

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE B. SKIDMORE

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SHAUN ILLINGWORTH

and

ELAINE BLATT

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TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Elaine Blatt: This begins an interview with George Bernard Skidmore on Friday, April 27, 2007, in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Thank you for coming. I want to start with where and when you were born.

George B. Skidmore: I was born in Mt. Vernon, New York, on March 23, 1921.

EB: What was your father's name and what did he do for a living?

GS: He was George A. Skidmore and he was a machinist, working on printing presses.

EB: On your pre-interview survey, you wrote, "Indentured apprentice, 1909." I was wondering what that meant.

GS: All right. When he graduated from high school in 1909, and he had four brothers and four sisters and his father died and he had to support the family, in order to support the family, he became an indentured servant, or an apprentice, an indentured apprentice, for six years, I think it was, [that] he had to work. ...

EB: He did that as a machinist, or was that later?

GS: No, he was a machinist.

Shaun Illingworth: Do you know anything about the family's history, where they came from?

GS: Well, we're [of] British descent, and the family came over right after the Pilgrims, the Skidmore part of the family. We have a record of them working for the Dutch East India Company, made four trips across the ocean, keeping records for the Dutch East ... India Company, before he [an ancestor] ... earned enough money to bring his family over from England. ... They settled up in Plymouth, except for one thing; their religion wasn't pure enough and they got kicked out of the colony there, [to] which my father always says, "That's because he didn't put enough in the collection plate," or something, [laughter] but they stayed up there in New England. ... They're living outside of the Plymouth Colony. They weren't allowed to live with them there. They had to have their own place and all. ... Let's see what I can tell you about them. ... Well, living outside the Plymouth Colony, they didn't have the protection of it, and I don't know if you've heard of King Philip's War, where the Indians ... bothered them. [Editor's Note: King Philip's War, fought between the Wampanoag and the English colonists of New England, took place from 1675 to 1676.] So, they ... moved out of Connecticut, where the war was going on; moved down into Connecticut, that is, where the war was not going on, and then, they finally settled up there in Westchester County. ... The story is that they finally bought half of Long Island from the Indians, not the good half, the eastern half, they bought, and settled in there. Soon, [the] Dutch moved in on Long Island there, ... when they had New Amsterdam, and [it] became a Dutch colony. They didn't get along too good with the Dutch then, so, they ... moved down to Long Island there. ... Before the Revolutionary War, the British came and chased the Dutch out, or bought them out, one or another. Then, ... in the war, the Skidmore Family, as in Isaac Skidmore; I don't know which one of my grand-grand-grandfathers he was. I think he goes back about four or five generations there; ... he had some iron, bog iron, up

in Connecticut that he owned and he heard that Washington needed cannon. So, he melted the bog iron down, made some cannons for George Washington. The only problem was, the iron wasn't quite as good as it should have been and many of these cannon that he sold to George Washington blew up when they fired them. So, George Washington never paid him for it, us for it. So, the government owes us plenty of money there [laughter] for the cannon we supplied. He melted a lot of the cannons down and sold them [as] cannonballs, at fifty cents apiece, during the Revolutionary War, riding around with one slave he had. ... We never did find out whether he was white or black, but the two of them went around selling cannonballs. ... Oh, let's see what else I can tell you there. ... Well, at the end of the war, he appointed himself a general, ... gave himself the title, and he was a general with ... an army of one. ... Well, let's see what else that he did during [his time] there. ... One thing about these cannons that blew up, if you go up to Fort Ticonderoga, you can still see pieces of the cannons that are right where they blew up. They never did move them. Well, the story there is, it's a little bit different from what Washington gave us, the British moved in, you can check the history on this, ... overnight. They hauled their cannon up on a hill overlooking the fort and they could sit on top of this hill and fire down into Fort Ticonderoga. The only thing was that the cannons that my great-great-great-great-great-grandfather sold them [the Americans] wouldn't quite reach up to the top of the hill. So, they found out they could get their cannonballs up on top of the hill, where the British were, by putting a double charge in the cannon. That's why the cannons blew up, from my viewpoint, [laughter] but we never did get paid for them and that was the only contribution we made during the Revolutionary War. ... Well, he finally got promoted to a major by George Washington, but they never did give [him] his money that he was claiming he was owed.

EB: Seems like a dangerous life.

GS: Well, that's the Revolutionary War, and, finally, well, I don't know, ... living out on Long Island there and owning half of it, ... they were in a lumber business. They cut a lot of the trees down out on Long Island, sold them for lumber, and, three or four generations later, we find ... that they're still out there on Long Island. ... Like I say, ... first, it was Indian, then, it was the Dutch, ... then, it was British, then, the Colonists move in. Living through three or four different wars there, [the] family was using up their wealth, but, in, I think it goes back to 1879 now, when they had a fire and no fire department around, the lumber mill and a lot of houses [were lost] and a couple of great-uncles died, at that time, and so that by the time my parents were there, they really didn't inherit anything. ... He had, like I say, four brothers and four sisters to support, so, he indentured himself out as a mechanic, ... working for them, and [that] brings us up to one of the questions you asked me in there, [the survey], was, "When and where my parents got married?" ... I called my sister, Edith Bromm, since I know that [she] might know something about it; couldn't find anybody that knows when or where they were married. So, I can't find out when my parents were married; you know what that makes me? [laughter] So, here I am. ...

EB: What was your mother's name?

GS: My mother's name, Bernadine Pauline Hake [pronounced "hay-k"], or Hake [pronounced "ha-ka"], H-A-K-E. It's German. We called her Hake ["hay-k"], but, I guess, sometimes in Germany, it would be Hake ["ha-ka"]. ... My great-grandmother, I think it was, was married when she was eight years old, over in Germany, and she became the second wife to, what was

his name? Joseph Hake, I think. ... Well, over in Germany, he was a button maker. When he came to this country, in about 1840, ... he made clothing. He made a lot of the uniforms for the Civil War soldiers, invented that funny hat that was crushed down in the front and on the back. He made those things and, let's see, he ... didn't do any fighting during the war. He just supplied uniforms for them. Oh, the eight-year-old little girl that was married, he waited until she was at least twelve before he brought her to this country. He was living in this country and she was living in Germany, so that, even though they were legally married, I guess, and all that stuff, eight-year-old kids were; they usually did that, [married a child to an older man], at that time. She came over to this country with him in 1840. She had two half-sisters that were her aunt's [children] and they lived up in the Bronx, which is where I think my parents were married, up in the Bronx. ... My older sister was born ... up in the Bronx and I was born in Mt. Vernon. ...

EB: Did your mother work?

GS: ... My mother was a schoolteacher, and, oh, this is another interesting point. [laughter] She taught school. Well, she went to college up there, in, oh, I think it was Hunter College, in New York, at that time. She became a schoolteacher. She was teaching fifth grade children and, one day, one of the students brought a pistol to class and he fired it once or twice in the classroom there. My mother went out and went to the front office and quit teaching. She just couldn't take it, when a student could carry in guns in the classroom. So, that was back in about, oh, I guess during ... World War I, back in 1918, possibly. So, those things have been going on for a long time. She didn't work much after she was married, except that, at home, she ran a seamstress business. She did make, oh, women's dresses and aprons and clothing, which helped support the family, ... our family, during the [Great] Depression there a bit. My father was working as a machinist and there wasn't always work for him, but, with the little dressmaking my mother did, we survived.

SI: Did your father ever talk to you about his time as an indentured apprentice? Did he say if it was difficult?

GS: Not much. He was doing it for the money and there wasn't that much money, so, there wasn't that much to talk about.

SI: Did he ever mention any challenges he had supporting his family?

GS: Well, yes, we could see that. We found that there were times, when we were kids, [that] we were a little bit hungry. ... We'd get a box of shredded wheat, and I had three sisters, and the shredded wheat would come with twelve biscuits in a box and there were four of us, four of us kids. We'd have one biscuit for breakfast, one for lunch and one for supper. ... My father, ... the machines that he worked on were printing presses and the machines were too big to bring in to a little shop to fix. He had to go to where the machine was to repair one of them. So, he would be gone for weeks at a time. He'd go to Cleveland to work on a press out there for a while, until he got that one running. Then, he'd come back home and, when he came back home, he had some money and we had a big meal, a feast and everything, glad to see him home, but that went on during the [Great] Depression there, pretty much.

SI: Was he involved in a union at all?

GS: Yes, he had to join the union, and, as that, he was an indentured apprentice, is what they called them. ... The union got work for him, but it didn't help much giving him any money.

EB: You said you had two sisters.

GS: I had three sisters, myself and three sisters.

EB: Were they older than you?

GS: ... One older sister and two younger ones.

EB: When was your sister born, the oldest one?

GS: The oldest one, I think, was born in the Bronx. ...

EB: Your father did not serve in World War I.

GS: No.

EB: Was he too old at that point?

GS: He was married with a family to support.

EB: That is why I was wondering when your sister was born.

GS: Yes. I think, when, in 1909, he graduated from high school at Mt. Vernon and he became an indentured [apprentice], it was six years [of] service as an indentured servant. So, that's 1915 when he finally finished his apprenticeship, and then, as a journeyman machinist, he ... was earning a little bit more of a living than before that.

SI: When did the family move from Mt. Vernon to New Jersey?

GS: Right after I was born, I believe. ... Well, let's see, ... I had an aunt there who married somebody from Rahway, New Jersey, and she wanted to move there. So, my grandmother moved with her, and then, ... my mother decided that she would keep the family together. She joined her sister, who was my aunt, and they moved to Rahway, New Jersey, where we grew up. That's where I met Tom [Kindre] and everything.

SI: Your earliest memories are of growing up in Rahway.

GS: Yes.

SI: What are some of your earliest memories, of your neighborhood and of growing up, as a child?

GS: Oh, yes, we weren't allowed to cross the street. ... Tom would be on one side of the street, playing and yelling across at me, and neither one of us was allowed to cross the Seminary Avenue that we lived on, but, oh, we survived. I don't know of anything special then. ... I guess the earliest things I remember is going to a doctor, or a doctor coming to me, and bringing ... little cherry candies for us kids when we ... had physicals, or something like that. Doctors used to come to the house in those days.

EB: Did you feel the effects of the Great Depression?

GS: Well, sort of, yes. ... We did without a lot of things and, like I say, my father didn't come home, because he was working, and didn't leave any money for my mother, and she didn't sell too many aprons or dresses that she made. ... We were down to [where] a box of shredded wheat would serve us for a day's meals, three meals a day with shredded wheat, and a little can of evaporated milk in a quart of water, and maybe a spoonful of sugar on it. ... I think, many a day, I can remember eating shredded wheat for breakfast, lunch and supper.

Thomas Kindre: I remember, when your father came home, it was a cause for celebration and we used to play softball with him in the backyard. He got all the kids together.

GS: Oh, yes. He was a pretty great, good father, [adept at] handling us kids. ... When he had time, he'd play with us, and, like Tom says, we'd have a gang together playing softball.

EB: What other kinds of games did you play?

GS: Oh, I don't know. What else did we do, besides softball?

TK: Tell them the name of your mother's cat.

GS: That, I don't remember now.

TK: I do, Alsabimitybalaboogigity.

GS: Oh, that one, yes, "Bangamafoo Singosityboo Guratsablimity Pinketybumpsy Skrukamafoo Blood."

TK: Now, what he just uttered was ...

GS: A password.

TK: His mother's cat's name, plus something we added to it. We had a club, called the Red Pirates Club, and that was our password, but he'll get to that.

GS: ... Tom's cousin there, we told him the password and Tom says, "Now, remember, mum is the word." So, he remembered "Mum" as the password. [laughter]

EB: You had a Red Pirates Club.

GS: Yes.

EB: What did you do with the club?

GS: Well, you're going to ask me about "Big Stosh," as I remember him. We had a fellow named, we called him, Big Stosh, and, well, he caught up to us in the sixth grade. He was about eleven years old when he came to this country and the family moved in. The family, of course, spoke Russian. None of them spoke English. Well, ... the state would take him and let him come to school, but nobody could teach him, because nobody spoke Russian. None of the teachers spoke Russian. ... Anyhow, they promoted him to the second grade without teaching him anything and, again, he went to third grade, fourth grade, all the way up into sixth grade, when we caught up to him, ... or he caught up to us. Tom and I, we were in the sixth grade. ... By this time, it was about 1932, in the Depression. ... Well, the way the story goes in the newspaper, ... in the middle of the Depression, ... a lot of people were pretty much, oh, what would you call it? Well, the Depression was affecting them and they had this one fellow, he couldn't support his family and he was very discouraged. So, he went down [to] the railroad station and a newspaper article says that he jumped in front of the train as it came through; body parts were strewn about two miles down the track. Well, now, Tom and I, we were twelve-year-old kids, you know, came Saturday, what are we going to do? walk up and down the track and see if we could find any body parts. [laughter] So, we did. We walked up and down the track and didn't find anything. Well, anyhow, Monday came, we went to school and, the next day, we're out there playing ... in the playground there at the school. So, I had a little matchbox, or I think Tom had the matchbox. Anyhow, we had a matchbox there and we poked a hole in the bottom of the matchbox and stuffed it with cotton, poured some ketchup ... at one end of the cotton, and my thumb was sticking up through the hole in the bottom of the box. So, we slid the cover back, there was the thumb, and we went out in the playground, running around to the girls, "Hey, you want to see a dead guy's thumb? Look, it's moving. He isn't dead yet," [laughter] and the girls would squeal and run away and we'd chase after them with the bloody thumb. [laughter] Well, the teacher finally came out and wanted to know what was going on. [I explained], "Oh, well, I'm not making any noise. The girls are the ones that are squealing and making all the noise." [The teacher replied], "Well, they tell me you're to blame here." "No, not me. I didn't do anything." Well, anyhow, she decided that we'd have to stay after school, Tom and I, and I don't know who else we had involved in it. I think Wilbur Manewall was involved in it.

TK: Sounds right.

GS: And, anyhow, we were running around on the schoolyard there, during recess. So, she decided, "Well, you're going to have to stay in after school." So, she had four or five of us lined up there after school, and we'd have to stay after school when everybody else went out and was playing ball. ... We're sitting in the classroom there and she says, "Well, you're not going to just sit there." She says, "Here, ... here's a book. You're going to read this book to Big Stosh." She finally recognized his problem was that he didn't know how to read. He'd never been taught English and he'd just been promoted in the school. That's the way they did it, nobody left back.

You promote them, ... let somebody else worry about them. So, this one teacher's a little bit more conscientious. She says, "You and Tom and the rest of you are going to help him ... to learn English." So, we would sit there and she gave us a book. Well, the book she gave us to read was *Huckleberry Finn* and we had to read one page, each of us, and then, hand the book to the next one to read the page, and we'd sit there after school. When everybody else is out playing ball, we're reading *Huckleberry Finn*. Well, we finally decided that the life we were leading there, going to school, sitting in the classroom, wasn't the life we wanted. The life we wanted was like *Huckleberry Finn*, [laughter] drifting down the Mississippi River in the summer, lazy river, you know. So, we finally drew up a pact. These Red Pirates, or whatever we were, drew up this pact. ... I remember, we wrote it up on the back of a paper bag and had everybody sign it in blood. [laughter] So, anyhow, we're all set. We were going to hitchhike down to Pittsburgh, where the Ohio River starts, and then, we would build a raft there and float down the Mississippi. ... When we got to [the] Mississippi, we'd sail down to New Orleans. We figured we'd make it before it got to wintertime, and then, we were going to fight pirates, because New Orleans was where the pirates were. ... That's what we knew. We remembered that part from our history. So, we had this all signed up and [were] getting ready to go, had a date where we'd meet out on the highway, and I made up a whole loaf of bread into peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to take with me. We got out on the highway and this guy doesn't show up. [laughter] "Oh, Tom didn't show up. It's got to be wrong. He's going to rot in hell. He signed it in blood. [laughter] So, anyhow, we'll have to look and see where he is here." We looked, went over to the school and looked in the classroom. He wasn't there. "Where is he?" We go over to his house to see if we could find him. Now, this is where we disagree. I say there was a sign on the front door that said, "Quarantine: Measles." He says it was chickenpox. So, which did you have, measles or chickenpox?

