly, it was just training. We did a lot of marching, drilling. We did a lot of PT [physical training] work and we had parades, a lot of parades, you know. ... We learned how to march properly. ... They were patterned after West Point, really. We were cadets, we did our marching to ... imitate them, we're on the honor system, which I think was a great thing, ... whereas, if you had a test, you could go outside, have a soda and talk, and then, come back in. They trusted you, that you would not, you know, cheat, and I never saw anybody cheat once. No, I was very happy with the honor system.

SH: Were the tests that you were taking deciding whether you were going to be a fighter pilot or a multiengine pilot?

DL: Right, at that point, yes, whether you make anything, right. ... So, from there, I went to navigation school.

SH: You were given a choice.

DL: Well, [the] choice is if you qualified. [laughter] I only had a choice of navigation school, because that's the only thing that was available.

SH: Bombardiers were filled.

DL: Well, I didn't want to be a bombardier. I'd just sit up there and toggle switches, yes. [laughter]

SH: Had you seen the different kinds of aircraft that you would have been flying on, or was it just something in pictures?

DL: No. We were just ground personnel. We were in camps and barracks and parade grounds, but ... not where they had the aircraft, at that point.

SH: Had you seen a B-17? Did you know what it looked like?

DL: I knew what it looked like from going to the movies, [laughter] but I [was] never physically near one.

SH: This is all still ...

DL: In the future, yes.

SH: Yes.

DF: What about when you were learning how to fly? What planes were you using then?

DL: They were, they called them L-5s, but it's like a Piper Cub. You know what a Piper Cub is? It's the smallest one-engine aircraft built, [laughter] and it's two seats, a front and back, and I think the high speed was sixty or seventy miles an hour, you know. ... Then, of course, we were out there in Cedar City and that was six thousand feet [altitude] to start with, so, it was a real struggle to get those little things up to seven thousand feet.

SH: Seven thousand feet?

DL: Well, one thousand above ground. ... See, [the] altimeter would show it as seven thousand feet, even though you were only a thousand feet off the ground. [laughter]

SH: In Santa Ana, how did your training progress there?

DL: Training was mostly; again, a lot of military training is learning to accept orders, to get physically able, that we did all kinds of things, marches. We used to run two miles a day, some days with gas masks on. They were trying to get your breathing apparatus working as well as possible, ... but we had competitions, marching and flags, you know, each [unit], but, there, it was strictly military, discipline, and we had a good time, because we were able to get into Hollywood from there. [laughter] It wasn't far.

SH: How often did you get a pass off the base?

DL: Well, usually, every weekend, but, you know, you couldn't afford to go there. We used to go to Laguna Beach a lot, because they had all kinds of amusements there and there was a nice beach place and they let us sleep in the lobby, in the chairs, at night.

LL: Tell them about *Winged Victory*.

DL: Oh, yes. When I was ... out in Santa Ana, they were making a movie called *Winged Victory*. It was an all-volunteer-type thing and it was made by everybody that was in the service, and, of course, the 20th Century Fox [movie studio] volunteered, you know, all the professional people and everything. ... They were making a movie called *Winged Victory* and it was based on a Broadway play, and that's where the [song came from], "Off you go, into the wild, blue yonder." That was part of it, yes, and they came around and they walked down and said, "You, you, you," and I was one of the yous, ... about twenty of us. ... They took us out to Hollywood and I was an extra in one of the shots where ... one of the guys washed out, you know. I was sitting outside on the bench, waiting to be called in, but we got to meet a lot of movie stars. We ate in the commissary, and I'm trying to think of some of them, Charles Winninger, John Hodiak, I forget the girl's name, but we met them all. ... For us, it was quite a thing.

SH: Did you tell your mom and your brothers and sisters to keep an eye out for you?

DL: Of course, I did. I wrote letters. [laughter] You've got to do some bragging.

LL: Tell them what you did with the tape and all, ... all the original stuff that you gave to Fort Dix.

DL: The what?

LL: When you gave them, at Fort Dix, the original tapes. ...

DL: Oh, no, that wasn't the tape. That was a record. ... I had got the original recording for *Winged Victory* from ... the Broadway play, the thirty-three [record], a big thirty-three, which included the *Air Force Song*, that became the *Air Force Song*, was on there. ... When I was down at McGuire, one time, talking to the musical [officer], I told them I had it. He said, "Oh, they'd love to have it," because it's a museum piece, really. So, I carefully packaged it and sent it down to Washington and they'd found it and they were thrilled to get it and, luckily, I had the sense to tape record it, put it on regular tape, instead of off the record. ... There was the fiftieth anniversary of the Air Force and they wanted to make ... a song, you know, and they used the recording there as a background, you know. They used it as a basis for making it and they sent me a copy of the tape that they gave out at the fiftieth Air Force reunion. I have it someplace, [laughter] but it was quite an honor, you know, that they wanted it. ... Actually, the captain, whoever it was down there, called me and thanked me for making it available for them.

SH: How nice. Was this recorded as part of the movie or was it recorded when it was a play?

DL: ... The movie was based on the Broadway play and this is just the music that was in the Broadway play and it really wasn't for the movie. ... It was for the fiftieth anniversary of the Air Force. ...

SH: When you were in training, how soon did you make that choice to become a navigator, when you were at Santa Ana? Was it right away?

DL: I would say right away. [laughter] ... I qualified for all three, but they weren't taking anybody for pilot training, so, it was either bombardier or navigator and I chose navigator, because I thought it was more demanding, let's put it that way, kid.

SH: Did they peel you off to go to separate schools?

DL: And they hooked us off. I went to navigation school.

SH: Where was that?

DL: Selman Field, Monroe, Louisiana, and ... we were there four months. They made us navigators in four months. [laughter]

SH: Again, by train?

DL: By train. ... It was all military there. There were no civilians. It's all military officers, full fledged navigators, who trained us. We used to go on training missions, you know, in these little two-engine planes, something like the one Amelia Earhart used to fly in. You'd just do training missions in planes, like, I think they called it a C-10, or something, and, every once in awhile, one of the navigators, the pilot would let you sit up with him, because you only had one pilot then, and, oh, that was a thrill. [laughter] They'd let you steer it, you know. [laughter] For a little kid, that was a big thrill.

SH: Little kid. Now, you were the old man of nineteen probably.

DL: That's right. ... Well, you know, I graduated from navigation school when I was nineteen, but, because there's a lot of them that they felt were immature, half of the class graduated as flight officers and half as second lieutenants, and I made second lieutenant. Flight officer is the same as a warrant officer. You had officer privileges, but you weren't an officer. Almost all of them, within a year or two, were made lieutenants.

SH: Was there a commissioning ceremony when you did that?

DL: Yes, yes.

SH: It was there in Selma.

DL: Selman Field, right.

SH: Selman.

DL: Selman, S-E-L-M-A-N, Field, Monroe, Louisiana.

SH: Okay. Had you gotten off the base at all when you were there at Selman Field?

DL: Oh, yes, we were allowed off. That's when I found out that the Southerners still called us damnyankees. It was one word. [laughter] They didn't like us.

SH: Really?

DL: Yes.

SH: They did not treat the servicemen as well as you had been treated.

DL: No, not if you were from the North.

SH: Were you shocked at the segregation, being from Jersey City?

DL: When you're young like that, you adjust very quickly and it didn't bother us any. We went out, we had good times. The girls liked us. [laughter]

SH: Were you making good money then?