TK: No, actually, it was scarletina, a finer version of scarlet fever.

GS: Oh, anyhow, he had a sign on the front door, "Quarantine."

TK: Yes.

GS: Well, it's not his fault that he got whatever it was. [laughter]

TK: ... I had to stay in the house for six weeks.

GS: Yes.

TK: That's what they did in those days. The whole house was quarantined. Nobody could go in or out of the house. Well, my parents could come out, but nobody could go in. ... So, I missed the big adventure.

GS: Yes. So, he missed it. Well, Big Stosh decided ... he wasn't going to wait for Tom to get well. ... His family was a big family. He had three or four brothers and sisters, and some were older, but his father ran a junk deal, [was a junk dealer]. He had a horse and a wagon and drove around town collecting any kind of garbage or junk that anybody wanted to put out. Whatever he could get for that, he was supporting his family on, but Big Stosh was just one more mouth to

feed when he wasn't bringing in any money. ... Here he [Big Stosh] was, seventeen years old, in the sixth grade, and he got a letter from the State of New Jersey that ... [the] laws don't require him to be educated past the sixth grade, or past the age of seventeen. So, he was out of the education system. The teacher told him, he says, "You can't come to school anymore. That's all the education you get for free." So, he was decided. Well, he had to do something. That's why he wanted to go, and he wasn't going to go back home. ... I remember telling him, "Well, look, you go ahead and go down to Pittsburgh and wait for us there at Pittsburgh, where the Allegheny and the Monongahela River meet and form the Ohio. Wait right there, at the end of Pittsburgh, and you build a raft there and we'll find you someplace on the river, walking up and down the banks of the river." That's the way we figured we'd finally catch up to him. Well, okay, in the meantime, what are we going to do? We were stuck there, waiting for Tom to get over his scarletina, or whatever it was. [laughter] I don't know, I thought it was measles, but, anyhow, ... he went down there. ... Big Stosh disappeared then and the police came around, wanting to know where he was or if we knew anything about him. Mum was the word. So, we didn't tell anybody anything. We'd signed it in blood, you know. It's a big secret, so, that's what it was going to be. So, anyhow, ... oh, I guess it was ... six years later, I remember, we were waiting to graduate from high school. ... We had a rehearsal that afternoon and Tom was out ... in the front yard, cutting the grass, when up drives a robin's egg blue Cadillac convertible, Big Stosh behind the wheel, you know. "Well, where have you been and what did you do?" Oh, he gives us this story, you know. ... He says, "You people didn't show up," so, he said, he went down to hit Pittsburgh. He found Pittsburgh [well] enough. He'd had enough schooling, so [that] he could read a map a little bit. ... He could speak pretty good English and [was] getting along with it all. ... So, he did all right getting down there. When he got there, ... he found, after sailing down the Mississippi and everything, he had to get a job someplace. Well, he got there on the docks, and he was a big, husky fellow. Like I say, he's seventeen, eighteen years old then.

SI: Down in New Orleans?

GS: Yes, and he decided he'd get a job. Well, the jobs on the docks were available. Like I say, a big, husky fellow, he went to work on the docks, pushing bales of cotton around, and so forth. ... Well, one thing was, he'd had some education ... by the time he got to sixth grade. Even though he hadn't learned to read much, he was not stupid. He was fairly brilliant. So, he got himself a job on the docks there and, within a year or two, he's in charge of a gang on the docks, loading and unloading cotton, whatever comes through the port there. ... While working there, he found the union, got involved with the union, ... because he was white, too; that was the other thing that helped him down there. Most everything else was run by the blacks on the dock, but he was white and he worked with them, got along with them, [was] a real good-natured fellow. So, he was quite successful in the union. The first thing you know, he's in charge of the union that's running the docks down there and, after six years, ... he's now about twenty-four, twenty-three, twenty-four years old down there and in charge of all the dockworkers in New Orleans. So, he even told [us], he said, part of it [was], ... on payday, he used to run a crap game and he was the only one that could count the dots on the dice [laughter] and tell who won the pot or who didn't, not that he was [doing anything] illegal, but he was making a living for himself. So, anyhow, he brought a thousand dollars home with him and dumped it in his mother's apron and was heading back to New Orleans when he passed Tom's house and saw us out there, stopped to say hello to us and he went, took off. Well, we didn't hear from him again for another six years

or so. By that time; ... it was later than that. I forgot when it was now. It was after World War II. ... I happened to be in New Orleans and figured I'd try and look him up, if he was connected with the unions. So, I went to the union hall and [tried to] find out if anybody knew or heard of him or anything. ... Somebody seemed to think that he went back to Russia during World War II, working as an interpreter, which sounds logical, but we never could prove much of it. We also found out that a couple of his sisters were living in Rahway and got married, but they hadn't heard from him, either. So, he just disappeared in World War II. Whether he was on our side or their side or wherever he was, [we] never heard anything more from him. ... I often said that if Tom hadn't had the measles and we went down to New Orleans, we could have run the whole country from there. [laughter]

SI: Wow, that is pretty amazing.

GS: Well, those things happen, you know.

SI: Was Big Stosh a rarity or were there more kids who did not know how to speak English? Was it an immigrant neighborhood?

GS: No, I think he was the only one that I know of that had that kind of a problem.

SI: Were there a lot of immigrants and immigrant groups in the neighborhood?

GS: Oh, I think so, at that time. Who else did we have? We had a group of Italians in there that were in school with us and, I don't know, we didn't pay much [attention] to who was what. ...

SI: There was no conflict.

GS: No. ... We didn't have any fight with them. ... Oh, we had one little problem there, once in awhile. They had the parochial school, [which] was run by St. Mary's [Church], and we were public [school] students. In parochial school, they had to pay for their education, ... so, they usually went to parochial school two or three years, but, once it got to high school there, they went to the public schools. ... We used to have fights ... that started when somebody hit a foul ball that somebody thought was fair and ... we'd stand there, argue with it, and [be] swinging baseball clubs or baseball bats here and there, ... but, generally, I don't think there was anything serious.

EB: Were there any African-Americans families?

GS: Oh, yes, we had two or three African-Americans there. Who? Jones was one. You heard what happened to Bill. What was his first name?

TK: Kenny Jones.

GS: Kenny Jones.

TK: He became a doctor.

GS: Yes, he became a doctor. He couldn't do much in school. We thought he was probably one of the stupidest ones in the class. ... Four years after we're out of high school, we find out he's getting his doctor's degree.

EB: Was there any racism?

GS: I don't think so. We got along good with him.

TK: There weren't very many.

GS: No.

TK: I think, in high school, we had about four black kids, and they were accepted ... as equals, I think.

GS: Yes. We did our homework together with them.

TK: Yes.

SI: Were you involved in any activities at school, like sports or the newspaper?

GS: No, I wasn't. I was a little, puny kid, smallest one in the class, and Tom was pretty close to me. [laughter] ...

TK: They lined us up by height, in school.

GS: Yes. He was about fourth and I was fifth. ...

TK: Skid was first, I was second.

EB: What about clubs?

GS: In school?

EB: Besides the Red Pirates?

GS: I don't know. We had our own club, the Red Pirates, [laughter] which didn't mean much to anybody else.

SI: Are there any other adventures that you remember, besides this planned expedition to New Orleans?

GS: Well, ... what was I doing in New Orleans after the war? ...

SI: I meant other things that you did with the Red Pirates, other than the Big Stosh story.

GS: Oh, yes, we had a treasure chest we buried up in the woods someplace. ...

TK: We had an island. We identified an island in the Rahway River. We called it Treasure Island. By then, we'd read *Treasure Island*.

GS: Yes.

TK: [Robert Louis] Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, and we built a clubhouse on this island, out of a big packing case, and we'd buried the treasure, you know, under a big oak tree, so many paces from such-and-such a point, ... the directions; maybe it's still there.

GS: I don't know. It could be. I think I went back and tried to dig it up one time, couldn't find it. [laughter]

EB: What was in the treasure box?

GS: Oh, anything.

TK: Junk jewelry. ...

GS: Anything we could find, ... a little tab, like this, from a can of beer or something we had, and buried that. We had, oh, a diamond ring, which was a piece of glass and a real cheap ring, that I don't know where we found that, and ... a couple of old Indian Head pennies or something was in it. That was probably the most valuable stuff that we had, put it in a cigar box and dug a hole and buried it and trampled it down, spread bushes around it, so [that] nobody else could find it.

TK: It's amazing what literature did for us. We were caught up in *Huckleberry Finn*, *Treasure Island*. These became the things that motivated us.

GS: And Errol Flynn fighting the pirates, and who is the other one that was swashbuckling around? Oh, [I] can't think of them all.

SI: Were you able to go see movies?

GS: Yes, we had movies. ... Ten-cent movie, you go in the afternoon, and [that was] if we could get ten cents. If not, we snuck in through the back door or something.

EB: Did you listen to radio?

GS: Well, we had one fellow, Bob Miller, ... he was our radio (signal?). He and George Jensen were both radio enthusiastic. They ran two ham stations, and I had one illegal one, that I never did get over to New York to get a license with. ... Every now and then, I'd get on the air with something, talk to somebody, and we built them ourselves, little one-tube radios.

SI: Those were ham radios, though.

GS: No, they were just for just radio.

SI: For picking up broadcasts.

GS: ... You couldn't call it a ham radio. We weren't on the right frequencies and we had, oh, just spark-gap noise we could make, ... send out over the air. They were illegal, but we'd practice code and we were slow. ... I used to louse up half of the messages I tried to send. I eventually did get a license to ham radio, but I never used it too much. I ... couldn't tell whether I was talking to somebody in the next town or whether it was ... coming in from Europe, or I'd get some foreign language on there, South America, and couldn't talk to them, either.

EB: Did your parents ever talk about politics while you were growing up?

GS: Not too much. I remember my father explaining that, "Roosevelt's going to ruin this country. Social Security is going to bankrupt it." ... We had a butter-and-egg man that used to come on Friday nights, or something, I guess we were about his last stop, and he'd come in and he'd sit there in the living room, my father talking to him, arguing with him, oh, until midnight. We kids were ... trying to sleep up there and he, my father, told him, [Mr. Skidmore slams his fist on the table], "It's going to ruin the country." [laughter]

EB: He did not like Roosevelt.

GS: Al Smith, too, he didn't care much for Al Smith, either, but he didn't vote for him, or he didn't have to vote for him. He was [in] a different ... state.

SI: Do you remember seeing any New Deal programs in your area, like the WPA, [Works Progress Administration]?

GS: Yes. The NRA, [National Recovery Act], was there, you could [see that], but I don't think it affected us too much. WPA, no; well, yes, Bill Dalton went to WPA, or CCC, [Civilian Conservation Corps], I guess it was. ... That was after we got out of high school; a couple of them went to CCC.

TK: And I worked for the NYA, National Youth Administration, for one summer, digging ditches.

GS: See?

EB: Did you have a job while you were growing up?

GS: Yes. ... Well, the farms around there, ... I used to go up to Clark Township and work on the farm. ... [The] farmer used to take a truck down to Freehold, where there was a farmers' market, and he'd trade some of the stuff that he grew in for whatever the others had. ... He would run around town, trying to sell vegetables and fruits, and I can remember, too, ... some

woman wanted to know if these were locally-grown oranges. He said, "Oh, yes, they're grown [locally]." [laughter] ... [I said], "What do you mean, 'locally-grown oranges,' and you're saying, 'Yes?'" He says, "What does she care? If she knew any better, she wouldn't ask us." [laughter]

...

SI: What would you do on the farm? What were some of your chores?

GS: Oh, pulling weeds, picking tomatoes, picking beans and hoeing up the corn. ... When he would leave the farm, [he would say], "You're in charge. Make sure the horses get fed." ... In the spring, we'd have to walk behind a horse. He had a most unmatched team of horses. One always wanted to go the opposite direction. ... Trying to plow a field with a plow, I had to do more pushing on that plow than the horses did. I could do it better without them, I think, but, anyhow, it was summer work, mostly.

EB: Did you go to any dances when you were in high school?

GS: No, not much. I think we had one dance I went to. It didn't work out too good.

EB: You did not date at all.

GS: No. We were "women-haters." [laughter] Tom was chief woman-hater.

TK: I was what?

GS: You were the chief woman-hater.

TK: No.

GS: Well ...

TK: You dated before I did, I remember that.

GS: Yes, but I don't remember doing that much, either.

SI: Were there other social activities, socials, get-togethers?

GS: ... To go to the movie, I'd have to take my sisters to the movie, some time, every now and then, but I don't recall ... doing much with them.

SI: What were your favorite subjects in school?

GS: Oh, we hated all of them. [laughter] Miss Carhart's English class, Shakespeare, we always [said], "We hate it," or, "I hate it," anyhow.

SI: It sounds like you got pretty involved in reading, though.

GS: Yes. We read books and things, but mostly pirate stories, and we went to see all Errol Flynn's movies. ... I still can't think of the other swashbuckler. ...

EB: Who was your favorite movie star?

GS: I guess Errol Flynn, I guess. He was always winning.

SI: Were you interested in aviation at all as a child?

GS: No. We built model airplanes that didn't fly. ... Tom gave me the first ride I had in an airplane, when he was taking lessons, I guess, just in 1942 or '41, was it?

TK: That was when I was in the Civil Pilot Training program at Rutgers, my junior [year] and spring of my senior year. ... As a result of that, I got my private pilot's license, and then, ... I guess it was in the Spring of 1942, because I graduated May 10th and I went on active duty on June 15th. So, it was within that period that I took you up for your first airplane ride.

GS: Yes.

TK: We walked up to Westfield Airport and they checked me out and [we] rented an airplane for an hour and flew around over the countryside.

EB: What did you think about that first flight that you went on?

GS: I didn't think there was too much to it. ... I looked at it [as], if you had some place to go, it might be worthwhile, but, just taking off from an airport, circling around, and then, coming back down, didn't seem to do much for me. ... Besides, airplanes were too dangerous. ... They got to be real dangerous when they were shooting at us. ...

TK: As you'll learn later, though, he later had his own airplane.

GS: Oh, yes.

TK: His personal airplane that he owned for a number of years. ...

SI: Before going into the service, did you get to travel much? Did you ever travel much farther than Freehold?

GS: I don't know, not too much. ... I don't know. We used to go to New York City every now and then, Upstate New York, where some of our relatives, ancient relatives, lived, or where they had farms or things like that.

EB: When you were a senior in high school, did you always picture that you were going to go to college? Did you just think that that was the next step?

GS: No. We figured we were going to have to go to work, but, after we got out of high school, the Depression was on; there weren't that many jobs. ... My father kept telling me, he says, "Well, if you can, if we can afford it, we're going to send you to college." Well, he was going to send my sister to college. She was the oldest. He wanted everybody to have a college education, but my sister was always too sickly. ... If he mentioned something, to go down to the college and sign up, or apply for admission, or something, she got sick, couldn't go. So, finally, he said, "Well, all right, you're next in line. If she can't go to college, maybe you'll go to school and help support the family." Well, he had the idea that I was going to support the whole family the way he supported his family, his sisters and brothers. So, I was supposed to support the family, too, [for] some time, when I went [to] get a college education. Well, after three years of college, he was running out of money and he couldn't [afford it]. He told me he didn't think he could afford to pay tuition for the fourth year in college there, that I'd have to do something. Well, that's when I started working. I got a job with Air Reduction Sales Company, which was a weird job. Air Reduction Sales Company, what they did [was], they would take liquid air and manufacture it, and then, ... once they had liquid air, they would distill it, and different gasses, rare gasses, would come off at different temperatures. So, they invented and made all these big stills. Well, one thing that I remember, they had liquid oxygen, [which] is very corrosive. So, if you make a machine that handles liquid oxygen, you can't make it out of ordinary iron or steel. It had to be pretty high-grade stainless steel, and some of the valves, the only thing they could find that wouldn't corrode out was gold. So, here, ... oh, they'd have to manufacture their own valves and so forth, [do] a lot of machine work on them. So, I was supposed to keep track of [the gold]. Well, even before they made it, they'd get the drawings made up ... on a certain valve and I would have to measure the valve, you know, and, from it, calculate how much gold had to go into it, that had to be used, and then, see that the gold was ordered, where the paperwork went through, a lot of paperwork on something like that. So, I'd read these drawings and try to calculate how much of what metal they were going to use, and I had a job like that in the summer. ... I finally convinced them it was just as easy to use an Archimedes on them. Wasn't he the one that called, "Eureka, I have found it?" yes. ... Well, you put the object in water and weigh it, and then, you take it out of the water and weigh it. You have a difference there and you could ... tell how much gold was on the thing and how much steel was in it. [Editor's Note: Mr. Skidmore is referring to Archimedes' Principle, "Any object, wholly or partly immersed in a fluid, is buoyed up by a force equal to the weight of the fluid displaced by the object."] So, I'd have to work on that. So, I did that mathematics on that and, ... just from the drawings, made up [the orders]. It was a summer job, ... but they paid me enough so that, the last [year], I had enough ...

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE-----

GS: ... [I was] looking for a job there, to stay on, but my father said, "No." He finally figured out, came September, time ... for tuition to [be] due, that he figured he'd pay it. ... I think he borrowed some money, from somebody, to pay for my last year of education. ... When I graduated, he gave me a bill for about three thousand dollars that he had spent, that ... he figured I owed him for my college education. Well, that was more than the education. The tuition didn't come to that much. ... I lived at home and commuted, and so forth. ... He was charging my sister rent now, since she graduated from high school. He was charging her rent there, while she was staying home. So, if I was living home, [he figured] I'd have to pay him some. So, anyhow,

as I say, after I graduated, he figured I owed him about three thousand dollars. So, when I got into service, I used to send him [money]. Most of my pay went back home to him, to pay off the debt. So, by the time the war was over, I'd paid off the three thousand dollars. So, then, when I came home from the war, I got married and he gave me the three thousand dollars as a wedding present. [laughter] So, that's the way we survived.

SI: Why did you choose the Newark College of Engineering?

GS: Oh, I wrote to a couple of colleges and found they were pretty expensive, and New Jersey College of Engineering there was a state college and the government supported it. I think the first year [of] tuition was 183 dollars, which he [my father] could afford, or ... he'd help me pay for it, so that it was mostly on price, and they'd accepted me.

EB: Did you know anything about engineering beforehand? Did you have an interest in it?

GS: Well, my father wanted me to become a mechanic, like him, or a machinist, ... at least something like that. ... Oh, I wasn't really interested in it that much. ... You know, it was something to do and I understood it, though. I found it interesting, better than Shakespeare. Shakespeare, I just couldn't stand that guy. [laughter]

EB: Did you participate in any extracurricular activities in college?

GS: Oh, I managed a fencing team, which I think we beat Rutgers on.

SI: Really?

GS: Yes.

SI: Did you play against Tom?

GS: ... Yes, we played. Well, we had West Point we beat, and, oh, I don't know where else we had fencing teams in those days.

EB: Did you take up fencing because of all of your reading of *Huckleberry Finn* and fighting pirates?

GS: Probably, yes, probably. [laughter]

SI: Did you just manage the team or did you participate?

GS: Oh, I was participating. I got whooped more often than I won, but I managed it.

SI: Do you remember which blade you fenced?

GS: Well, mostly foil, although I liked the epee, because the foil moved too fast for the judges to see what was going on, where, with [an] epee, if you left a mark on him, you know, the epee we

had; oh, I forgot what it was. We'd put a red dye on the end, tip of the foil, and it would leave a red blotch, which you could erase off, but, if you had your white jacket on, if they found any red dots on it, well, they could tell that you made a touch, whereas the others, a flick of the wrist and you could make a touch with a foil, but the umpire didn't see it. You got cheated out of it. [laughter] ...

SI: Had you done any fencing before college?

GS: Oh, just with Tom and wooden sticks for swords. [laughter] We used to run around. Douglas Fairbanks, he was the other fencer.

SI: Okay.

GS: Yes, I knew I'd think of it. He was the other fencer that we had.

EB: What year was this, when you were in college?

GS: Well, we graduated from high school in '38, and [it was] '38, '39, '40, '41.

EB: At that point, when you graduated from high school, what was the feeling when you would read about what was going on in Europe in the paper?

GS: We read them, but we didn't really believe everything that was said, either. ... They had a draft there, but we figured, "Well, it's [not serious]." Everybody was getting out of the draft. We didn't know too many people that got drafted. They weren't really pushing it. They would call them in and, by the time they gave them a physical, ... half of them had flunked out. So, we didn't worry about it and never thought they'd really get a hold of us that way. ...

EB: Did you think that a war was coming with Japan?

GS: Yes, we figured there probably would be, but we didn't know how it was going to affect us. ... I guess about the first time we really heard too much about it was in March of '42. ... The war started in December '41 and we figured, "Well, maybe we will get involved in it," but we didn't know what it would be. ... I didn't really figure there was that much involved in it, but, in March of '42, the Navy recruiting team came to the college and they gave us lectures and [were] trying to tell us that, "Okay, what we can do for you [is], we need pilots, we'll train you to be a pilot, a fighter pilot, and all that goes with it. You'll get a uniform right away. We'll give you a commission. You'll get a uniform as a cadet," or something, "and you'll go off to another nine months [of training]. We'll make pilots out of you, [with] ... a commission," and so forth. ... We didn't know what the difference between being drafted or commissioned or [an] enlisted personnel [was], but, when they came to me and asked me if I would sign up, you know, [I replied], "No, I don't think so, ... doesn't sound like that good a deal for me," figuring that, by now, we were getting to see ... where the jobs were, who was getting jobs, which, let me bring you up-to-date on that. Well, before, in the Summer of '41, maybe July and August, I'm working at this Air Reduction Sales Company and having a job there, getting paid. ... I looked at the graduating classes, the Class of '41. ... Being, you know, it's a small college, you couldn't help

knowing people that were in different classes. In fact, a lot of people were spending five and six years to get through the engineering degree, even in those days, and so, they were started out in the Class of '41 or '40 and, finally, they were getting into our class. We knew them as classmates, only taking half a course that we were taking, because they'd already had other ones. ... Anyhow, that summer, I looked around and saw that a lot of the people that graduated in '41 did not have jobs that were anywhere connected with engineering. They were making hamburgers and working in the drugstore, and so, where are the engineering jobs that we [were] told [about]? The school told us, you know, that they had advertised it, engineering was going to be a place that's going to need plenty of help. "We're coming on the war and the engineers are going to win the war for everybody. It's not like any and all these other jobs." So, all right, they [his classmates] looked at, "Well, we'll have a job," but, then, there weren't any jobs. You know, 1941, nobody got [jobs]. They graduated from college and here it was, August, September, in '41, and they were still looking for jobs. ... I found a group of students that had graduated before us and what they were doing [was], they said, "Well, we had to make our own job and we found something that's interesting. There was a schooner up in," oh, which one was it now? New Hampshire. I think it was in Portsmouth up there, "about a 125-foot schooner there, needed a little bit of work on it and we went up and looked at it," and this group had already looked at it before and they had found out that what they could do [was], ... they could survive, but they weren't going to get rich on it. They took this schooner and repaired it, and then, they could handle, oh, maybe a trailer load of lumber. You could load that down below decks there and, up in New Hampshire, they had a lot of hardwood lumber, was what they grew there. The furniture factories were down in North Carolina, where ... the underneath part [of the furniture] was soft pinewood, but they'd have a veneer on top and they'd have to get some of the hardwoods for the veneer. So, they needed this lumber brought down. Trucking was [an option]. All right, you could go up there and truck it down, and they were getting ... paid pretty good money for a truckload of lumber. ... We figured, "Well, we can bring it down to them on the boat and we'll have a lot of fun sailing around up and down the coast. ... When winter comes, we can take the sailboat and go down [to the] the South Seas, and maybe we'll find pirates down there." I don't know. [laughter] I think, there, ... well, we're reading stories about all the women they had with their grass skirts down there, dancing out in front of us all, looked like a better life than anything. ... You know, it was something we could do. So, we went over and asked them, "What's the chances of getting a job with you people, in the crew here?" He said, "Well, [the] only job we have open is for a navigator." "Oh, well, all right, let me see what I have to do to become a navigator." So, I went to the math professor there in Newark and asked him what he knew. I said, "You know, we've been studying engineering here and we've had a lot of mathematics, a lot of arithmetic and different trigonometry, and so forth, but one thing we haven't had, there's one part of mathematics that we never got anything [on], we're getting ready to graduate, when do we learn spherical trigonometry?" which is an altogether different part of mathematics than we'd seen. He says, "Well, we don't teach that here," he said, "but, if you want to learn it, there's a couple of books in the library you can take out and study it on your own," he says, "and, if you get stuck, maybe I can help you out a little bit, but," he said, "frankly, I never studied it myself." So, all right, I went and got his books out of the library and started getting interested in them, and there was a lot of extra work involved, trying to do spherical trigonometry. It's altogether different from that, with no teacher and no instructor, but the books were ... understandable. ... I was able to read and I studied them, wanted to know what else I had to do. ... Well, the Coast Guard issues the license for coastal navigators. So, all right, let me see what I can do. So, I went

to the Coast Guard and they said, "Well, you'll have to have a sextant and we [then] give you a test." So, I came down here to the Shore. I don't remember where it was now. There was a Coast Guard station down here someplace, or down in north of Belmar. Somewhere up there, there was a Coast Guard station, which I think probably does [still] exist. The building exists, anyhow, but I don't know if I could find it again, but I came down there and they said, "You'll have to have a sextant." Well, I didn't have a sextant, and, ... not only that, but the cheapest sextant I could find was about 135 dollars, for a used one, and I said, "Well, I can't afford the 135 dollars for a sextant. So, I'll see what I can do." I had a piece of plywood and started working on that and I cut it out, made it about the diameter of this table here. It was over three feet and [I] made myself a big sextant, like that. Well, I figured ... a large sextant will have the accuracy, but it's going to be clumsy to use. So, I went back to the Coast Guard and showed them my sextant. [I] said, "Well, here, I can measure your angles here and do the mathematics and see if I can show you where we are here." ... They came in and they were having a lot of fun out of the great, big sextant I brought in. [laughter] So, anyhow, they said, "Well, come on, let's see what you can do with it." I said, "I'll show you it works." So, I did. They took me out one night, on a nice, clear night, off [the] Jersey coast here. We got out there and [I] took some shots for them, brought it back and did some of the mathematics that I had figured out from books, and they finally decided, "Okay, here's your license." I was a coastal navigator. So, I went back and figured that, "Well, now, I can get a job, sailing up and down the coast, which is a better job than [most]. It's almost like fighting pirates anyhow, as close as I'd come to it." So, I was all set to [do this]. This was in August of '41, and, of course, came December in '41 and things changed a little. So, they're not going to be sailing a sailboat up and down the coast.

EB: Was there a fear of German submarines?

GS: Oh, I don't remember that that early. We ran into them later on, and, no, we had the sailboat there. It had a little steam engine in it, too. Well, that's the other problem we criticized Newark Engineering with. If you'll recall, back in the '30s, all the railroads ran with steam engines and every factory you saw around had a big smokestack on it [that] came up. ... Inside, they had a little steam engine, or a boiler and a steam engine, and they ran a pulley with it and the pulley's up in the ceiling. They had these pulleys running around and [they had] belts down to other machinery, sewing machines or whatever they were. The factory, whatever they manufactured, stamping presses and all, was run by steam. So, the mechanical engineering course up at Newark was a little bit heavy on steam engines. We learned tables of entropy and enthalpy and pressures and all of that, but ... it wasn't that practical. There were no jobs left for steam engines. They were getting rid of them and putting in diesels and steam turbines, and so forth, but not much on the [steam] engines. So, anyhow, ... well, in March then, the Navy came around, trying to recruit the college students, and, all right, ... a couple of guys got [hooked on], "Oh, yes, we're going to make you a pilot and give you a uniform, wings and all. You're the glamorous part of fighting this war. You'll win it, ... of course, overnight, you know. You're all going to become naval aviators," but I told them, "No, I don't think I want to be a naval aviator. Besides, the Navy needs navigators and you need people that can run your steam engines. You've got a lot of smaller boats that I can handle the engine on, or I can assist a gang that runs some of your bigger steam engines," and [they said], "Well, all right, we don't have a billet for you handy, but we hope to have a billet available in another month." "Well," I said, "I don't graduate until June." "Oh, we can take care of that. We'll get you your graduation earlier." ...

Well, that was a promise, but it didn't look like they were giving them any [earlier] graduation. The Navy wasn't expanding that fast, and so, the jobs weren't open. So, anyhow, I told them I'd rather, "If they have an opening, you know, where I can run a steam engine and do some navigation, I'll accept that, but I don't want to fly your airplanes." So, all right, they said, "Well, what we'll do [is], your draft board is right tight on your heels there; they're starting to really put pressure on people." ... Draft boards had to produce. ... Well, I lived up, ... at the time, the family had moved up to Westwood, New Jersey, and Westwood, New Jersey, is a little village up there. One thing they had was a big tuberculosis hospital up there, and I forgot what they called it now. ... Where the allotments were for [the] draft, they had so many people they had to get and, if you had a big population that was in the hospital or running the hospital, [it] didn't matter to the draft board. They wanted so many people, this and that, in the next draft calling, you know, and so, you would have to be called. Well, most of them that they called worked in the hospital, or a good number of them, were either in the hospital, patients, or worked in the hospital, which couldn't be drafted. So, that left everybody else ... that was eligible, had to be drafted. So, I told the Navy, "Well, all right, ... if you get me a billet, you know, where I ... think I can do something for you, anything but flying your airplanes," and they said, "Oh, we'll take care of that," and I said, "Well, you're going to have to do something." ... I told the Navy they'd have to do something in a hurry, "Because the draft board is already sending me a notice that, within thirty days, prepare to report within thirty days," or something like that, and they said, "We'll take care of it. ... You go. Even if the draft board does [do that], you graduate, and then, they take you, ... as soon as we have an opening for you, we can give you the commission and we'll get you a transfer ... from the Army to the Navy, and you'll be all set then." So, all right, I sort of believed them, that that's what would happen. Of course, ... I graduated and the day after graduation, I get a notice from the draft board to report to; ... where was it? Someplace over in New York City there, for the naval draft board. ...