DL: Yes, seventy-five dollars a month.

SH: Were you sending it home?

DL: Yes. Well, I always sent money home, because I was the main support for my mother. So, they took twenty-five from me and they added twenty-five and they sent her fifty dollars a month.

SH: Did they?

DL: Yes, until I became an officer. When I became an officer, there was no more of that. It was up to me; if I wanted to send money home, I could send [it], but, when I was overseas, now, ... I was making four hundred a month. That's a lot of money back then. I was getting flight pay, overseas pay, combat pay, and all of those mushroomed, was all the way up to four hundred a month, I was making. When I came back to work for Metropolitan, it's twenty-six dollars a week; what a come down. [laughter]

SH: Let us talk about the four months at Selman Field.

DL: Yes.

SH: What was the training like there? Was it very intense?

DL: Very intense, very intense. It was eight hours a day. We'd have missions, ... even if just on paper, where you could [practice making calculations]. Long missions, you had to ... go out and shoot the stars and the sun at night, you know, because we were celestial navigators, as well as all the other things. See, you didn't have (Sirius?) then. You had to be a navigator then. You didn't have a little bug, like you said [how] you found out where I am on the GPS system. We didn't have anything like that. So, we had to actually navigate and we used to fly from Tinian to Japan. Each plane flew individually, because, if you flew in the formation, you'd waste too much gasoline, and gasoline, it was very careful. So, we'd start, and then, we'd go up and we'd know where the initial point was and we'd go in on the target and drop our bombs, or whatever we were going to do, and then, came back, individually. ... Out of six missions, I landed five times on Iwo Jima, once because of battle damage. That mission I was on there, we had holes in the plane and, the other times, [it was lack of gas]. We flew over a brand-new plane. The minute we landed on Tinian was the last time I saw it, because the oldest planes went to the newest crews and the newest planes went to the oldest crews. So, we had all kinds of [plans], we're going to name it and everything else, and the minute we landed, that was the last we ever saw it. ... We got an old piece of junk, because the 58th Bomb Wing was the first bomb wing in the 20th Air Force and it was in India before it came to Tinian. ... It was different than the others. It was the first B-29 group. They used to fly missions from India to China, over the

Hump, [the Himalayas], and bring bombs and they'd have to make, like, four trips over the Hump to make one mission against Japan or Singapore, and they were very ineffective. ...

SH: When you were sent from Selman, then, where were you sent?

DL: I was sent to Lincoln, Nebraska.

SH: That was where you met your crew.

DL: Yes, that's where they put the crew together.

SH: Can you talk about that then, please?

DL: Yes. Well, you know, we went there and we ... [got] introduced to all our crew members, and everybody got along. I mean, we were all in the same boat, and our pilot was real old. He was thirty-one, [laughter] but he was a great pilot. He had been a civilian pilot before the war. He came in as a pilot instructor, and then, somehow or other, got into multiple engine, and then, he became a B-29 pilot, but he was very well-qualified.

SH: Where was he from?

DL: Louisiana. He was a plantation owner, a real Southern gentleman. [laughter]

DF: Did he use the term "damnyankees" as well?

DL: No, he didn't use that. He wouldn't dare. [laughter]

SH: What about the rest of the crew? What was their makeup? Where were they from?

DL: Okay. The co-pilot, he was a mechanic before the war. He was from Mechanicville, that's why I remember, Mechanicville, New York. ... He was twenty-five. The bombardier was twenty-five and married, and he was from Massachusetts and, really, it's the four of us [who were] the ones that were really close together, let's put it that way.

SH: You were the only officers on the crew.

DL: Yes, and the radar operator.

SH: The radar operator was an officer as well.

DL: He was an officer, too.

SH: Where was he from?

DL: I don't know. [laughter]

SH: What about the B-29? What was its reputation at that stage? Had you hoped for the B-17?

DL: Oh, no, B-29 was in a class by itself. It was the first of everything. It was the first plane that had a pressurized cabin. It was the first plane that used computers for the gun turrets, ... had a CFC [central fire control] man. He could control all or transfer them to the side gunners, and it was all by computer. ... When they fired, of course, it would shut off, so [that] they didn't cut off our own tails or wings. ...

SH: That is good.

DL: That's a good thought. [laughter] ... I used to put the information in on the desk, our altitude, our air speed and all these other things that [the] computer needed to do the calculation. ... Each gunner had a sight and it just was aligned with two things on either end and they would take and bring that around for [aiming]. ... There was the gun at the end of the ship. You had to know the wingspan and you can put the wingspan between the thing and, when you got them there, you pressed the button and the guns did the rest.

SH: How many gunners were on the plane?

DL: Let me see, one, two, three, four gunners, and the bombardier also had a gun sight, because there was one right under him, one right above us. I sat right between two gun turrets. When they went off, it's like getting hit in the head, you know, and, plus, the fact that [I am] dead center of four thirty-three hundred horsepower engines, and that, going for sixteen hours, I blame my hearing loss on that. [laughter] ...

SH: I could see why.

DL: Yes, but ... we really got along well.

SH: You were thrilled with the assignment to the B-29.

DL: Oh, yes. That was the premier plane, really, from World War II. ... A lot of the planes [that] were designed after that were designed [based on] the things that they advanced on the B-29, and it only took nine months from the time they first started until they made the first test flight, nine months; takes nine years now for an airplane to get [online].

SH: How soon after it was approved as a plane did you get into it? Were you one of the first to take on the B-29?

DL: Oh, no. I was way down the line, because [the] 58th Bomb Wing got them long before. That's the old guys; they're the ones that went from Kansas to India, and they were stationed in India.

SH: Did the B-29 not have a reputation for ...

DL: Overheating. The engines, they had a lot of glitches in the engines. ... Actually, they were working them out as they were producing them and they did have a lot of glitches in the engines, overheating and things like that.

SH: When you were in Nebraska, at Lincoln, you were training, flying together, doing missions. How long were you there?

DL: Actually, I was only in Lincoln long enough to get our crew together, and then, we went to (Piyo?), Texas, for our transition training. ... Down there, for a city boy, down there, there was a railroad, went from El Paso to I forget where, two hundred miles long and it was a single-track railroad and not a house between the one place to the other. I couldn't believe it, you know, where, up here, it's city, city, city, and, down there, two hundred miles and not a house, [laughter] just a single-track railroad. ... We used to fly it, you know, because we would know where we're going then, you know. ... [We] had bombing ranges and dropped bombs and navigation missions and calibrate the instruments, you know, put it down and turn it, so [as] to calibrate all the instruments for the thing. ... That was interesting, and that's where our pilot; I told you he was a plantation owner. His wife came down to visit him once. What a vision; she had a white linen suit on, she had dark hair, what a beauty, I'm telling you. [laughter] I can still picture her, you know. I was just a kid and, of course, she was a more mature woman. She was probably in her late twenties, what a beautiful woman, that's all I could say; [laughter] things you remember.

SH: What was the routine like when you were in Texas? What was the day like? Were you up early in the morning? Did you fly at night?

DL: Oh, yes. We were in some sort of training mode all day, but we were only there for about three or four weeks, and then, they were ready to go overseas.

SH: Was it at that point that you got a leave to come back?