SI: 90 Church Street?

GS: ... Yes, I think that's where it was, yes, Church Street, and went over there to talk to them and they said, "Well, we still don't have an opening for you. Report to your draft board as they want and, as soon as we have the opening, we'll transfer you. We'll send you a notice." Now, I believed them, you know. So, the draft board came around and, right after graduation, I had about three days to get everything straightened up and report to; well, I was still arguing with them. I found, that same day, I had a call from the Navy to report, and they just wanted to let me know that they were taking care of things. So, instead of reporting to the draft board, I just let it go by and, of course, a week later, an MP shows up at the house, going to escort me into the Army. So, I figured, "Well, all right, what can I do about it?" So, I'm drafted. ... Well, the first thing they do is, they get us down to Fort Dix there. We report there, and then, they ... give us some tests and, apparently, I did better on the arithmetic than some of the [others]. They didn't give me any tests on Shakespeare, [laughter] but they gave me mathematics tests and things like that, ... which were easy. "So, okay, you've got an IQ of over 100; you're in the Air Force. ... Anybody that has an IQ over 140 here is going in this group down there." So, all right, they send me down to Florida, down to Miami Beach, Florida. There, they give us some more tests and, well, I remember the first day in the Army down there, in Florida. ... They gave us the handbook, soldier's handbook, and the first thing in there is your; oh, what ... do they call them now? ... [I] can't think what they wanted. The rules for guard duty, what are they? Not orders;

it was a soldier's handbook that had your, oh, "Speak to no one unless spoken to," and a lot of that stuff in there.

SI: Regulations?

GS: Yes, they were regulations, but every soldier got a handbook like that. At least ... down there, everyone had them. ... The first day there, they gave us this handbook. ... I'll think of it before we're done, maybe. ... Yes, "Speak to no one unless spoken to." ... I don't know, "You have to, if you're standing guard duty, you salute all officers," and all that. So, it was a handbook that they gave you, what you were supposed to do. So, they gave it to us about ten o'clock in the morning there and, by two o'clock in the afternoon, they called us out, "Did anybody remember your;" general orders, I think they were. Yes, I think it was the handbook with general orders. "Anybody remember their general orders, learn their general orders yet?" ... We got them at ten o'clock in the morning and had lunch and nobody had even looked at the thing. I looked through, turned two or three pages through it while I was eating lunch or something, and they came in. ... Oh, about two o'clock in the afternoon, they brought a truckload of oil drums on. ... They opened them up and in these oil drums were a bunch of rifles left over from World War I, all soaked up in whale oil. ... Some of these barrels, you opened them up and, oh, they stunk real ripe. They'd been sitting in them for twenty years, sitting in the whale oil. ... They smelled bad, but they wanted them cleaned up, you know. Well, we looked at them and they had broken stocks on them. ... We finally picked a couple of them out, you know, and cleaned them up a little bit and the Sergeant says, "Here, ... see that speck? Get that off of there." We'd have to do that for them. We finally cleaned up enough of them, so [that] we had some rifles, and then, I think about six o'clock at night there, after cleaning rifles all afternoon, they called us out again and they wanted to know, ... "Anybody here remember general orders?" and, "No." "Somebody's got to remember one. We gave you the book this morning. Didn't you even look at it? ... Somebody's got to know ... their general orders a little bit. Just give me one general order. Somebody say one." ... I said, "Well, oh, yes, I can remember one, 'Speak to no one unless spoken to.'" "Okay, you're number one," and he says, "Did you hear what he said? What did he say?" "Speak to no one unless spoken to." "You're number two," [laughter] right down the line. [laughter] He picked out about sixteen of us, and here we were, ... down in Miami, living in a hotel there. So, when it came time for going to bed, "Nope, you sixteen are coming out here. Here, pick yourself a rifle." So, we got rifles that we'd cleaned in the afternoon, supposedly. "Here's clips, ammunition clips, for them. You're going to be [standing] guard duty on the beach tonight." Well, the beach down there was a row of palm trees, and then, there was a little bit of a highway in there and another [row of] palm [trees]. We've got to patrol the beach between the two groves of ... palm trees that they had there. ... Okay, we'll do that, and we get out there, and, oh, they also showed us how to fire the gun. "You pull the trigger. ... That fires the gun," you know. [laughter] ... Here we all [had] ... 1898 rifles we had, and patrol the beach. ...

TK: Probably Enfields [Lee-Enfield rifles], weren't they?

GS: Yes, some of them were that. They weren't even all the same make. Some were Springfields, Springfield 1909, I think, or something like that. So, anyhow, they take us out on the beach and [say], "You patrol the beach. ... Your patrol is from here to here and you'll meet

the guy coming up the other way and you turn around and walk back again. ... You walk back until you meet somebody up here again and go and guard the other way. You give him the password and turn around and go back down again." So, here we are, out there on the beach, ten o'clock at night, you know, and nothing's going on much, but they tell us, you know, "If you see anything move between the beach and this palm tree, shoot first and ask questions afterwards. You're not going to have time to ask any questions." "Well, supposing somebody, one of our men..." "Don't worry about it. We have nobody else. Nobody's on this beach but you, and you're in command and your orders are, 'You shoot first and ask questions later on.'" So, all right, we're there on the beach and walking up and down. We're listening. Oh, about midnight, we hear something down the beach a ways. Two shots ring out and there's some yelling going on down there, but it was not our territory, so, we walk up and down the beach. Well, we finally get to, oh, six o'clock in the morning. We're finally relieved of duty, you know, and we go back in and want to know what was going on out there. "Well, there was a dog out on the beach, so, somebody shot the dog," and [we asked], "What else was the noise?" "No other noise. ... There was no noise." ... A ship was sunk off the coast there, about two or three miles off the coast there, right near Miami. There was a ship down there. We did see the smoke and, oh, a little bit of reflection of the flames out there, and [we asked], "What was it?" "Well, we don't know. It was one of our tankers [that] got torpedoed and that was it." "Well, what happened to the people that were on the thing?" ... "Most of them were saved." "Okay." Well, we find out that two of the sailors on the ship that was torpedoed swam ashore, walked up through our guard, all the guards that we had there, out to the highway and hitchhiked a ride into town. [laughter] Nobody saw them, nobody fired shots at them or anything, but this was the first action we saw. We weren't really involved in it and we ... [had] only been in the Army for about three days, had spent most of it on the train ride down to Florida. We had some more tests the next day, and anybody that could do a square root, "You're going to be sent out to Colorado." "What's in Colorado?" ... "They're a cooks and bakers school, out in Lowry Field, Colorado." "What are we going to cooks and bakery school for?" "It's the Army. You're ordered out there to report to cooks and bakers school." Well, we got on the train, a rickety, old train, that we thought was going to jump the tracks any minute. The tracks were so wobbly and everything that I was beginning to wonder about it. I'd never ridden on a railroad that was that clumsy. ... Well, they gave us a tray to get our food on and you get a cup of coffee, a tin cup, you know, and a cup of coffee. ... Everybody walks through the Pullman cars that we were in, up to the front end. When you get enough, about thirty people, up in the front, where there was no more room for them, then, they could turn around and walk back. ... To get through the baggage car, you had your tin tray there and they'd put a spoonful of peas on them and some string beans and a potato and you'd walk through the car. Well, you're walking through the car and it's a rickety train that's bouncing up and down like this and you get to the between cars [gap]. ... You're holding this tray out and you get between two cars and the wind would catch your tray, "Woosh." [laughter] So, your whole meal was dumped on you and you go back [to] try and get another one. You're out of luck. ... In the baggage car, ... somebody put a steel plate down and, on that, they ... built a fire and put a couple of cinderblocks there and put an oil drum on it and, in the oil drum, they took a bag of coffee, coffee beans, and soaked them in there. You'd get your cup, they'd pour some of this coffee in it and, ... like I say, in going between cars, you're bouncing around and ... your tin tray would go up and the coffee would be spilled all over the place. You figured it wasn't worth it to get the cup of coffee back, but it was a rough road. Finally, we got to Colorado and went to Lowry Field and there's a big sign up ... as you enter the field there,

"Welcome to Lowry Field," ... something like, "Home of the Cooks and Bakers for the Air Force. You, too, can be a ... master baker." [laughter] So, anyhow, we went out there trying to figure out, "Who decided that we have to be cooks and bakers?" ... Well, they finally decided to send us out to school and we go into school. ... [We] find out there was lots of checking on us, to see who we were and what we were, to the extent that they went back to where I grew up in Rahway. I lived across the street from the fire department and they interviewed the fire department, wanting to know what kind of a character I was, and same way with the schools. They went to some of the teachers I had and checked me out at Newark, to see what kind of a student I was, and I'm getting letters from home that, "The FBI came around again and ... we wanted to know what you did. Well, why is the FBI looking at you and [what is] so important?" and so forth. "I don't know anything about it." Well, after about three weeks there, we found that a couple of the guys that were with us were kicked out and we were going to a different school, an armament school. "Armament, what is that?" Well, we find out, a little later on, that it was a bombsight maintenance school, [in] which we had to learn about the bombsight, Norden bombsight, and we were going to maintain them. So, they finally started giving us the mechanism in there and what it was doing and how it worked, and so forth, and it was touted to be, "This was the thing that was going to win the war, but it had to be kept secret," you know. So, we looked at it and, right away, it looked to me like they had some errors in it, that it wasn't going to work, and they said, "Don't worry about it. ... It's going to work," you know. Well, I analyzed it from my own experience and I said, "Some of this is not going to work. You've got something in here that's screwing up the works. It just doesn't work that way. Mathematics and certain laws of gravity, Newton and them, they made regulations. You're dropping bombs. According to Newton, they have to go where they're [headed]. You know, they're going to go down, they're not going to fall up," and, oh, there were a couple of other things there. ... I was dissatisfied with it, as far as, technically, it just didn't work. So, [I] tried to tell them that, "No, it doesn't work." ... I had an instructor there and I asked him where he'd learned his mathematics. I said, "This isn't going to work that way," and he said, "Well, that's the way it has to be, because the Army says so," and, finally, I had one or two of them, one or two people, but nobody of any rank, that would agree with me. I had a fellow from Princeton that was there that was pretty good on his mathematics and ... a nice fellow. ... Well, I remember him for one other thing. ... The first mission he went on, we were flying alongside of him there, and, all of a sudden, his plane falls out of formation here. This is him, this is the lead ship. He falls out of formation, goes over, right underneath the ship there, the one in front of him that he was supposed to be following, ... just as we're letting the bombs go, and the ship above him dropped a bomb right in the co-pilot's, right in his lap. I remember, the fellow's name was Smith, and a recent Princeton graduate, and the whole plane just disappeared. ... We had this big explosion alongside of us and heard metal tearing around our plane. ... I looked out the window to see where it was there and all I could see was four streaks of smoke, with each engine leaving a smoke streak as it fell down, and on top of it came fluttering pieces of a wing or a piece of the tail. The whole plane just disappeared. So, that was one of the first experiences I remember there, still trying to convince somebody that the Norden bombsight was not as accurate as it was supposed to be. It would work all right at low altitudes. The error wasn't much, but there was a big discrepancy once you got up to altitude, and I tried to convince some of them. I found out the instructor that was teaching us, ... he was a civilian instructor and ... I started asking him about his mathematics. "Well, where did he get his schooling?" you know, and he was a schoolteacher.

He taught fifth grade arithmetic. So, they made him an instructor and promoted him to second lieutenant.

TK: Skid, you mentioned, in connection with the Norden bombsight, the theory of centrifugal force bombing. Now, was that a function of the bombsight or was it a function of how it was used?

GS: ... There is no such thing as centrifugal force bombing.

TK: No, but you told me about that.

GS: Well, I know that this guy, we had some bombardiers that said that they wanted to use it, but it doesn't work. ... There is no such thing as centrifugal force. It's a fake force, ... but the biggest thing; let me put it this way. ... Well, I guess Einstein was more famous for it, his Theory of Relativity, and he said that all motion is relative and you have to have something standing still to have motion, or something has to have [a standing position] relative to motion. If it's moving ... or if you're going to move it, you have to find something that's standing still to have motion. The big example of that is, if you're standing on the Equator, you're actually moving a thousand miles an hour to the east. You're standing still on the Equator, but you're moving a thousand miles an hour to the east. Now, the Norden bombsight had no correction for anything like that. The Earth is always revolving. If you're up at forty-five degrees latitude, you're moving 707 miles an hour to the east. When you get up to the North Pole, you're just spinning around. You're not moving any place, but you're spinning, but trying to convince some of these people that were teaching bombsights or bomb[sight] maintenance ... was useless. You couldn't explain it to them, you know. So, they had contraptions on there and, finally, we were out there in Colorado and they sent up eighty aircraft from California, just came out of [the] Lockheed plant. ... They wanted these bombers in a hurry to have the bombsight mounted in them, so [that] they could be shipped to England, and they hired us to install the bombsights. Well, these planes started arriving and, before we even got to them, we found out that the bombsights didn't have the right mounts on them and they sent them up with a bunch of pilots, just graduated, new pilots, out of California, sent them up to Colorado, and, in Colorado, you're landing your airplane at a five-thousand-foot altitude. These guys just came out of flying school, had no experience landing aircraft at altitude. They didn't believe their instruments when they saw them. Half of them cracked up on landing out there in Colorado. The other half didn't have the mounts right. So, here, we had to take these bombsights and pickle them, put them in oil, again, whale oil was used. ... Well, we were supposed to install [these]; what we can do is, take them and put them in storage. So, again, we'd get up in the morning and they would march us off through the hills out there in Colorado and ... drive us on the truck to some place. We'd have to get out, and then, walk through the hills for another two hours. We finally come to a cave and, here, we had to go into the cave, you know, that was all sealed off and everything, take these bombsights and unpack them and put lubrication in them, again, more whale oil, to see where they were. ... Oh, I remember ... one thing I had there, ... walking this two miles to get up there, uphill, you know, to get to this cave or whatever it was, a vault ... (tubed?) in the side of the mountain or something, where they had this thing where they want the work done. ... We [were] walking there, up this hill, to get to the entrance of this thing, and, as we're ... marching through the morning there, you know, a grasshopper comes and lands on me. ... I catch the

grasshopper. So, I've got a grasshopper in my hand. Well, we get inside the cave and ... this grasshopper got away from me. So, about two o'clock in the morning, we're back and sound asleep, you know, and the sirens go off and everything. "Now, everybody out," got to go out and go up to the cave; something was moving in the cave. [laughter] So, what am I going to tell them, it's my grasshopper? They've got all kinds of electronic sensors on there to see any motion or anything that goes on in this cave. Nobody could find Skidmore's grasshopper. ...

SI: I want to ask a question about your problem with the bombsights. Was your problem with the Norden bombsight in particular or just the bombsights you were dealing with? Were they poorly calibrated?

GS: No. We were dealing with Norden bombsights and the problem was that the Norden bombsight was all right up to ten thousand feet. ... It didn't have too much error, but you get above ten thousand feet, you've got another error. You've got this part of this Coriolis effect of error. ... At ground level, the diameter [circumference] of the Earth is twenty-four thousand miles. ... Like I say, if you're standing on the Equator, you're moving twenty-four thousand miles an hour [in a day]. If you get up to fifty thousand feet, or even ten miles higher, the diameter up there is twenty miles more than the twenty-four thousand. So, now, you've got an error of twenty-four thousand miles you're ignoring. So, the arithmetic just doesn't work out. ... Finally, you had to take ... this other one they had in there. They had a; oh, I forgot what they called it now.