DL: No. We went from there to Kansas City, no, Topeka, Kansas, and, there, we were picking up a brand-new plane, and that's when we got our leave to go home, our second leave. The other leave was when I graduated. ... I only got two leaves, in three-and-a-half years. ...

SH: Where was the first leave from, from Selman Field?

DL: Selman Field, December 23, 1944. [laughter] ... See that picture?

SH: Yes.

DL: That was taken December 1944.

SH: Is that in Jersey City?

DL: Yes. That's my mother's 1941 DeSoto. That's a classic. That's a classic.

SH: I was going to say, now, she has gotten another car.

DL: Yes. ...

SH: She took to driving rather well.

DL: Oh, yes. Well, she had to. [laughter]

DF: Was that her first time seeing you in uniform?

DL: That's the first time I was in an officer's uniform and, you know, that car is a classic, that '41 DeSoto. You can tell by the grillwork. In fact, they used the DeSoto for taxis, ... in the '40s and the '50s, in New York City, that car.

SH: To follow up on Dave's question, had you come home in uniform before you came home as an officer?

DL: Well, I only came home twice and I came home as a second lieutenant the first time, like that, always wore a uniform. ... [When] you were an officer in the military, you never wore civvies, and then, when I got my leave from Kansas City to come home, I come home in uniform.

SH: How was that, coming home?

DL: Well, first of all, you come home, there's nobody here. All your friends are gone and it's sort of a letdown, almost. You know, you expect to come back, have a good time, but all your friends are gone.

SH: Where did your two other buddies go that you talked about?

DL: Well, Freddie was four-foot-ten-and-a-half and he was given a medical discharge, because he was too short, and my other buddy, I don't know what happened to him. He must have had some sort of a heart condition or something, but he didn't go in the service and he went to college when he graduated, and I never saw him again after that. Freddie, I saw lots of. When I came home, he was there. We ... played on the same softball team. I managed a softball team for ten years. I was the manager and Freddie was the catcher. [laughter]

SH: When you came home, it was really just to see your family then.

DL: Yes, that's all.

SH: Ten days, a week, how long did you have?

DL: I think it was a ten-day leave.

SH: Did that include getting there and back?

DL: Yes, it usually did. ...

SH: Did you take the train back?

DL: ... I took the train. First of all, they didn't really have much air travel at that time, and, if you did, you had to be in the military, going someplace on military assignment. So, I always come home, from Selman Field, in the train, went back there in the train, and then, when I came on leave from Kansas City, ... St. Louis, I think it was the *El Capitan*, was a famous train, at that time, to New York City. ... On the way coming home, I sat next to a girl, very nice girl. She was going to New York City to see the parents of her boyfriend who was killed. She was a very nice girl.

SH: Had he been in the Army?

DL: In the Army.

SH: I guess that was a tough thing to do, knowing that you were going to get ready to go as well.

DL: Yes, but she had me to talk to and I think it took a lot of the tension away from her, you know.

DF: Was this within a day of her finding out the news? How long had she known about the news of her boyfriend?

DL: I don't know. She had been in touch with them, you know, and then, when he was killed, she kept in touch with them and they wanted [her] to come visit.

SH: When you report back to Topeka, Kansas, where do you go from there?

DL: We went out to the airfield in Topeka. We got our brand-new B-29 and we made all kinds of plans to name it and everything else, flew it out to California, and then, from California, we flew to Hawaii. We were there three days and I loved it there, and, you know, the only hotel on Waikiki Beach was the Royal Hawaiian.

SH: Really?

DL: It was the only hotel and, now, I see pictures, it's wall-to-wall, ... but we had a good time and we were smart. ... All the officers pooled all their money. We bought six cases of whiskey. They cost about two-fifty a bottle, Three Feathers and stuff, and we brought it, put it in the bomb bay and took it with us. ... When we went into town, one officer always had to stay with the plane, with their .45-[caliber pistol], we had .45s, to make sure it didn't disappear, and then, when we got overseas, we sold them for thirty dollars a bottle. I didn't drink one. [laughter]

DF: Good investment.

DL: Yes, it was a good investment, but that was fun.

SH: Was this because you had a pilot who had been around and knew these things?

DL: I don't know whose idea it was, but whatever it was, it was a good one, and we took every nickel we had and invested it in this. ... We used to get beer and we used to put that, you know, in the bomb bay when we went on a mission, because, when we'd come back, it was ice cold. ... Up [at] high altitudes, it gets below zero up there, and then, the bomb bay is not air-conditioned, and we also, ... being we were officers, belonged to the liquor locker. ... About once a month, we each got a bottle, a fifth of something, and, whenever we got it, we always gave one bottle to the enlisted men. One of us gave something to [them], because they weren't allowed to have it, but, look, when you're doing something like this, they're close to you.

SH: I was going to ask, was there really a division between the officers and the enlisted men on your crew?

DL: In a way, because we slept separately and everything else, that we didn't get close to them, like we did with the other officers, but we knew they were there and we liked them and we took good care of them.

SH: Where were they from, generally?

DL: Most of them, from the South, except the radio operator; I remember (Takach?) was from Brooklyn, [laughter] and I think the flight engineer was from Brooklyn, too.

SH: What were you going to name the plane?

DL: We wanted to name it ourselves and, when we got over there, then, I told you, they took it.

SH: What was the name you had picked out?

DL: We ... hadn't got to that point yet. We'd assumed we'd have time to, you know, but, when we landed, that's when we found out the oldest crews got the newest planes and ... the oldest planes went to the newest crews, and we got an old piece of junk, *The Dragon Lady*. [laughter]

SH: At least it had a name.

DL: It had a name, yes.

SH: When you got into Pearl Harbor, did you still see some of the destruction?

DL: Oh, of course. We came right in. We landed at the naval base and all the ships were upside down and still in there, because it was, let me see, '45, but they wouldn't have had time to salvage anything and they were all upside down. It was an unbelievable sight. Now, another sight that was unbelievable, the first time we landed on Iwo Jima, that, first of all, Iwo Jima is very small and all around the island were sunk ships. The landing crafts and everything that [had] come in,

they were sunk, and the guys came ashore. ... Mount Suribachi, I would have called it a hill, because, you know, it wasn't no big mountain, but they called it Mount Suribachi and, by the time we got there, it was secured in March, I was there in June, and they had taken and leveled, the Seabees, [US Navy construction battalions, CBs, often referred to as "Seabees"], leveled the whole island, made it one huge airport. ... What those CBs could do, I'll tell you, unbelievable, but the way the Marines took the island, they went around; ... the Japanese were all underground. They didn't have any outside positions. They were all underground with windows facing in all directions, and the Marines went around, one at a time, blew up every one of the exits they had until they'd completely ... closed them all, and then, they just left them in there to die. Twenty thousand Japanese soldiers died inside the city [underground tunnels], but, of course, it cost us six thousand Marines, too, to do that, and, after the war, the United States gave the island back to the Japanese. They came down and exhumed all the bodies and brought them back and made it a vacation resort. It probably was a great thing to go into the tunnels, you know, ... but the Japanese had to have Iwo Jima back.

SH: To back up, you were three days in Hawaii, and then, did you do any training at that point?

DL: Well, it's not training. We had to get there, [laughter] and we didn't have any commercial flights, so, we were flying our own plane. We went from there to Kwajalein [in the Marshall Islands] and, Kwajalein, you land on it and, when you come down the runway, there's water here, there's water here, there's water here, there's water here. It's just big enough to land an airplane on it. ... The trees were all down completely and you pick up a hand full of sand and you've got bullets in your hand. It was that much. It was so fierce, must have been fierce, and then, we went from Kwajalein to Tinian, and that was an experience. [laughter]

SH: Tell us about it, please.