SI: Was it the Sperry bombsight?

GS: No, this was mostly Norden. Sperry worked on a different principle. Sperry was mostly electrical, this was mechanical, and I can't think of the name, what the problem was. I know what the problem was, but I can't think of the terminology on it. They had an automatic erection system. So, here's this automatic erection system. You had a gyro and it's spinning around and, you know, it's going, spinning, and, from there, you take sensors, right up to the telescope you're looking through, and this would hold that telescope steady, aiming it right at your target. ... That's what it's supposed to do, but, to get the gyros level, how do you get the gyro to know that that's level? The one thing that they used on there, they'd use a pendulum. Well, a pendulum can hang down, see. Now, that gives you a vertical line, so that you transfer that, you know, it goes down through the middle of your gyro. That's supposed to hold it steady, but, when you set it up and you get it going, supposing your plane was in a little turn, anything, ... just not dead level, not precisely level enough to tell you where ... your bombs are going to go. The whole thing ended on that. Well, here, you've got this thing, it's supposed to automatically erect, and that took its sense from the pendulum you had. In fact, it was an inverted pendulum there, which would go back and forth this way. ... If you're sensing something that's supposed to be horizontal or vertical from a gyro spinning, how do you get that started first? ... You're up in the air in a plane and you want to set your gyro running, you're going to have to have it dead level. How do you get it dead level if all you're going by is gravity pulling ... that pendulum down? So, if you set it a little bit off, now, you're on an angle and the plane's going to go like this and it'll tighten up on the spiral. ... They finally concluded that the automatic erection system should be done away with, and they'd send us back out to where all these bombsights we'd packed up in whale oil [were to] take the automatic erection system off of them. They don't work, mainly

because, in order to set it, you gauge your gyro and you get it set there, but ... how do you know the plane is dead level when you set it? and that's what was happening. They'd start a bomb run and the guys would come on to a bomb run and they'd be turning on to the bomb run and they would check their gyros and they'd set the gyro. The gyro's taking the airplane off, and so, this is the system they had.

TK: Skid, was this something that the designer knew and supplied correction tables for, or is this something they didn't recognize at all?

GS: No, the guys in charge of buying these and ... having them installed didn't understand how they ran or how they operated, and we'd try to tell them and they didn't [listen]. ... It was a minor error if you had your plane dead level when you set the gyros. You would have a minor error in there, but, if you're in a slight turn, and that would compound itself by the time you got to the target, you were almost standing upside down. ... Like I say, at ten thousand feet, it wasn't too much. You're only five miles up, or not five miles; what are you?

SI: Two miles.

TK: Two.

GS: Yes.

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO-----

EB: This continues an interview with George Bernard Skidmore on Friday, April 27, 2007, in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

SI: Please, continue.

GS: Okay. Now, where was I? Well, like I say, the gyros were not set right and the automatic erection system would set the gyro at an angle, instead of dead perfect. So, you [have] ... already put an error into it. So, finally, before I left Colorado, ... they had told us to remove all ... these automatic erection systems and to make a correction there, which would help a bit, but there were other errors in there, other things that they did. Anyhow, we finally got, oh, a couple hundred of them changed over, so that we removed the automatic erection system and we just had to depend on the pilot flying the plane right side up when he engaged it, or, one or two degrees off, he was in trouble, and one or two degrees is a small [margin for] error to have something like that. So, anyhow, we did all that and they were looking for something for us to do ... while these things were being changed and installed by other groups and things like that. ... They came to us and decided that, "Well, we're running short of bombardiers that can really understand these principles." ... The guys that were teaching them didn't understand them, either. ... So, they said, "Well, you people are the one group that we know of that seem to understand the gyro. We're going to make you bombardiers and give you a commission," and so, some of the fellows went to them and told them they didn't want to be bombardiers, that they never signed up [for that], you know. They were volunteers in the Army and they didn't mind working ... as mechanics on the bombsight, but they really didn't want to get into combat, where

they're into where the bombs are dropped. ... There was a little bit of discussion there. Finally, they decided, "Well, you people want to get a commission? The only way we can do it is, ... we have to give you flight training, bombardier training," or to train [you] to ... live on an airplane that's up at five thousand feet or so, or ten thousand feet, and even up to twenty-five thousand feet we went in those days. ... We decided they would send us out and give us new, what they called a flight physical, to see how we could really work it. Well, we get out there and they lined us up [at] six o'clock in the morning, out there in Los Angeles now. ... They gave us a clipboard. We're stark naked, with a clipboard is all we have holding on to. We go into this room and this doctor, they had a doctor there with a stethoscope, and he looks in one ear with his stethoscope, I don't know what he's doing, and he signs off your clipboard. ... You stand around for another half-hour and, finally, they move you up the line and get to another guy and he looks in the other ear with his stethoscope and he checks you off. Well, I'm going through there and, finally, ... after the third day of these physical examinations, which was mostly waiting in line someplace, ... I get to get up one morning there, the third morning, and I'm really [sick]. Oh, I have a cold and my head feels like it's a cold, you know, and so, I ... figure, "Well, I just don't feel like going ... through another day's physical, but, okay, I'll stand in line, without any clothes on and just the clipboard." We walk into this one doctor's office and he's running up and down my back, counting my vertebrae up and down with his fingers, and pushing on this one, up and down some more. Finally, he stops and says, "Where did you come from?" and I said, "What do you mean? My mother said I was born under a cabbage leaf. What do you want ... to know?" ... "Where were you? Were you in this morning? Did you come through this line here?" "Yes, I just came from the room next-door here." "Let's go back and talk to John." You know, he goes in there, there's the other doctor, John, whatever his name was, and he says, "Take a look at this guy here. Look at his back." "Oh, look at that." He says, "Did he come through here? Yes, here's your signature on it." "Oh, how did I miss that? I wonder if Harry saw this. Harry, come on." We're going back through the line, you know. "Hey, Harry, come over and look at this guy here. Well, what do you think of him?" "Oh, how did I miss that?" So, I'm wondering now, "What kind of freak am I? ... Are they going to flunk me out over whatever I got? How did I know what it was?" So, after a half-hour [of] going back through the line and having about twenty other doctors look at me, to see what kind of a freak I was, finally, one of them comes to me and says, "Tell you what, son. ... Go over to the dispensary and tell them you want to be admitted. You have measles all over you." "Measles, [laughter] how did I have measles?" I look at my arm here and ... I'm full of spots. So, okay, I've got to have measles now. So, anyhow, there I am with measles. Well, you get into the Army hospital, [it was] six months before you can get out with measles. So, I'm hanging around out there forever, it seems like, doing nothing, a lot of KP [kitchen police duty] they had me on, here and there. Even though I had measles, I'm dishing out food. That goes on for awhile and, sure enough, they decide, "Well, ... you were assigned to go into navigation ... when you could pass the physical. Now, you haven't passed the physical, but the navigation class is six months ahead of you or so; at least six weeks ahead of you. We can't put you in that one, but, well, we'll have to hold you here and let you do KP for another six months or so." So, I told them, "Come on, let's get squared up, you know, and get some sense into some of this stuff." So, finally, ... I said, "I know navigation anyhow. I have a navigation license. What do I have to go to school for, again, to learn this from teachers that don't understand it, fifth grade arithmetic teachers that ... didn't know the difference between a sine and a cosine or a tangent and secant?" ... which is what was all involved in a lot of trigonometry. So, okay, "Well, you might as well sit in this class. ... It'll be

a review for you, ... so [that] you can get the last six weeks of it. We'll see how you can make out." Well, after about six weeks of navigation class, and the class is getting ready to graduate and I've only been there in that six weeks, "Well, we'll give you the final exam and see how you make out on it." So, I passed the final exam for them and they decided, "Well, all right, we're going to let you graduate, if you've got everything else done. Your physical is okay, ... you passed the final exam for a navigation course, and we do need navigators. We can't waste time sending you through classrooms again, where you've already known more than the instructors know, and so forth. So, we'll let you graduate with it." So, I get out there, where they're lining up for graduation, and the guy, one of my instructors, comes up to me and says, "Whoa, you ... can't go through today." "What do you mean I can't go through today?" Teacher says, "Well, we're checking your list off here and you're not qualified." "What am I not qualified in? I just passed the final examination and everything." "Not that," he says. "Did you ever fire the pistol before?" "Yes, why?" "Well, it doesn't say so on here. ... Until you can qualify with a .45, you can't graduate." Well, so, I'm pulled out of the line there and [I ask], "What do I have to do to qualify with a .45?" He says, "Well, you have to go out to the firing range and talk to the sergeant on the firing range to get qualified." ... "How can I do that? You're all lined up here and moving into the auditorium and I'm not qualified to go into that. I'm ... pulled out of the line." He says, "Well, until you're qualified, I can't help you." So, I'm standing there, all by myself. "What do I have to do to qualify here?" you know, I ask around. He says, "You have to go out to the firing range." "Well, how do I get to the firing range?" I don't know. This instructor that was giving me a lot of trouble, that I was giving trouble to, too, because he didn't understand what was going on, either, but he said he was the navigator that was on the Tokyo raid, ... *Twenty [Thirty] Seconds Over Tokyo*, or something, he was the navigator in that book. ... He said, "Well, there's my jeep over there. I'm going inside, but you know what happens ... when they find a cadet that stole somebody's jeep and [is] riding around on it." So, I'm wondering [if] he's trying to tell me, "You've got to take the jeep and go over to the firing range and see if you can get qualified before the ceremony starts, but, remember, if you get caught doing it, you're going to be court-martialed," or something like that, you know. "You're stealing jeeps around here and riding around in it." So, all right, what am I going to do, stand outside there? So, I said, "Okay, I'll take your jeep." I took the jeep and ran over to the firing range, went to the sergeant on the range there, asked him, "What do I have to do to qualify?" and he looks at my papers and says, "Oh," he says, "all you have to do is fire it." "Well, what do I have to hit?" "No, you don't have to hit anything. The targets are over there. Just shoot, fire the gun toward the target and don't worry about hitting it. Your score doesn't mean anything." So, he hands me the .45, you know, and I'm looking at it. I've got the target there and I take the thing and [fire], "Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang," about six shots go off. He says, "Okay, you're qualified." I looked to see where I hit the target, you know. ... One of the slugs came out of the .45, went through the target sideways. It didn't leave a round hole; it left an oblong hole. So, I looked at the weapon he gave me and the barrel is loose on it. You find that that's the way it is when they get worn out. One of the first things that wears out on them is the mechanism that holds the barrel steady, because it's sliding back and forth and you get a little bit of play in the side and the slug will come out of it sideways. So, anyhow, I get back over there and ... everybody's almost marched in already. ... I'm looking at this instructor ... whose jeep I had borrowed and he sees me there and he looks at my paper and says, "Good morning," he says, ... "you're in line here." So, I get in line and, when they get down to the "S"s, they call my name and I got a certificate now as a navigator, commissioned, and all the paperwork that goes with it.

So, anyhow, now, what do I do? Well, we had a system. We're out in Los Angeles there. ... "How much time do I get before I have to report to anything?" "You're just graduating. You have ten days." "To get to where?" "Kingman, Arizona, ten days to get to Kingman, Arizona." Now, what am I going to do in ten days out in the West Coast there? and, finally, I find out that I can buy a ticket on the railroad and buy a ticket from Los Angeles to New York and back to Kingman, Arizona, and it's going to take about eight days, four days to come home and four days to get back, and I have one night home. So, okay, I'll take the one night and ride on the train there, everything, see what I can do. I get on the train and I come home and had one night at home. I get on the train to go back out to Kingman, Arizona. The airfare [train fare] they charged me was from Los Angeles to Kingman, Arizona. All the other riding around for four days, or eight days, on the train was for free. So, that's the way the railroads were gypping the government out of charges. So, anyhow, we're out there in Kingman, Arizona, and I find there's a big pool there of newly-graduated navigators, bombardiers, pilots, gunners, whatever else they had. ... So, we sit there for about three days and somebody comes in and he ... [is] looking for an experienced navigator, and he says, "I don't want any of these brand-new navigators that get lost before anything. I've got to make a trip up to Salt Lake City and the weather is bad. I have somebody [piloting] that can let down over the lake and be sure he's not letting down into the mountains. So, I want to let down over the lake and get underneath the clouds. He can land there and land me there in Salt Lake, but I need a navigator that I can trust," and the other guy says, "Get Skidmore. He's a guy you can trust." He says, "Well, okay, come on, let's see what we can do." So, I get a job where I'm officially a navigator for the Navy now, or for the Air Force, and I fly him up to Salt Lake City. ... He wanted to ... make sure I was over the lake when I broke out of the clouds below. He didn't want to be over the mountains. So, I told him, "Well, here we are, and we're letting down now through the clouds and let me know when you can see the ground." He says, "I don't see any ground. I see water." I said, "That's where we are, over the water. We're down over the lake. Once we're underneath the clouds, now, you can find the airport and land." So, that's what we did. That night, we took off and went back to Kingman, Arizona, again. Whatever his business was, I don't know. So, there I was. Next thing that happened to us was, they were going to send us up to; I've got twelve o'clock here, almost. I hear church bells ringing.

SI: Do you want to take a break?

GS: Well, we'll go for lunch some place. You have a place ... where we can try something like that?

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: One thing we skipped over was, where were you when Pearl Harbor was bombed? When did you hear that news?

GS: I was home doing homework on steam engines. That was on a Sunday, and [I was] writing up reports on some test we'd done at college on the steam engines. So, that's where I was. ...

EB: You heard it on the radio.

GS: Yes.

SI: Did it have an immediate impact on you?

GS: Not much. ... I figured, "Well, it's over there in Hawaii and ... we're a big country and the Japanese are going to [lose]." ... You know, the radio didn't tell us how much damage was done there and we just assumed a couple of bombs went off over in Pearl Harbor and the Navy we have there, that they could fire back at the planes, and so forth, and I thought, sure, ... the war would be over in five minutes, with the technology we had, but, no, none of that technology we had was used, and what technology we had was false, because, like I say, [we were] hiring a fifth grade arithmetic teacher to try and teach spherical trigonometry. ...

EB: You never felt the urge to volunteer, like a lot of people did.

GS: No. ... Like I say, every day in the Army, ... the orders of the day would come out and, at mess hall at night, you know, he'd tap his glass and the CO would stand up, "All right, let me have your attention now, and the orders of the day [are], the [Steven] Petz crew, with Skidmore as navigator, has volunteered to..."

EB: I just meant generally, to volunteer to fight.

GS: We didn't have to volunteer. They came out with orders of the day and said, "You have volunteered."

TK: But, you didn't feel any immediate urge after Pearl Harbor.

SI: Yes, to run down to the enlistment center.

GS: No.

TK: A patriotic urge?

GS: No. I was figuring, "Well, we'll be sailing down the South Seas ... that next summer, you know, and we're ensured of a job where we're going to have food, we'll earn enough money so that the thing [supports us]. Maybe we're not going to become millionaires, with coastal trade on lumber, but we're not going to starve to death. We can control the prices," and everything else. ... So, we felt pretty secure.

SI: Did you find the transition from civilian life to military life difficult?

GS: Difficult, well ...

SI: To go from relative freedom to being subject to orders?

GS: Yes, because ... what I felt was, the way the orders were given, you know, they were false orders. The order is to do things that were impossible and for no reason at all, except that some

general wanted a free ride some place, or something like that, and there was an awful lot of politics in the military and we were on the wrong side of it.