DL: I remember, we're coming up. Now, we were all puffed up, that this is our plane, we're going to name it, and it was quite a shock, when we landed, that's when they told us we were going to get a different airplane, and then, they gave us this old piece of junk. It flew, but we had the bomb bay doors that flopped open when we took off. We'd have to try to get them closed. Oh, on one mission, the bomb bay stayed open. We couldn't get them closed, and you can't fly too long with the bomb bays open or else you run out of gas, and the CFC man said he'll go out and get her open, pull them closed, and he went out there and he froze. ... On the side, it's only that wide, you know, ... where the bomb racks were.

SH: You are talking about six inches. Is that what you are saying?

DL: About it, probably, just big enough to stand, and so, that left the bombardier, because that's his responsibility. He went out and got the CFC man back in, and then, he got to put ropes on the bomb bay doors and closed them. He was a hero, to me. I know the pilots made a recommendation, for heroism, for him, but it was the end of the war and I'm sure it got buried some place, but he deserved a medal for what he did, I'll tell you.

SH: You would not catch me out on that thing.

DL: No.

SH: Tell me about some of the bombing runs that you made and where you went.

DL: Well, I only flew six missions.

SH: You flew six.

DL: Yes. Five were night raids.

SH: To where?

DL: The various [islands], like Hokkaido, [Japan's second largest and northernmost main island]. I don't even remember the names, to be honest with you, but what we used to do is, we used to fly up to Japan, and then, once we hit the coast, the radar man took over. ... Then, he guided us into the target and he would have the bombardier, all he did was set it up so that the bombsight, ... when he told him, it would drop the bombs, and we used to carry, I don't know, thousands of bombs in packages, thermite bombs, all different kinds, you know, depending on the target, jellied gasoline bombs, sometimes. ... When they went down, they exploded to cover a huge area, thermite bombs that would burn through steel. ... Every fifth plane carried five-hundred-pound bombs with delayed-action fuses, maybe one hour, maybe five hours, maybe ten hours, and the purpose of that is, the firemen down there knew that. So, they wouldn't come in to fight the fires, because they knew they could get caught in one of those explosions, and we burnt all the towns right to the ground, because they were made of paper and wood. ... That's why Japan is so modern today, because they rebuilt them, with our money, ... and they're very modern. They don't have any old towns, and one target, the next bomb target, was supposed to be Kyoto, which was a religious town, and we often wondered why we never bombed it. ... Then, we found out later, it was on the list of future atomic bombs, if necessary. There were only two atomic bombs in existence at the time and they were brought over on the Cruiser *Atlanta*, [USS *Indianapolis*], which, two weeks after it left, got sunk by the Japanese. ... First, it was Hiroshima and the next one was Nagasaki and both planes were, one was the *Enola Gay*, the other was *Bockscar*, and they were on North Field in Tinian and they took off [from there]. ... [Editor's Note: The 509th Composite Group of the United States Army Air Force was assembled in late 1944 solely to train for the delivery of the atomic bomb. In August 1945, they conducted the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.] Except for the pilot, they didn't know where they were going, what they were doing. In fact, the plane has the insignia of the 313th Bomb Wing. Their insignia was with an arrow, the 509th Composite, but they didn't want it identified, so, if they saw it coming, they'd know it was an atomic plane. ... Do you notice, the *Enola Gay* has a circle and an "R?" which was really not their designation, and we saw the planes before they took off. We would go down and look. We didn't know what we were looking at, but ...

SH: Why would you look at a different plane? Did it look different?

DL: No, no, what it is, the 509th Composite Group was separate from everybody else. It had a fence around the whole area. The planes were segregated and they had different bomb bays than we did. So, they were a curiosity. So, we'd go down and look at them, but, you know.

SH: How many planes were in that group?

DL: I don't know how many, but there wasn't a lot.

SH: Were they doing training missions?

DL: ... They used to come over to our officers' club, and they said they were being trained to do something special, but they didn't know what it was. ... They kept bragging they're going to win the war, and, of course, we'd tell them, "Baloney." ... I mean, it was true; they did win the war.

SH: Were all six of your missions routine? Was there a lot of flak?

DL: Well, by the time I started flying, ... I never saw a fighter anymore, and their night fighters just didn't exist. There was some flak. In fact, my first mission, we went up and ... we got caught in a searchlight. The plane lit up like a Christmas tree and, you know, everybody said, "Oh, if you get caught in the beam, you're a dead duck, because, then, they know where you are and they can send antiaircraft." So, we're sitting there, saying prayers, and nothing happened, [laughter] thank God for that. ... That was the only time, you know, that we were really concerned, except the time [when] we couldn't get the bomb bays closed.

SH: You had said that there is a picture where there is damage to your plane.

DL: Oh, yes; you mean on that one mission we went on? There was a lot of damage. We had a three-foot hole two feet above the tail gunner's head, and we had thirteen holes in the plane from flak.

SH: All from flak.

DL: Yes, and, when we first went over; go ahead.

DF: I was going to say, as you were telling me earlier, you might want to mention again that you initially wanted to shut out ...

DL: Yes, that's just what I was going to say. When it [the flak barrage] started, I pulled the shade down and said, "Oh, jeez, I don't want to see this," and then, I said, "Eh, look, what's ever going to happen is going to happen, so, I might as well see what [it is]," and I pulled the shade up and watched the, "Boom, boom," you know. It was like that, you know, puffs exploding all around you. ... Then, it sounded like they were throwing gravel on the plane, you know, like [if] you threw gravel on a tin roof. That's what it sounded like. ...

SH: You talked about the planes flying singular. Were there other planes in the area?

DL: No, we flew up singular, and the funny thing about it [was], we could have two hundred airplanes going up to a target, and, after we took off, we'd never see another B-29 until we got up there. ... Everybody went a different way or something, [laughter] but we'd get to landfall [at

the same time]. When we got to landfall, that's when we hit the coast. ... On night missions, there was no formation flying, because you'd kill each other. ... In fact, we used to go in with our running lights on, because we lost more planes from people dropping ... bombs on planes. ... By putting our running lights on, the chances are better to be seen, and we'd take our chances with the Japanese, you know, and you'd go in one at a time. ... See, one of the things with that is, though, when you get [the] first fire, they start just ... aiming at that fire. So, your fires were concentrated more than patterned, but that's what ...

SH: The lead plane drops the first salvo.

DL: Whoever was first; there was no lead plane.

SH: Okay.

DL: Everybody was individual, except for the day missions. I was telling [you] about the day missions. We went up individually, and then, we rendezvoused just off the coast of Japan. ... We had a formation all set up and we got in the formation, you know, with all the groups. So, we spread out, and then, when we were in formation, all ready, we went in, and they were waiting for us, because they set up this flak. We had to go through a flak field, and the reason for the formation was that the bombardiers were told that when the lead plane dropped their bombs, you dropped your bombs. ... That way, when he dropped his bomb, they got a spread, instead of all hitting the same spot. We got a spread, and we completely demolished the Kawanishi Aircraft Factory. It said it was totally, eighty percent, destroyed and, functionally, ceased to exist, and I got a Presidential Unit Citation for that. [laughter]

SH: Did you fly out of Tinian and back to Tinian? Why did you wind up on Iwo Jima?

DL: Because we ran out of gasoline. ... We had battle damage once, when I had that hole in the tail, and we had some holes in the propeller, too, but, the other times, because we had this old piece of junk, we didn't have enough gas to get back to Tinian. So, the other five missions, we landed there, four missions, we landed there to get gasoline.

DF: What was the typical amount of time between the missions?

DL: You mean between them?

DF: Yes.

DL: Once you started them, it's like every other day, really. You'd come back, you'd get a night's sleep, and then, maybe one day off, and then, the next day, you go again.

SH: You did your six missions all within ...

DL: A short period of time.

SH: Two weeks?

DL: Two weeks, three weeks, total.

SH: Wow. When you would come in to Iwo Jima, they did all the repair work on your plane right there.

DL: Well, they didn't do all the repairs. They did emergency repair. In other words, they'd only fix stuff that had to be done. They didn't patch up the holes. They used a file for the holes in the propeller, so [that] they weren't so rough, you know, things like that. It's enough to get us back to Tinian.

SH: When you would come in to Iwo Jima like that, would you be housed in barracks until the plane was ready? How long would it take?

DL: Oh, no, no. We stayed with the plane, because you wouldn't be there that long. They ... came right out and did it and off we went.

SH: How long would it take to fly from Iwo Jima back to Tinian, to your field there?

DL: That was the half way [point]. Iwo Jima is exactly half way from Tinian to Japan, to Iwo, to Japan, and that's why Iwo was so important. It was going to be the jump off point for the invasion. ... The Japanese knew that and that's why they tried to save it, and they had everything fortified.

SH: As you said, you only had these six missions, but, when you went over, what were you told about the proposed invasion of Japan? Were you given any kind of briefing?

DL: We learned that mostly after. ... After they dropped the atomic bomb, they called in all the officers and they had a meeting. They showed us the strike photos and, like, the cities were, "This was a city block," nothing, and it's just the streets. You'd see, like, just the streets were still there, but there was no houses. The only thing that was left was reinforced concrete buildings, and they were damaged, but they're the only thing left standing. Everything else was down to the ground.

SH: Was this after the war was over or right after the bombing took place?

DL: Right after the bombing took place, they called us in and told us.

SH: The first bombing?

DL: I don't remember [if it was the] first, but, right away, they told us; I think right after the first one, because it was inconceivable that one bomb could do this much damage, because we knew what we carried and there's no way we could duplicate anything like that.

SH: Once the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, did you continue to fly missions?

DL: Yes, that's right. Luckily, I didn't have to fly missions. I wasn't scheduled, but they did fly about five missions, you know, not each plane, but five missions in total, you know, after they dropped the second bomb.

SH: When were you told that the war was over? How was that relayed to you? What was the procedure?

DL: Well, it was sort of announced, and I had the unfortunate job of being officer of the day that day. [laughter] ... All the enlisted men were around with their guns, shooting, firing them in the air, and the Colonel calls us, "Go out and tell them to stop doing that." So, I got in my jeep and went down on the runway and stayed there. [laughter] I wasn't going to argue with these guys. They're drunk and shooting guns off. [laughter]

SH: What were your briefings like for a typical flight? Did they call you in in the morning?

DL: Okay, call you in and you go in ...

SH: What time of day?

DL: Well, it depends. If it was a night mission, you would take off around four in the afternoon, because you wanted to get there about two in the morning, when everybody's asleep. ... A day mission was just the opposite; you'd ... start off early, very early, in the morning, so [that] you'd get there during the day, so that the sunlight, you know, was to your advantage. ... You'd go in, and they'd have a big map on the wall, with tapes [of] where we're going to bomb that mission, and then, they'd tell us what the target was, and they'd give us background on the town, the number of people and everything else. Then, you'd have the weather guy come in, give you what you call metro winds, and they were very important, because, when you're flying there, you had no navigational aids, and, sometimes, you flew using metro wind as a guide, that you know your drift right or left, so that you could keep it on track. ... Then, after that, they would say, "Let's go," but you'd get up, have breakfast. Everybody went to church. Everybody went to church, the atheists, everybody went to church. ... When you got down on the end, you did the same thing. If you made the last mission, you did everything exactly the same way, you know, pull the propellers through, everything, you know. It's superstitious; we were superstitious. ... Then, we'd take off, and then, after the flight, ... [the] navigator was the intelligence officer. We'd come back and each crew would go in with an intelligence officer, and that's the only time I got a free bottle of whiskey. The government, they gave us a bottle of whiskey, and a ... can of grapefruit juice, called it "battery acid," and we were drinking that while they were interviewing. I guess that's to make us alert, because, after sixteen hours, you're a little drugged, ... but, my job [was], if I saw anything, I had to write it down, the longitude, latitude, the position of it, what it was, and give that to them, so that they could plot it, in case it had some significance. ... Then, after we had our whiskey, we'd go home and go to bed. [laughter]

DF: You mentioned superstitions. Did you have any personal superstitions or any charms that you carried around?

DL: I didn't have any charms. I'll tell you one thing, though; I sat on a flak suit. You know, flak can come up, too, you know. [laughter]

DF: That was a good idea.

SH: Did you have parachutes? Did you carry them or wear them?

DL: No. We had parachutes, but the only one that had backpacks were the pilots, because their seats were made for the backpack to fit in back of them. Now, I had [my parachute] on a desk and I had to be able to get out and get around [in order to get to it]. So, I had a clip-on. My parachute clipped on, you know, and you put it on when you're going to jump. Otherwise, you couldn't move. ... Just the pilots had the backpacks; everybody else had the clip-ons.

SH: When were you most fearful? Was there any time when you remember being truly frightened?

DL: You know, the most fearful thing was when those bomb bays wouldn't shut, because that was a real serious problem. ... If we couldn't get the bomb bays shut, we couldn't even make it back to Iwo. We'd have to ditch.

SH: Had you already dropped your bombs?

DL: Yes.

SH: You took off, dropped your bombs, and then ...

DL: And then, they wouldn't close, ... and he had to go out there. ... I think, I still think, it's heroic.

SH: Do you remember his name?

DL: Sure, (Marvin Budd?), from Massachusetts. ... To me, he's still a hero. [laughter]

DF: When you say you would have had to ditch, would this have been over land or water?

DL: Water. ... All there is between Japan and [Iwo] is water. [laughter]

SH: Were there other planes that did have to ditch, that you were aware of?

DL: I didn't, positively, [was] aware of it, but I know a lot of planes did ditch, that they didn't even make it back to Iwo, because of battle damage, or, if the gas tank was ruptured, you know, and they'd have to ditch in the water. ... They had great [air-sea] rescue [squadrons]. I'll tell you, they had flying "Dumbos." They were those PBYs. They used to come right into Tokyo Bay to get guys. The submarines used to come up and park there, and, if we went down, the submarines would pick us up. ... I was always told, if you have to get picked up, get picked up

by a submarine, because, when you get picked up, you have to stay on it for three months and the food's good. [laughter] It's a funny thing, but it's [based in some truth].

DF: I assume not everyone knew how to swim. Was there something that made everyone float if they had to ditch into the water?