EB: How did your parents feel about you being drafted? Do you remember the original reaction of your mother and father, with you being the only son?

GS: Yes. She wanted to know, ... you know, "Why don't you become a general right away, instead of being drafted?" So, she thought that I should be running the thing, instead of being drafted. Well, you know, I'd try and tell her, "You don't have any choice. This is it," and she said, "Well, surely, you can convince them that they're doing things wrong." You know, I would complain to her about, maybe, that the job they were giving [me was subpar], like the first thing she heard was that I was going to become a cook for the Army. She wanted to know why I was going to be a cook or a baker, you know. ...

EB: She did not cry when you left or anything like that.

GS: No, I think she was glad to get rid of me. I was a nuisance around the house. [laughter]

SI: Was there anything about being in the military that came as a shock at first, such as the food?

GS: The food was edible, but, when we got it, it's like now [in a retirement community], they're scheduling our meals ... to suit somebody else, and you'd get fed [irregularly]. Six o'clock in the morning, they'd serve ice cream to you and, six o'clock at night, you'd have just, oh, bread pudding, or something like that. ... When you ate, you didn't have much say in it, you didn't have much say in what you ate. What they fed you, that's it, and same way with your job, you know, like, the first job they gave me, you know, was stand on a beach with a rifle and shoot anything you see out there in the water coming ashore.

EB: Did you make good friends with the guys that you were training with?

GS: Yes, most of them. Like I say, I was always in with a bunch that IQs were supposed to be over 140, or something like that. They were fairly intelligent and they had senses of humor. ... I didn't mention this one, ... the argument I had ... with one of the instructors, and he'd say, "I say it's this way," and I said, ... "Well, it doesn't work that way." ... I had an argument with one of the instructors on whether the gyro that ran the Norden bombsight was a DC shunt motor, or ... I said it was a series motor and he said, "It's a DC shunt motor," and I said, "Well, it's a DC all right, but it's not shunt, ... it's series." I said, "It's low torque and high speed and that's a standard electrical motor, you know." "No," he says, "I say it's a [shunt]," and I told him, "No, it's not shunt, it's series," and I said, ... "You've got the diagram there and it is a series," and I said, "If you read the book," I said, "I'm sure, somewhere in there, it mentions that it's a series motor." He said, "Well, we're going to settle this over in the gymnasium. Meet me over there at four o'clock." So, what did I know about what he was doing? He arranged [a boxing match]. He picked out some boxing gloves for him and boxing gloves for me. I had two great, big pillows on my hand and he had a nice, clear shot, and, anyhow, two weeks later, when I got out of the hospital, the gymnast says, "You put on a good show up there in the gymnasium. Now, we're

going to teach you more about boxing," and, oh, was it just like Prewitt, in *From Here to Eternity*? He didn't want to be a boxer, and so, ... at that time, I finally convinced them, "Well, I used to play a trumpet in the high school band. I'll be a bugler, rather than a boxer." "No, no, we want you in the boxing." So, he was going to give me lessons. So, after about two weeks of his lessons, I convinced him that I was never really going to be a professional boxer for the squadron. ...

EB: Were there any other conflicts with the officers? Did you feel like they had special treatment?

GS: Oh, yes. I didn't get that far yet.

SI: Even in training, you found yourself butting heads with the instructors.

GS: Oh, yes.

SI: You also mentioned this long train ride from LA to home and back to Kingman. What was it like to travel in those days, during the war? Was it difficult?

[TAPE PAUSED]

GS: ... We'd have orders to travel someplace and they would arrange, most of it was done by train, and, when we graduated, we were allowed to travel on train. You know, they gave us ten days to get to Kingman and we were ... restricted to how we could travel. We were not allowed to travel on motorcycle, on horseback, and, in the orders, they usually had restrictive clauses like that. ... We would travel on train. We were not allowed to travel on express train, ... because that would take a seat up from somebody that was more important. ... That trip up to Nebraska from Kingman, ... I didn't get that far yet, but it took us twenty-two days to go from Kingman to Nebraska, mainly because ... our orders came out and we were allowed to travel only on local trains. ... Traveling on local trains, ... they could only take us so far and [they would reach] the end of the line, and we'd be riding on a train through Texas there for about three hours. All of a sudden, we'd pull into a station or a siding and we'd park there, want to know when somebody's going to take us any further and have to go see the; oh, I forgot who it was that scheduled these trains.

SI: Trainmaster?

GS: Yes, something like that he was, and he had a title, anyhow. We'd have to contact him and he'd look at our orders and say, "Well, I can't put you on the express. I've got this local that goes through and that can only take you so far." "Well, as long as we're heading east and going, let's get on there." See, we had our own private car, a Pullman car, and there were about twenty of us, twenty-two of us or so, that were on this train ride, and, after about three days, we're not moving very far, ... someone decided, well, they can go faster walking than on the train. They just took off and went home and figured our orders read that we report to Bruning [Army Airfield], you know, on the, I think it was 11th of October, we had to be there, and we're out there in the end of September and we started about the 10th or 11th of September. We had the

month, thirty days, to get there, and so, we're riding on this train, but it didn't move much. Sometimes, we'd spend two days, overnight, at a station, sitting on a railroad siding, waiting for somebody to hook us up to a locomotive to take us further. ... Like I say, some of them just got off the train and went home, said they'll be there. They can make it better on a bicycle. ... So, they showed up. Some of them showed up late, but didn't matter. They needed ... people so much that, even if you were late, there wasn't much penalty on that, as long as you got there. If you didn't show up within sixty days, maybe they'd be coming looking for you.

SI: Did anybody ever get off the train and try to go into town?

GS: Oh, yes. ... I think there were only six of us that rode the thing out, out of twenty-two that started, or something, and everybody else came in ... there two or three days earlier, two or three days late, whenever they got there, and nobody criticized it too much, as long as they got there. I didn't hear of anybody that really served any jail time or went to prison or did more than just being bawled out. ... You know, you tell them, "Well, I'm tired of riding on the train. I had to go by these regulations. If I couldn't get here on time, it's not my fault. Talk to the railroad," and so, that was their excuse; they ... couldn't do anything else.

SI: When you were in training, did you ever have an opportunity to interact with civilians, in local towns or places you were passing through?

GS: Not too much. ... Well, on the train, I remember, we'd pull into Chattanooga, Tennessee, there and the Red Cross or somebody, a bunch of girls, were there waiting for us with lemonade and doughnuts, and the other thing was, though, that we didn't have any money, and, [as] far as food goes, the trains they hooked us on to ... did not have a dining car. If they did have a dining car, we weren't allowed there, because they were ... supposed to give us a dollar a meal and they ... weren't able to give us a dollar meal. The train didn't have it [and] we weren't scheduled. The train master would always say, "Well, you people aren't included in our meals. You don't get any." So, I can remember, too, we were young kids, you know, just walking through the dining car there and here's a guy that left a roll on his table, you know. We'd put the roll in our pocket. ... That's all we had to eat that day. ... Then, when we're going through Salt Lake City, I think it was, we stopped there and we got off the train and they told us we'd have about a five-hour wait, you know, eight o'clock at night, ... make sure we're on the train there, because we're going to move then. So, all right, one of the fellows says, "Well, I know where the USO is here in Salt Lake. ... If we form up, we go parading through town there and everybody'll see us parading, if we keep it neat and everything, nobody's going to say anything, you know, and everybody in step and in military formation." Well, the Sergeant's parading us down through the middle of Salt Lake City. We finally turned the corner to go to the USO, just in time to see the fire engines pulling away. The thing had burned down that night.

SI: Mostly, your work kept you on the base.

GS: Yes. ... Well, you were assigned to a base and they would be coming looking for you if you weren't where you were supposed to be. So, usually, you soon found out where you were supposed to be. ... You'd check the bulletin board three or four times a day to find out what changes they'd made in it, and so, as long as we were where we were supposed to be, it wasn't

too bad, but, ... when they finally got the outfit ready to go overseas. ... Well, this is another story. ... We were leaving Nebraska then and ... went down to West Palm Beach. We flew down there, started out in the morning, about ten o'clock in the morning, snowing like mad, and we had a pilot [who] was flying us. I didn't know it at the time, but he had had one hour and fifteen minutes' time in a B-24. Now, how much do you think you can learn in one hour and fifteen minutes about a four-engine airplane to take it across the ocean? So, anyhow, we're down there at West Palm Beach and ... the outfit moves down there and they put us in a high school. Everybody [had to] sleep on the floor in the gymnasium. "That's as far as [the accommodations] ... we have. We don't have room for you." No beds or anything were made. We just [slept] on the floor in the gymnasium and, at eight o'clock at night, you know, they'd get us a meal someplace, ... [or] six o'clock, and, by eight o'clock, we're all finished eating. "All right, everybody back to the gymnasium." So, we go back to the gymnasium. "All right, lights out in fifteen minutes." "Lights out in fifteen minutes?" "Yes, that's it. ... Keep it quiet, no noise," and, about ten o'clock at night, everybody's still making noise, you know, and telling jokes and stories. ... First thing you know, ... the noise dies down and they said, ten o'clock at night, you know, the lights were out at eight o'clock, a couple of people fell asleep. So, it gets to be ten o'clock and nobody had much sleep. So, this sergeant comes through the gymnasium, blowing his whistle, "Everybody up and out to your ship. Everybody up and out to the ship." Okay, so, we get up, go out to the ship. Well, before that, that afternoon, they had called for all the pilots, "[If] your name is on this list, ... we want the whole crew in the auditorium," you know, and they meet in the auditorium in the high school and they ... give a little talk about where they're going and all, but we were on the thirteenth crew at that time. "Thirteenth crew is not a part of this trip. ... You're not going to go with it. You're supernumerary." So, the crews get out there, I guess, ten o'clock at night. Finally, they look for the crews. "Well, not us, we're not part of the squadron anymore." "No, everybody out to the ship. We'll tell you where you're going." So, okay, we get out to the ship and the first thing we know, the ships up in front of us are starting their engines, you know. We're sitting there, waiting to see what's going to happen. ... We're in the gymnasium, at ten o'clock at night. The guy comes through blowing his whistle, "Everybody out to the ship." "Us, too?" "Yes, everybody out. Get out there." Okay, so, we get out and go out to the ship, and we're looking up the line there and we're on the back end of the line. ... Up in the front, they're starting their engines, and so, a guy finally comes, and [he was] riding a jeep. He gets up to our plane. He looks up at the Pilot. "I think he wants you to start your engine." "Okay, I guess everybody's starting their engines." So, we cranked our engine up and, first thing you know, we see the planes up ahead are taking off. "Taking off, wow." First thing you know, this guy in the jeep, "I think he wants us to go." [laughter] So, we head down out there, out to the runway. He's still telling us to go ahead, "Go, hurry up." So, we take off and, by now, it's, oh, about midnight ... when we get everybody up in the air, and the Pilot says, "Okay, Skid, you're the navigator. Give me a heading." "Where to?" He says, "I don't know. Don't you know?" "Nobody told me." We didn't go to any briefing. ... Everybody else went but us, but we didn't go. Well, he's tuning, ... playing with the radio there. Radio silence; there's nobody on the radio. We looked back at the airfield; all the lights are off. "Well, where's everybody else going?" "I don't know." "Well, follow them." "Can't follow them. ... There are no lights on up here now. ... We're not using running lights. It's just dark." So, he says, "Well, where are we going?" We asked around, "Anybody know where the other crews went?" Well, one of the gunners says he heard from his buddy that they were going to Trinidad. I said, "Oh." The Pilot says, "Okay, let's go to Trinidad. Skid, give us a heading to Trinidad." "How do I know where

Trinidad is? ... They didn't give me any maps or any charts. I don't have any maps of the Caribbean Islands." "Well, they've got to be somewhere." Well, now, I'm trying to think back to my sixth grade geography and all the pirate stories I read about the islands down there. I had all the islands memorized, you know, the whole chain, right down there to South America and all. So, I said, "All right, try 140 degrees. We'll see what happens." So, we're heading out, 140 degrees. Well, we're going along there. ... The first thing you know, it's getting daylight a little bit. Finally, it gets up, [the] sun comes out, and the Pilot says, "Hey, where are we going now?" I said, "Well, you see that island up ahead?" "Yes." "That's not Trinidad, that's Tobago. Right behind that, there is an island. That's Trinidad." "Oh, okay." So, we go down there and he says, ... "You sure this is Trinidad?" I said, "Yes, this has got to be Trinidad," because I'm trying to remember all the pirate stories. ...

TK: Now, back up a minute. Where are the other planes? You don't see them.

GS: Don't see them. They're all in the dark. You know, they would take off at, oh, two minutes apart and you've got sixty-four aircraft, I think, we had there at that time, so, that's two hours it's going to take them just to get airborne, and they were all airborne for going out over the ocean, you know, someplace, and so, we figured, "Well, there we are, finally, we got to Trinidad," and he says, "Where's the airport?" I said, "Come on, I found Trinidad for you. You fly over top of it and see if you can find an airport." So, he finally flew over top of it and ... found a big airport right in the middle of the island. I said, "There's your airport. Let's see if we can get in there." So, we landed there. After we're on the ground, a jeep drones out, a little "Follow Me," sign on the back of it. We follow him over and he parks us and we get out and he says, "Welcome to Trinidad." "Oh, you see, I told you this was Trinidad," but he said, ... "May we see your passports?" this British officer, you know, in his jeep. I said, "We don't have any passports." "Oh, do you have military orders?" "No, we don't have any military orders." "Oh, highly irregular. Tell you what we'll do; let's go over to the officers' club and we'll each have a scotch." [laughter] So, we followed the jeep over there and [he] wanted to know where the rest of us were. He said, "We didn't tell you?" "[We] figured that more than one would be coming in here. I don't know ... where they went to, but we're here and we don't know where we're supposed to be, either, because nobody told us." Well, all day long, we're waiting for somebody else to come in and nobody else shows up from the outfit. So, we finally get in touch, with the radio, you know, and talked to them on it and they find out where we are and something. Nobody knew anything about us. We were just missing, or something. ... Finally, about, oh, the next day, about noon the following day, the squadron commander shows up, and come to find out that, yes, they were supposed to come to Trinidad, but the problem there is that you've got your westerly, or your, what do they call them? the trade winds that ... go to the west, and they come across the ocean there and they get to Trinidad. It's a little mountain area, a mountainous island, and the clouds rise up over top of it and they get up on top and they cool off enough and it starts to thunderstorm. ... You've got a thunderstorm there, you could set your watch by it. About eleven-thirty in the morning, it's hot enough that thunderstorms start coming in, and they don't stop until seven-thirty at night, when the sun goes down. So, that's why they started us out at midnight, a midnight take-off for the first plane, and he's supposed to be down there before the thunderstorms come in, but, anyhow, ... the whole bunch took off and where were they all? Well, a couple of them, once they got over the water, the engines sounded like they were running a little bit rough, you know, automatically rougher when we're flying over water. So, they went

into the next island that they found to see if they could get their bearings and get their engines fixed up, and we had a couple of them that landed on Martinique, which was run by Vichy France, where the submarine pens were, and they were immediately captured by the Germans there, or the French, whoever was running the thing, and taken out of the war. ... Another one, he had a couple of girlfriends he knew down on Puerto Rico. When he got as far as Puerto Rico, "Oh, I'll stop and visit my girlfriend while I'm here." ...

TK: Didn't they have a course direction?

GS: I don't know what they gave them. ...

TK: Down the Windward Chain?