DL: Well, every plane had a couple of these big, yellow boats, and they would pop out when you ditched. You could pop them out. ... There's enough [room] for five or six in each boat, and we had about three of them, and, plus, we had Mae Wests, you know these things, and you pull the button and, "Whoosh," it blows up and you could float.

SH: Yes, a lifejacket.

DL: Yes.

SH: Were you given emergency instructions, in case you were not only to ditch, but if you were picked up by the enemy? What were you told?

DL: Well, we were trained. We had our .45 and we had [our] emergency kit, and in there was an assortment of bullets for the .45, the bullets that you could use, you know, like a shotgun, for game, or other things, you know, just designed [for one purpose]. We had fishing lines, we had, believe it or not, Charms, because you could live the longest by eating Charms, and, you know, take up the least room, and there was some what they called "tropical chocolate" in there, and "battery acid" or lemonade, [laughter] but that was all in this rescue kit.

SH: What is a charm?

DL: Oh, you don't know? It's like a Lifesaver [candy], but they're square and they're sugar, almost all sugar.

SH: Okay, all right.

DL: And they had quite a few of those, and it could ... extend your life if you had them, you know, to use them for energy.

SH: Okay, I had to ask.

DL: Yes, you know, I just assumed you'd know. ...

SH: No, that is okay. You learn something new with every single oral history, I will tell you. Then, when you found out that the war was over, like you said, you took your jeep and sat out on the runway. What was the next step for you?

DL: The next step was almost nothing, that we had no real duties. We'd just go and eat and we just waited to see what's going to happen. That's all. Now, I was too young to go home with the 58th Bomb Wing. I didn't have enough points and I was too young. So, I had to stay there, and I

went up to the 313th Bomb Wing, which is North Field, from which the *Enola Gay* took off, and that's the one with the circle on the tail. [Editor's Note: The *Enola Gay* B-29 Superfortress dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, on August 6, 1945.] ... I was up there for about six months, and then, they decided ... there's no point in having a B-29 [bomb group] out there when nothing's going on. They moved us to Clark Field, in the Philippines, and we moved the whole 313th Bomb Wing, lock, stock and barrel, to Clark Field in the Philippines. ... We took advantage of the hospital down the end of the island. We got a hospital bed for each one of our guys, we got an ice cream machine and ice cream mix, anything else that we thought was worthwhile. Some guys took jeeps, because they're all going to be just left there.

SH: This is on Tinian.

DL: On Tinian, and we flew over to Clark Field. ... Then, when we got to the Clark Field, almost all ... the mechanics had gone home. They were using guys from the Armored Corps [who would] come up to work on the airplanes, and that was the last time I flew a B-29, was going from Tinian to Clark Field.

SH: I was going to say, when you were still on Tinian, did you fly at all?

DL: Yes, we'd get our flying time in.

SH: Did you?

DL: ... You had to get three hours a month to get flight pay. So, we made sure we'd get our three hours a month.

SH: This was just to go up and look around.

DL: Even just if it was in a C-47.

SH: Okay, it was not on the B-29 then.

DL: Didn't have to go up on the '29. As long as you got three hours flying time, you got your flight pay. ... On Clark Field, I got my flight pay on a DC-3, or C-47, they called them. ... I'd just go up and sit in the plane and fill in the log, that I got my three hours. [laughter]

SH: Were there any kind of mercy missions or anything like that that you guys worked on?

DL: We didn't get any mercy missions.

SH: Did you see any of the prisoners of war?

DL: No; wait a minute. When I went over to Clark Field in the Philippines, all the enlisted men, almost all of them, had gone home. It was about fifty-fifty officers [and] enlisted men. So, the officers wound up doing a lot of the work, you know, and I was a wing mess [and] utility officer, one time.

SH: You were what?

DL: Wing mess officer. I used to go over to Fort Stotsenburg and get the flour and stuff, with a trailer, but, then, after that, I got into wing utility, and then, we were rebuilding all the [facilities], building barracks. ... We were doing the electric [wiring], and, in grammar school, I had electric and I knew how to wire, you know, and so, I knew wiring. We took and got a generator authorized, and we went down with a big flatbed and brought up a generator from Manila, for power. ... I [was] also assigned a chit for oil to put on the roads. They didn't tell them that, but we sprayed it on the roads, to keep the dust down. ... We did all the work ourselves. We made ... the *sawali* huts and we had Jap PWs [prisoners of war] and we'd go over and pick them up on the trucks and they were very talented, and they were no trouble at all, believe me. *Sawali* was mats made of bamboo strips and used as siding.

SH: Really?

DL: They were no trouble at all. They were very artistic, a lot of them. ... In fact, once, I remember, ... we forgot one PW and he come running out, running after us, ... because the Filipinos would kill him, ... and we treated them good. ... They lived on canned salmon and rice and they were very happy, and they were artistic. A lot of them did a lot of artwork and made things and we treated them right.

SH: Did any of them speak English, that you know of? Did you ever try to communicate with them?

DL: I was never [able to], couldn't communicate [with them]. ... You do it by hand signals, "Do this. Do that," you know, and they were very good workers, I'll tell you.

SH: How did the Philippine people treat you when you were at Clark?

DL: They treated us all right. It's a funny thing, but, when you help people, the have-nots hate the haves. Filipinos didn't particularly, [were not] fond of us, let us put it that way, because, even though we saved [them], ... freed them up, spent billions of dollars redoing their thing, they still didn't like us, and, I mean, I wouldn't say that [on an individual level], but, I mean, as a general feeling. Individually, we made friends and things like that, but we weren't really welcome there.

SH: Did you go down into Manila?

DL: Oh, yes.

SH: How was the damage there?

DL: Well, the damage was extensive, because we went down, we'd go stay at the officers' club, and we had facilities, but Manila was pretty much destroyed. ... They had what they called the Intramuros. That's the walled city, and the inside of that was devastated and you could see,

everywhere, bullet holes, and, you know, where guns put holes. ... The only thing that wasn't damaged was the Manila Hotel, because General Douglas MacArthur owned it, was on the board of directors. ... That was standing all by itself, practically unharmed in all this devastation, [laughter] and you heard it here. [Editor's Note: The Philippine Government owned the Manila Hotel, but General MacArthur lived there and operated as *de facto* head of the facility during his tenure there before and after the war.]

SH: Did Clark Field look like it had sustained the same kind of damage that you had seen at Pearl Harbor as well?

DL: No, ... Clark Field, pretty much, was a regular base, you know.

SH: It was a regular base by the time you got there.

DL: But, the thing is, about a year after we left, there was an eruption in Mount, one of the ... volcanoes there, and put about a foot of ash on Clark Field and they closed it, because it cost too much to restore it. So, they closed Clark Field because of that, and they had took the planes off first, you know. [Editor's Note: In June 1991, Mount Pinatubo erupted and covered the base in a thick layer of ash, damaging many facilities. The US Armed Forces formally transferred Clark in its entirety to the Philippine Government in November of the same year.]

SH: How long are you on Clark then, in the Philippines?

DL: Six months.

SH: This brings us up to about 1946.

DL: 1946, yes. ... [I] went over in February, to Clark Field, in '46. Then, I was, I won't say discharged, because I was separated, in October of '46.

SH: Where were you sent from Clark Field then?

DL: Instead, I came home on a ship, [laughter] one of these things that could either be a troopship or, you know, a transport. ... Our bed was in lower number four, just a hammock down there, way down. So, me and two others, three other guys, we got a spot in back of the winch, in the back, put up tarps. We'd protect it as ours and we slept there. We did everything there. ... I saw, what is it? What's that movie? [Editor's Note: Colonel Lundberg is addressing his wife.] ... Anyway, there was a movie. I saw it seven times; oh, *State Fair*.

LL: *State Fair*, oh, yes.

SH: It was being played every night.

DL: Played every night, and, if we left our spot, we would have lost it. So, we stayed and sat through it seven times, eleven times, but ... we had a good time, let's face it.

SH: Did you come straight from Clark to the United States?

DL: From Manila to San Francisco.

SH: You did not stop in Hawaii then.

DL: No. ... When we got to San Francisco and we were coming into the harbor, it happened to be at night and they have these yellow lights. ... It was a little foggy and it really was eerie, coming in under all those big, yellow fog lights. You know, it was quite a thing, yes, and the first thing we all wanted was milk or ice cream, hadn't had any in a year-and-a-half. [laughter]

SH: By this time, did you sense a difference in San Francisco from when you left?

DL: Well, it was peacetime then.

SH: Were things calmer?

DL: ... Oh, yes, they were very calm. In fact, we went [to the] Top of the Mark and St. Francis [Hotel] and had steaks, you know, all the things we missed. [laughter]

SH: Did they treat you well, coming back that late?

DL: Oh, yes, everybody was nice to us.

SH: How long were you there?

DL: Oh, about a week. ... Then, I came home by train, ... to Fort Dix, but the thing that surprised me, during the day, it got nice and warm and cozy; at night, it got cold. I had to wear my battle jacket, because it got so cold at night, but, you know, after being a year-and-a-half in ninety degree heat, day in and day out, it was quite a change. [laughter]

SH: When did you start making plans for the future, like, "I am going to do this when I get home?"

DL: Well, I don't know if I, you know, really sat down and did a pattern. I came back because I had a job waiting for me at MetLife, twenty-six dollars a week, but all my friends, except for (Freddie?), were gone. They either, like my one buddy, went to college, [or] worked for, what the heck is it? Sperry Rand, I guess, and he was gone. ... You know, it's sort of like coming back to a desert, really. All your friends were gone and it wasn't the same.

SH: Had your brother gotten home before you?

DL: Yes, he got home before me.

SH: Had you gotten to see your brother when you were in the South Pacific at all?

DL: No, no.

SH: No chance to catch up.

DL: No, but he was with a fighter unit, but as a truck driver, you know, and he was on one of those islands. I forget which one.

DF: Did you two share stories of the war together?

DL: Not really. Well, first of all, when we got back, he went and got married. So, I didn't see too much of him after that. [laughter]

SH: Who was living at home when you came back?

DL: When I came back, actually, it was my youngest sister, Dorothy, I guess (Helen?) was home then, and the other two had gotten married. So, it was just my sisters and me, and my mother, of course.

SH: When you got home, did you take a vacation or go right to work?

DL: Well, you had, like, a terminal leave; like, you got paid for, like, sixty days, or something. So, I didn't do anything, ... but, then, I went back to work, because I was bored staying home. [laughter]

LL: ... Then, you decided to stay in the Reserves.

DL: Oh, well, when I was in the Philippines, they offered me a permanent commission, which is really an offer, because, if you get a permanent commission, they can't bump you, but I turned it down, because I wanted to go home. [laughter] I didn't want to stay in the Philippines. I'd have had to stay three years in the Philippines if I accepted that.

SH: Really?

DL: Yes, well, because they're trying to ... get people to stay because, really, actually, we were such [that] if we were invaded or anything, we were in no position to do a thing. We're completely helpless, really, at that point, because all the important people had gone home. Everything was broken up, and, really, we were not a very good military outfit at that time. ... Then, when I got to Fort Dix, they offered me a Reserve commission, and I jumped at it. I liked the military. I really did. I would have stayed in if I was in the United States and they offered me a permanent commission.

SH: What happened when Korea erupted? Was there a chance you would be called back?

DL: Yes, I could have been called back any time.

LL: They did make you an offer to come back, because of navigating. ...

DL: Oh, yes, but I turned it down. ...

SH: You were able to not go when you were called back.

DL: No, it wasn't mandatory.

SH: Okay.

DL: They were looking for volunteers, let's put it that way.

SH: What did you do in your Reserve training? Where were you attached?

DL: Well, all the Reserve training, when I lived in Jersey City, was down in the Bayonne Naval Base. ... They had headquarters they'd set [up] as training. You know, it's just general training things, like ...

LL: You were the commander.

DL: Oh, at the end.

LL: ... And, don't forget, you also were over in New York for a bit. ... Actually, your promotion took you out of it.

DL: Yes. I had a four-year Reserve assignment with the Sixth District OSI.

LL: Yes.

DL: The OSI is, like, the Office of Special Investigation. It's like the FBI in the Air Force. They did criminal investigation, counterintelligence, background checks, and one other thing. I forget what it is, ... but, in order to get in there, I had to get what they call an OSI top secret clearance. ... With that clearance, they went back through my grandparents, they went and checked [everything], they checked my high school. They went to my high school.

LL: My parents, my family.

DL: Her family, everybody. They did a very thorough [job]. See, what they're looking for in checks is where there's a blank spot, like, there's a month or six months unaccounted for, because, ... if you're going to be a spy, you had to be trained, and so, they checked to make sure there was no breaks in where your whereabouts were, you know, and, of course, your background, too.

LL: He liked it, but he got promoted out of it.

DL: Yes. I was there four years, you know, ... but, then, I got promoted to a major from a captain, and I got bumped out. ... The TO [table of organization] called for a captain.

SH: Tell me about when you met Mrs. Lundberg.

DF: I was going to ask that.

DL: [laughter] Ah, this is ...

LL: This is a story.

DL: A long story.

SH: Just for the record, she is the voice you hear in the background. [laughter]

DL: ... I managed a fast-pitch softball team in Jersey City, and we had a pretty close-knit group of guys. We used to go on vacations together and everything. ... About five of us went up to ...

LL: Williams Lake.

DL: Williams Lake, and I met a girl there who lived across the street from me, in Jersey City. So, I was talking to her and there was this girl laying next to her, with a towel over her head, and she said, "Oh, and this is Lillian," and she said, "Oh, hello," and put it right back over her face. [laughter] That was my first meeting with my wife, and then, at nights, we sort of got closer.

LL: Tell them how fast you proposed.

DL: Six weeks after. [laughter]

LL: We met in July and we went down to the Shore with ... his friends and our friends. We both had cabins and, coming home, he proposed to me. I said, "This is fast." [laughter]

DL: Well, you know, I was thirty-three at the time.

SH: Okay. This was well after the war.

DL: Well after the war, because I went to college nine years at night, to get my BS and MBA. So, that occupied me, and besides playing softball, with the guys. [laughter]

SH: Where did you go to school?

DL: NYU, School of Commerce, and then, ... Trinity, the graduate school, [90 Trinity Place, the home of the NYU Graduate School of Business Administration].

SH: You were still working for MetLife.

DL: Still working. I was going at night.

DF: You used the GI Bill to pay for your education.

DL: Yes, and the GI Bill paid for all of that. I had enough credits, if I wanted to start on my doctorate, but I was burned out, I'll be honest with you, and you know what? ... Tuition was eight dollars a point. It's now about eight hundred dollars a point; eight dollars a point.