GS: Yes. ... The ones that were briefed, went to [the] briefing, they went out around to the whole Caribbean, Lesser Antilles and all the way down to Trinidad, and I flew down and gave them a heading of 140 degrees, I think, or something like that, and he went direct. ... These that went around the islands, they were going to take another twenty minutes or an hour longer than we were, and there wasn't that much gas left in some of them. A couple of them dropped in the ocean, a couple of them landed in Martinique, others landed at some other islands, but we were the only one there, that was supposed to be where they were supposed to be. So, when the CO [commanding officer] found out that a couple of the squadron hadn't made it and where they were, he wanted us to be put back in the squadron, but ... we got word that, yes, they were looking for us back at West Palm Beach and somebody had preferred charges against us for stealing an airplane and leaving the country in time of war to avoid combat, or something like that, which is what they stand you up against the wall and shoot you for. ... The CO shows up and he says, yes, it's what order he has, to hold onto us and not to let us go until we can get back for a court-martial and all, and, finally, he got to talking to him and told him where we were and what we were [doing] and that we were supposed to be part of the squadron. He needed us back because he had lost so many planes, ... but that's basically what the story is there, leaving the country.

SI: We will now break for lunch.

[TAPE PAUSED]

GS: Yes. After I was in the Army for about three months, this one comes up after I got drafted, and so forth, ... finally, I got a letter from the Navy, telling me they have found a berth for me and, if I report to Courtland [Church] Street, Manhattan there, again, within the next ten days or so, they will have a commission available for me and a berth. So, all right, this was what I was waiting for. I figure I'm going to get out of this hassle with bombsights and cooks and bakers school and all that stuff. So, I go to the first sergeant and tell him ... I would like to speak to ... the company commander at that time, and he says, "What do you want to talk to him about?" and I said, "Well, I've got a letter here, that the Navy is offering me a commission, if I can report to Courtland [Church] Street within the next ten days," and he looked at me and says, "Oh, you want to join the Navy?" "Yes, I guess so." "Tell you what you do; over there, there's a mop and a bucket here. You mop this floor up and we'll talk about it some more." [laughter] Well, I

never did get to do any more talking about it. That was it. "You're in the Army now. Forget about it. The Navy, ... they're just the enemy, as far you're concerned." So, that's how I got to stay ... in the Army, instead of the Navy, but, then, they changed us to Air Force.

SI: The crew that you flew to Trinidad with, did they remain your crew for the rest of the war?

GS: No. Let me give you a little bit before that; when I graduated from navigation school, when they finally gave me the diploma and everything, that was, I think, September 11, 1941 [1943], and they told me, "Report to Bruning, Nebraska." I get on these trains, the local trains, and we'd ride for about three hours and we'd pull into a siding and, ten o'clock at night, they'd wake us up and start banging the car around. We're hooked onto a freight train, or something else there that was moving slow. ... Finally, I got into Bruning, Nebraska, within the twenty-two days, and so forth. I arrived there and I find that there wasn't anything there. The squadron had been formed about in March '41 [1943?] and they were on paper, [created in name only]. There wasn't anybody there, maybe five or six officers they had, a couple of commanders, and so forth, and they just didn't have anything, on paper. Nobody knew who was doing anything. People had taken off. They'd been sitting around since, oh, early January. Nobody gave them any orders or nothing. They'd show up once a month to collect some pay and go home again. Well, when I pull in there, ... I find out, or we find out, that the reason they hadn't done anything besides be on paper is that the Air Force had ordered some aircraft ... for them. The aircraft had been delivered and rejected. The B-24 had a lot of defects on it, and so, they sent them all back to ... Consolidated Aviation, and some of them went to Ford out in Detroit. He was building a plant that could build them, and they were gone. So, they had no aircraft. ... There were two or three aircraft on the field there. The only thing they had were some early model B-24s that weren't really completed. They had no turrets on them and they find out that the aircraft, without the turrets, was useless. So, they decided we'd have to add some more turrets to it. So, they added a ball turret underneath the belly and the nose turret up in front. They had to change the engines. They ... needed more power in the engines to do some of the things they wanted to do. Finally, it got to be the first week in November, I think, it was, yes, first week in November. ... Well, after I graduated from navigation school, there I was, graduated from it in September and the ... first week in September, ... arrived up there and joined this squadron. I guess I was on their payroll from about the first week in October, and we still had nothing to do, but the first week in November, they delivered sixty aircraft or so, to Bruning, Nebraska, for us. Well, now, we had sixty aircraft and about, oh, 130 that were pilots or co-pilots registered and they had two or three instructors and they were going to instruct us how to fly the aircraft. Well, with weather out there and everything ...

-----END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE-----

SI: Please, continue.

GS: Okay. With weather delays and everything, the Pilot there was lucky if he would get an hour of flight time in one week, because, ... what it was, there weren't enough instructors to ... teach them anything. So, there we were, having just training, trying to get straightened out, and, finally, they decided, "Well, we've got enough of the crews [and] the crews have had enough experimenting now. We'll try a real simulated mission, where you're going to really take off and

fly to altitude," and so forth. So, they gave us the whole thing there. We had to leave Nebraska and fly up around [the] northern United States, all the way up into the Dakotas someplace, and they briefed us on a [target]. Up in the Dakotas there, at a certain spot, there would be a farm there and, out in the farm, they had some white crosses made out of white sheets or so that they put out there. "That's your target. ... We're going to take off, you know, and we're going to fly to altitude and the gunners are each going to get to fire their guns," and I never could figure this out. You're flying over Western Kansas there, or Western Nebraska, either one, which is mostly the desert [prairie] or farms there. You're firing ... these fifty-caliber machine guns. There must have been bullets all over the sky up there. What went up must have come down someplace. I often wondered, "Who's protecting the people down below? They're American citizens and you're just firing off into space and those things come down;" never did find out where they went or what happened to them. Nobody says, "No, nothing, they'll wear out before they hit the ground, you know. They'll have no speed left on them or anything, so that if they do hit you, they'll bounce off you, or something. Don't worry about them;" never found an answer to that one. [laughter] Well, anyhow, now, here, we're going up on this mission ... to do something, and we have to get up early in the morning, when we get out there. Oh, well, before this, they had assigned us to a crew and we were the thirteenth crew in the squadron. There were twelve aircraft in the squadron, each of four squadrons had twelve aircraft, and then, the wing, group and headquarters, they had the rest of them, but there were sixty-four aircraft that were delivered. The three aircraft they had that were not flyable anymore, the old, obsolete ones that had no turrets on them and weaker engines, they're so different that the characteristics of flying were altogether different. ... They finally decided on the B-24H, [which] was the one model we were given. They had started out with the A model and we were down to H by the time they got them acceptable. ... We were assigned a crew and the crew that we had, the thirteenth crew, they went to the squadron and said, "All right, we're going to make up the thirteenth crew. Any of you pilots that have some 'foul balls' you don't want on your crew, we've got a chance to get rid of them. We'll take them from you and assign some of our replacement crews to them." So, all right, we ended up with, ... the Pilot was a little, short guy. I don't know how he ever got into the aircraft or how he could fly it. They had to put four-by-four blocks on the rudder pedals, so [that] he could work them. He couldn't reach the floor with them. He looked awkward wearing a uniform, because he was so short. He was only about five-foot-two.

EB: What was his nationality?

GS: I don't remember nationality at all. No, I can't. I don't think he had any nationality. He's just an American. ... We were an "integrated" crew, to the extent that we had one full-blooded Indian. He was our ball-turret gunner. He was a full-blooded Indian and worked out very good with us. He had marvelous eyesight. His eyesight was fantastic. We could look down a runway and, maybe about a mile-and-a-half away, you could see somebody down there; he could tell you who it was.

EB: Do you remember what tribe he was?

GS: I think he was Navajo, and he got along good with us, but he was in trouble there, because he burned the orderly room down. He set fire to it, did a war dance around it, whooping and hollering and complaining that, "This is no way to fight a war, with airplanes and machine guns.

In my tribe, we have four arrows, and then, we use our tomahawk." ... He got along good with us, but we finally told him, "Look, you behave yourself or we're going to kick you off the crew," and he behaved ... himself and stayed out of trouble enough to get to go with us. Like I say, his eyesight was fantastic. He was a ball-turret gunner and he worked out the sight they had on the ball turret and got to use that [very well], so that we'd be sailing along there and you'd see a German plane almost a mile off on the side. He'd open up with a short burst. The first thing, you see smoke coming out of that plane way out there.

EB: Did he speak an Indian language?

GS: I guess so. I didn't know. We spoke to him in English. ... His buddy on the flight was ... a young kid, who we found out wasn't even seventeen years old yet when he was assigned to us. So, what were we going to do, complain about it and we ... lose a man, or somebody else would grab him? But, he ... worked out as pretty good on the plane there. ... By the time we left the country, he had just had his seventeenth birthday. We celebrated that down in South America, on the way over to Italy. ...

EB: How many of you were actually on the crew?

GS: Ten men on a crew. The Co-Pilot was real short, or the Pilot was the short guy, and he had applied for a fighter plane, or, you know, a transfer to fighters, rather than to the bomber, because he couldn't really handle that bomber. ... To land that, you've got to pull that yoke back and hold it and he didn't have enough strength to hold it where he needed it. He'd get that plane up there and try and get the nose up and it would bang, drop on the floor on him. But, they finally transferred him out to his fighters and we were assigned a new pilot. Well, the C Squadron CO wanted to know who had somebody that could handle this new crew, that was a thirteenth crew, and they decided to give us this hotshot co-pilot we had that had joined the squadron. He had one hour and fifteen minutes' training in a B-24.

TK: You had a name for this crew of yours. Was it "Rejects" or something? ...

GS: I don't know. "Skidmore's Section Eights," I think they called them.

TK: "Section Eights."

GS: "Section Eights," yes. [laughter] ... We were always part of Section Eight. Well, anyhow, let's see, we had a co-pilot that was originally with the squadron. He was down there in Alamogordo, I think, in March, when they were first put on paper. He was a co-pilot for the Squadron Commander. The Squadron Commander flew with him once, landed the plane and told him, "I want you out of this airplane and don't you ever come back in a plane you're flying with me." He says, "You don't know how to fly this," and he cursed him up and down. "You don't know how to fly. I don't care where you go, but keep out of my sight." So, we had our co-pilot, that he almost killed us a couple of times. ... Well, when we're leaving Trinidad, Trinidad had a runway that went up and down like a roller coaster. ... We're sitting out there in the sun, waiting for a clearance for take-off, and so, the engines are running hot on him, because it's [the] tropics down there, and so, he turns on the; oh, what did they call them, the vents? Well, they

had vents to keep the engine cool there, when it was on the ground. He turns those on and, with them, you ... destroy your power and everything. You have to make sure that they're closed, the cowl flaps were. Cowl flaps had to be closed for take-off, ... but he opened them up. We're sitting on the runway there and it's getting hot and the engines are getting hot and he's watching his instruments. He turns on the cowl flaps, opens them up. When it gets time to go, we're going halfway down the runway, we're going up and down and up and down, and the Co-Pilot leans over to the Pilot and tells him, "Hold it on the ground a bit. I've got the cowl flaps open yet." So, the Pilot turns to him, "Why you; ... don't sit there and do something. You're not supposed to [do that]. Why did you ... open the cowl flaps? Nobody told you to open them. Don't open them. Don't do it. Don't touch anything. Just sit there," and, anyhow, we're going up and down like this. Well, when we're going up on one of these hills on the runway, the Co-Pilot feels himself rising up and he thought we took off. Well, the first thing ... a co-pilot does on take-off [is], as soon as you leave the ground, you have to put the brakes on, because ... the big landing gear's spinning and they have gyroscopic action and they fold up into the wing. When they fold up into the wing, you're twisting them and, if the wheels are going too fast, the twist will rip your landing gear right out from underneath you, which has happened more than once. So, he's got to close the cowl flaps. He tells him, "Hold it on the ground." Well, finally, we're going up one of these hills and he figures, "We're up in the air." So, what does he do? He hits the brakes, to stop the wheels from turning. We're just getting up to the top, he hits the brakes and the nose dives us down into the ground. We're down off to bottom of the shocks on the ... nose landing gear and it bounces back up again. We're going up. ... I'm standing there ... between the Pilot and the Co-Pilot, calling off air speed, which we have to, it's critical for [take-off, and] so forth. ... I'm calling the aircraft air speed off to him with my eyes glued on the air speed indicator and I feel this going up, and I look up over my nose, the nose of the aircraft, to see what we're doing. By that time, we're over the top and heading down, right into the fence at the end of the field. "Ka-boom," we go through the fence. The Pilot, by that time, ... he's still chewing out the Co-Pilot for having brakes on and off at the wrong time and all, and I call him and tell him, "We hit something." He says, "Yes, we did." I said, "Well, let me go check the nose and see what we were doing there. Don't bring the gear up until I tell you." So, I crawl up into the nose to see what it's looking like and I find we've got about eight feet of chain-link fence draped on the nose wheel. [laughter] Well, we've got to get rid of that. So, I tell him, ... "Hold it with the gear down. Leave it down. Don't try to bring the gear up before we see ... what's happened here." So, we're up there and I'm crawling around in the nose. Well, I find out, ... I see this chain-link fence draped on the nose wheel. I'm wondering what I can do to get that off the nose wheel, and they had a useless piece of an airplane in the back there; they had a crank. We've tried to use them, but they never did work. It was a crank on a pole, ... like you see these guys winding up an awning with. ... What it was for, it was [for], well, in case you're on the ground and you have no battery or anything, supposedly, you can stick this pole up into the engine and hook it onto a little spot they had there and start cranking. ... If you have two men cranking on that crank as hard as they can, they could never get an engine started, [laughter] but that's what it was for, to start the engines when they're on the ground, with no battery or anything. "Well," I said, "let me bring that pole up here and see if I can reach that chain-link fence." So, I'm up in the ... nose there, with the doors open, laying on my stomach, poking this chain-link fence with this big pole, finally, get it to drop off in the ocean. Well, when we looked around, we couldn't see any damage done to the nose wheel. So, we said, "All right, let's bring the gear up and see what

happens." Well, we got the gear up and it worked all right. There seemed to be no damage to the nose wheel, or nose gear, but the people on Trinidad had a hole in their fence. [laughter]

TK: Did you drop the chain-link fence? ...

GS: ... Dropped it in the ocean. ... This co-pilot, he was a piece of cake. That wasn't the only time we had troubles with him.

SI: Were there other characters on your crew?

GS: Well, yes. Like I say, we had that [co-pilot], ... the nose turret was run by the sixteen-year-old kid; the ball turret was run by the Indian, full-blooded Indian; the tail turret was run by a Texan, who talked and walked with a drawl. He could never be in step, the way he marched. ... With his big, long, lengthy legs, he would lope, [be] loping along, [laughter] and keep up with everybody else, but always out of step, ... anyhow, but he was a pretty good shot. He'd call off up there, "We have some ... boogies. They're coming in at six o'clock, down there low. Never mind, I got him." He'd fire a little burst while he's telling us about them and he'd take so long to tell us that they're coming in at him that he'd shot them down already. So, he worked out all right, but who else did I forget? The Bombardier, he was the "old man" of the crew. He was twenty-eight years old, which was old. The rest of us were teenagers, or I was twenty-one and the rest of them were, usually, younger than that. So, anyhow, ... I guess that makes up the crew there. ...

SI: What about the waist gunners and the top-turret?