SH: When did you retire from the Air Force, as a lieutenant colonel?

DL: I lived out here, in Rutherford.

LL: No, she said, "What year?"

DL: Oh, when I was sixty, so, whatever year that is.

SH: Before we end the interview, could you just briefly talk about the work that you have done with the Air Force Museum?

DL: Oh, yes, okay. That started; ... we can go up to West Point to the grocery store, [post exchange], about once a month, because things are thirty percent cheaper up there than the supermarkets, and it's a nice trip up to West Point.

SH: Oh, it is beautiful.

DL: It's beautiful, and you're treated nice.

LL: And they have Retiree Day.

DL: And they had a Retiree Day there, once a year, where all the retirees, even if you didn't retire from West Point, who come up there, we're invited up there. ... You're invited up to, what's the name of that hall? Eisenhower Hall, where ... it's big enough for six thousand cadets to be there.

LL: Beautiful.

DL: Beautiful, and they give you coffee, bagels, and [there are] all sorts of things that you could go and look at, you know, on the outside. ... Then, when you finished there, ... you went over to the field and they had a special reviewing stand for all the retirees and they put on a parade just for the retirees, and it was quite impressive. ... At the end of the parade, they had parachutists come down, you know, ... and they parachuted down and [they landed] right on the spot, you know, and then, from there, we went over to the cadet mess hall and we had lunch with cadets. They put, there's what, eight people?

LL: One at each end.

DL: And one cadet at each other end [of the table], you know, and, if you want to see something that's impressive, it's their mess hall. It looks like King Arthur's palace. It's all brick and stone

and high ceilings, you know, wood ceilings, and they have, like, a big, round parapet in the middle, you know, where they could go up and talk to the cadets, and they serve four thousand cadets at a time there. ... They did [this], snuck us in, I think, either before or after that, and all of us ... came and we had lunch there. They had a cadet at each table, and it was very interesting. ... Then, after that, at that time, [they had] what they call a paramilitary show on the outside. A lot of people came and they had all kinds of guns and exhibits and stuff, and that's where I met this guy who told me about the B-29 at the airfield, New England Air Museum, and that's when I ...

SH: There was already a museum in place, the New England Air Museum.

DL: Oh, yes, long before me, and so, I called them up and I got the executive director. I asked him if I could come over and, "I heard there was a B-29 there and [I was wondering] if I could, you know, go in and just sit and take my picture in the navigator's [seat]." He said, "Sure, come on over," and we went over, and Mike Speciale was the executive director. ... We went out to look at the B-29 and I was so disappointed. It's sitting out in the field with weeds. ... The tail was dented, the wingtips were dented, and they had it covered with a tarp to keep water from going in the cockpit and it was dirty. ... Oh, it was a mess, and I said to Mike, I said, "Mike, do you know that's the most expensive airplane you have, sitting right there?" ... He said, "I know, but we don't have the money to restore it." I said, "Let me see what I can do." It took me about six years, scrounging. I tried the 20th Air Force, the Air Force Association, the 58th Bomb Wing, that was in existence then. I even went to Metropolitan, trying, to no success, and then, a good thing happened for us, not for him, but the guy who was president of the 58th Bomb Wing Association, who was the guy who wouldn't say "Yes," he died, and the guy that replaced him was (Tom Murray?). He lived up in Newburgh, [New York]. So, I got in touch with Tom and I said, "I'd like [for] you to come over and see the B-29." I said, "We're trying to restore it, but we have to get funding for it." He said, "Okay, I'll come over."

SH: Where was the museum? Where was the plane?

DL: The plane was at ... Bradley International Airport in Hartford.

SH: In Hartford, okay.

DL: ... It's got another name, but, if you say Hartford, you know what I'm talking about. So, he came over and he looked at it and he said to Mike, "I am now the president of the 58th Bomb Wing Association." He said, "I looked it up and I have the authority to authorize us to do this," he said, "because I don't want to go to the committee, because the committee [would] just tear it apart and nothing'd ever happen." So, he says, "I hereby authorize the 58th Bomb Wing to ... collect money to restore the B-29," and he said, "I have my check for a thousand dollars," gave him a check for a thousand dollars. He appointed this guy, Jim Petrillo, in charge of collections. Now, Jim must be a millionaire or something himself, because he made very generous donations, I'll tell you, but he did a great job. He was able to get four hundred thousand dollars, and they said, at that time, you needed eight hundred thousand [dollars], because [we had to] put up a building, and everything else. ... The Governor of Connecticut gave us a million-dollar grant to finish the restoration and for the museum. So, we were able to finish it. We had a lot of people

volunteer to do work, like, the engines were restored by an engineering school, the propellers were restored by the propeller company. The guy came and polished the whole airplane for nothing. ... You can see your face in it. ... Boeing was very helpful. They furnished us all the parts we needed. ... We took out all the insulation inside, you know, and they gave us the canvas to put it up. ... I'll never forget, ... I told him, one of the guys that was in charge of the crew, the front wheels were a mess. They were all damaged, and he went out and, somehow, he found two brand-new tires, and that matched. ... He was so elated over it, you know, like a guy finding gold, and he was so elated over finding two new tires. So, he put the new tires on the front wheels, because everybody would see that. ... They completely took all the instrument panels out and restored them. Took them out, restored them, but they put them all back so that they were functional, and the flight engineer's panel, the navigator's instruments, the radioman's instruments, everything. ... If you see it now, it's better than when it was new, [laughter] and it's in a hangar by itself and there's an area for memorabilia, that they had somebody working on it. I don't know where that is right at this moment, but everybody donated memorabilia, and, if you go there, you'll see my picture when you come in, that I started it, with that picture. [laughter]

SH: Congratulations, that is wonderful. Have you been to reunions? Have you ever caught up with any of your crew?

DL: Oh, yes, we had reunions. We didn't go to last year's because ...

LL: Yes, we went last year.

DL: No, we didn't; no, the year before, didn't go last year because it was in Wright-Patterson [Air Force Base] and your back was bad.

LL: We went to the one at ...

DL: The one before.

LL: ... New England Air Museum, though, because, remember, that was when I had the accident.

DL: Yes.

LL: And I had to put the patches on me. Yes, they had one at the New England Air Museum.

DL: Yes, but it'd only been one since you had the accident.

LL: Yes, yes.

DL: ... But, they said they may not have many more because, I'm a baby in the 58th Bomb Wing, most of the guys are in their late eighties or nineties. He said, ... "Everybody [that] came had wheelchairs or canes or, you know, were disabled," and it was only a few, like sixty people, including the wives, at the last one. ... He said that would probably be the last one, you know.

They may have them at the Air Museum, for those who can make it, because the last one at the Air Museum, we had quite a few, what, two or three hundred people?

SH: Is there anything that we have not remembered to ask?

DL: No, I think you did a pretty good job. [laughter]

SH: I thank both of you for having us here today. It has been a delight to talk with you.

DF: Yes, it has certainly been a pleasure.

SH: Yes. It was wonderful to see your memorabilia. Just for the record, there are tremendous artifacts around the room, a scrapbook your daughter put together and all sorts of great things. Thank you so much.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

Reviewed by Sean Redican 2/12/09
Reviewed by Jessica Ondusko 3/10/09
Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 7/27/09
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 7/28/09
Reviewed by Donald E. Lundberg 11/3/09