GS: Oh, yes, the two waist gunners we had. The top-turret was the engineer. He was the kind of a guy, the Pilot would tell him, "Okay," he said, "I want you to transfer fuel from number three to number two tank." "Oh, now, wait a minute, ... sir. Lieutenant, if you do that, our number three engine is our weak engine, you're going to put extra load on it; I think we'd better transfer it the other way." Well, he was probably right, but that's not the way the Army works. When the Pilot says, "Transfer fuel from number three to two," you transfer fuel from number three to number two. You don't give him an argument that, "Number three engine is the one that's going to need more fuel, so, you better keep some in there," and all. He knew his airplane. He studied it, but you couldn't give him an order and expect him to just jump in and do it. So, anyhow, they transferred him, too, took him off the crew he was on and transferred him to the thirteenth crew. ... The waist gunners were ... all right there. They got along good together, both left and right waist gunners, and they could keep track of what was going on, what they were supposed to be doing. So, they behaved themselves well, and then, there's one more. Oh, me; how did I get on the thirteenth crew? [laughter] What did I have to do to get there? ... I came into the squadron and, when I came into the squadron, ... there were twenty-two navigators that were coming in with us, and for the whole group. ... They came in with a whole group of them and they just assigned us alphabetically. Skidmore was towards the end of the alphabet, "You're on the thirteenth crew." So, that's how I got stuck on there. I didn't have to foul up too much at all to get on there.

EB: Did everyone get along very well? It seems like there were a lot of different people. Were there conflicting personalities?

GS: ... No, I don't think we really had anything that conflicted. The Indian got along good with the cowboy, and so forth, and the only one that we didn't get along with was the Co-Pilot. He was the only one that gave us any trouble, and the Pilot finally put him on there and told him to behave himself or he's going to kick him off the crew. So, all right, well, the same with the Indian; he burned the orderly room down and we finally got it cleared up with him. ... Of course, his whole problem was a little bit of firewater. One half a beer and he'd start off raving again, "No way to fight a war, with machine guns. My tribe says tomahawk and four arrows." ... So, anyhow, ... that was the crew we were assigned. ... Like I say, the little pilot that couldn't reach the pedals, he was replaced with this co-pilot that had no time as a pilot in control, but he was conscientious. He studied his airplane and tried to make up for the fact that he had an hour and fifteen minutes' time in a B-24, a total of eighty-four hours in the air through all his flight training and everything. So, he was a novice, but [he studied]. ...

EB: Where did you say they put the crew together?

GS: Oh, out in Bruning, Nebraska. ...

EB: Did you know at this point that you would be going overseas?

GS: We figured we're training for overseas. We figured that's what it is. We were going to be in a combat group and we'll be shipped over sometime, but we figured we're going to need six months' worth of training to get this thing shaped up. So, anyhow, they send us off on this one mission, where the target is some white sheets put out on a line up in South Dakota. So, we go to briefing and, finally, we're getting ready to take off and we find, "Where's the Bombardier?" "He's not here." "Where is he?" "Well, he was in the town last night." "Nobody saw him since last night? Oh, cripes, well," [the] Pilot says, ... "we're going to have to cover for him." ... We were one of the ends, in the back of the formation. "We'll be taking off later. See if anybody sees him," you know, and, sure enough, we're taxiing out and, there, alongside of the airplane, we see him running along, trotting along, trying to keep up. He's waving his hand at us. One of the gunners says, "There he is, there's the Bombardier out there, waving at us," and the Pilot says, "Oh, I think he wants to climb onboard." Okay, ... so, we stopped a minute on the taxiway. He ran over and climbed into the airplane. We said, "Okay, we got him. Go ahead and take off now." So, he's on the plane with us. He didn't attend the briefing. He didn't know anything about where we were going on the training mission or what, but, anyhow, ... I get him up in the nose there and I'm telling him, ... "Where were you? You were supposed to be here at eight o'clock, you know. Now, it's almost nine-thirty and you finally show up." Then, I find out he's stewed to the gills. He'd been out all night long, showed up in time to catch the plane running down the runway. So, he gets onboard. All right, we take off with the rest of the group and they form up. We fly over Kansas and Nebraska, out west there, into the hills. ... All the gunners fire their guns. We finally climb up to altitude. That's when we first started having trouble. We get up to altitude and one of the first things we discovered is, we have no intercom. "Why don't we have any intercom?" "Something wrong with it." Okay, well, now, we can't talk to anybody. Well, all right, the first thing we know, we see one after another of the planes are dropping out of

formation. ... We finally get up to altitude and the Bombardier, he starts throwing up in his oxygen mask. So, here, he's in trouble. He can't use the oxygen mask after he's thrown up in it, and so, I'm up there and he's ... starting to turn blue, without breathing any oxygen. So, I figure, "I can't talk to the Pilot, because the intercom is out." The gunners had their guns. They were supposed to be target shooting, or something, and most of the guns didn't work. So, anyhow, here I am, up in the nose with this co-pilot [bombardier] and I figured I'd better get out of here before he dies [or] he drops. He's turning blue, you know. We're up to almost twenty thousand feet and, without any oxygen, for about ten minutes, he's going to turn blue and never come back to life again. So, I have to crawl through the [fuselage]. From the nose, I have to crawl through to the back of the plane, get up under the Pilot and tell him, where I lift his earphone off and tell him that, "The Bombardier is in trouble. He has no oxygen. We're going to have to go down," and so, he peels off and we go down. Well, the other thing we find out is that there's no ... walk-around bottle, which is a spare bottle that they have. I don't know, there was a bunch of them on the airplane. Well, I go to use [one of] those, so [that] I can crawl around the airplane from the nose back up to the Pilot and back again. I find nobody filled the walk-around bottles. They're all empty. So, I have no oxygen, the Bombardier, he's got no oxygen, and we finally got the word to the Pilot to take us down to where we can breathe. ... In the meantime, I figured, "Well, I know that there's spare oxygen up in the top turret. Let me hook my oxygen mask in there." So, I go to hook my oxygen mask in there and I find that the top-turret man, he was using them. He was using that one. I couldn't get in there. I figure, "All right, I'll go back and go down in the bomb bay. There's a spare oxygen [hookup] there." I head down into the bomb bay and the top-turret guy comes down out of the turret and he grabs a hold of me and he's dragging me back up onto the flight deck. ... I'm fighting him to try and get down into the bomb bay, where there's spare oxygen, and, in the meantime, he grabs me. ... We're rolling around there on the bomb bay doors, or walking on them, anyhow. ... They're only supposed to hold 125 pounds or 150 pounds, at the most. So, two of us rolling around there, wrestling for an oxygen mask, why the bomb doors didn't open? because they didn't work. The latch didn't work on them. I guess it was; oh, the other problem we had, it was frozen. ... You're taxiing out and you run through a puddle and the water splashes up on the plane and it freezes the landing gear and the bomb doors, so that this happened to them on the first few missions we flew, until we found out what to do for it. ... You take off and you've got water, or mud and water, splashed up on the bomb doors. They're stuck closed. You want to open them up to drop your bombs; they won't open. So, you have to drop your bombs anyhow and the bomb doors, with a ... five-hundred-pound bomb on the bomb door, they automatically open and they dumped the bombs out that way. So, here we are, rolling around on the door where the latch didn't work. So, finally, ... we're down enough now so that I don't need the oxygen, we can breathe regular air, and I'm wondering, "Well, how's the Bombardier making out? He was turning pretty blue when I saw him last." So, I go up, crawl up through the nose again, and, again, ... without any oxygen at all. ... We get down to about ten thousand feet and you can breathe air all right there. So, anyhow, again, oh, I'm looking for the Bombardier, to see how he's doing. He's there. He threw his oxygen mask away, because it was all full of his vomit and everything, from drinking all night, and he's sitting there, sucking on the end of the tube. So, he's getting the oxygen, ... big grin on his face. ... I looked to see what happened. Everything else was pretty much normal. The Pilot wants to know where we were supposed to be going, because he left the formation, and, in the briefing that they gave us, ... if we left the formation for any reason at all, if we could possibly continue on to the target, ... instead of dropping our bombs at twenty thousand feet, ... we would be

allowed to drop them at ten thousand feet. So, all right, I figure, "Well, the Pilot wants to head up to the target, see if we can find these sheets on the field in South Dakota." ... All right, I find the target for him and figure, "Well, all right, we'll make a couple of bomb runs the way we were supposed to, at ten thousand feet." I go over them and [we] drop the bombs and hit the target there a bit, and then, we head back home, see. Well, when we get home, we find out the thing was a disaster. ... Nobody else even found the target up there and ... a couple of planes continued on. They were down up in Canada someplace. After they got through the Dakotas, they kept going, because they didn't see any white sheet where they were supposed to. They just thought they hadn't reached it yet. ... So, I land and the first thing I know is, the commanding general wants to see the navigator that was on this plane that just landed. "Oh." So, I go in there and there's a general, two-star general, and, oh, two or three colonels and a couple of one-star generals, all in the officers' club there, having a conference and all, and the first thing they want to know is, "Did we find the target?" "Yes, we found the target." "Did you drop any bombs?" "Yes." "When did you drop your bombs?" and we had to give them, "1:04, the first one went out, and, 1:07, our second bomb went out." I gave them where I'd logged them in. Okay, so, then, I hear the generals are talking to the Group Commander. ... The Group Commander says, "Well, you told me if I got one bomb on that target, you're going to send the outfit overseas." "Yes." He said, "Well, there's your bomb. He hit the target. You've got the one bomb there. You've got three of them there." "So, you're going overseas." Okay, by now, it's the first week of November and orders come through for us to go overseas. It was all my fault, because I hit the target. [laughter] So, we go down to West Palm Beach.

SI: Why did the top-turret gunner attack you?

GS: ... He had a spare oxygen tube that he wanted me to hook onto. He was going to share his oxygen with me. He saw that I had no oxygen there. He wanted to share his oxygen with me and I'm trying to get away from him to find my own oxygen tube, and that's basically all it was. So, all right, we're sent down there to [go overseas], I think I mentioned this part, about ... [the] take-off there at West Palm Beach and landing at Trinidad, and where, finally, they decided they weren't going to court-martial us for leaving the country. ... We're back in the squadron again and, well, I guess we continue on further. We go down to British Guiana and down into Brazil, and what's British Guiana? That's not what it's called nowadays. What is British Guiana today?

SI: Suriname, I think. [Editor's Note: British Guiana is now Guyana. Dutch Guiana is now Suriname.]

GS: Yes, I think it is, too. They keep changing these things on us. You can't keep track of things. Anyhow, ... well, we get to go and [we were] getting into Africa there. ... They want to know if I could find Africa and I told them I thought I'd find Africa for them, and we took off from Fortaleza, Brazil. We finally went to Fortaleza, Brazil. From there, our trip was across the ocean. That was the big part of the trip that we had. ... It was on Christmas Eve of 1941; ... no, 1942, by now, it was, wasn't it?

SI: 1943?

GS: ... '43, it would be, by now, and we're living down there in ... Fortaleza, in Brazil. ... Finding the strip there, there was no strip there. ... When I got to where they told us the airport would be, I told them, "There's where the airport is." We looked down and there's a field there and with, it looks like, grass that's never been cut, and we went down low over it and, there, we see a jeep sitting ... off the one end and some tents on the other end, but where's the runway? and nobody cut the grass? Here's grass about three to four feet high. We couldn't see whether it was dry underneath it or a lake underneath there, water ten-foot deep or what, but we were there and I told them, "That's got to be the airport right there. That open spot's the only place you can get into. We might as well try it." I said, "With a jeep there, it's got to be somebody that drives the jeep, or some place around." ... We landed there and it was the place we were supposed to, but they were the engineers that had just arrived two nights ago to build an airfield, but we landed on it anyhow and, by the time we were ready to leave, two or three days later, they had at least mowed some of the lawn and we were ready to go. ... Being up Christmas Eve, there were two nurses down there that got us into singing Christmas carols all night long. So, the bunch of us were sitting around the fire, singing Christmas carols, and, finally, two o'clock, we finally got to bed. Well, about six o'clock in the morning, they wake us up and tell us, "We're going to get going," or, no, we get over there first, before they tell us we're going to go. We show up for breakfast; we're too late for breakfast, because we'd slept late. So, okay, comes noontime, we're looking for a noon meal. "No, we're only going to have one meal today, [at] nighttime. Six o'clock tonight, you'll have your supper." All right, we show up six o'clock at night. We're in line, in front of the chow line, and they pull us out and say, "You guys, get out to your ship. You're taking off right away, as soon as you can." "Soon as we can?" "Yes." "What are we going to do for something to eat? We didn't have any breakfast. You don't give us any lunch. Now, we don't have any supper?" "Tough," they said. "See if somebody can pick up some turkey sandwiches for you, ... but you're going to have to get off as soon as you can." So, all right, we get a couple of sandwiches, get ... back on the plane and we take off and we're going to fly from [Brazil to Africa]. Well, they wanted us off early so that we'd fly all night long. ... [If we] took off by nine o'clock at night, we'd have the stars out. ... Early in the morning, it would be broad daylight down there, over in Africa, and that's when we're going to land in Africa, in daylight. So, okay, the navigation wasn't too difficult. We had stars all night long, but, then, we ran into a hurricane down there in the South Atlantic. ... Finally, we navigated through the hurricane, come out on the other side of it, took a couple of star shots. Well, one, I didn't have any stars. ... Venus was out in the daytime. I could tell from there. With Venus and the sun, I had my two lines that I could cross, anyhow, and where they cross is where I'm heading for, or at least I knew where I was [and] which way to go to where I wanted to head for. So, we're coming into Africa and the Pilot's beginning to worry about [if] we're going to run out of gas early, you know. "We have to cut down our speed, you know, and conserve fuel to ... get there." The Co-Pilot, he's gone. He's all worried, this guy that was lousing things up on us. He's real worried that ... we're going to run out of gas before we get there and he starts playing with the radio. ... He picks up Dakar on the radio and wants to know if they can take a fix on us and tell us which way to go, and, oh, yes, they have a fix on us already and we should make a correction to the left of about ten degrees. "Left at ten degrees?" I said. "I've got a correction, right five degrees," and so, I checked my figures and I said, "No, we're out here. We're not way up there," and the Pilot says, ... "You guys make up your mind." I said, "I've got my mind made up. He's getting a fix from somebody from Dakar that tells him where we are?" and I said, "Well, let me talk to the guy from Dakar." So, I get on the radio to talk to him and he can't give me the password. He

didn't know what I was talking about when I asked him if he had the password for the day, and I said, "This doesn't sound right. He's got to have the password. Even though they change it every day and you can get confused whether it was over last night or this morning or whatever time it was, whatever day it was, but ...

SI: There must be a password.

GS: "[If] you can't give me the password, we're not going to follow you," and so, the Co-Pilot, he says, ... "He gave me a good fix on us, told us where we were." I'm arguing with the Co-Pilot and the Pilot says, "Look," he says, "I'm responsible for this flight. Now, you've given us one heading and Skidmore's giving us the other heading. He's the navigator. If he isn't right, it's his fault. If I go with where you tell us to go and it isn't right, it's my fault." He says, "I'm going with Skidmore." So, all right, we headed in. The first thing you know, the nose-turret calls out, "Land ahead." "Okay, land ahead." ... The Pilot wants to know, "Where's the airport?" and I looked to see where we are. I said, "The airport's straight ahead." He said, "I thought the airport was on the coast." I said, "No, it's ten miles inland." Okay, so, we go ten miles inland, there's the airport. We were within a mile of it, which, after eleven hours in the air or something, running across the ocean, wasn't too bad a navigation [job], to come within a mile. So, that gave me a reputation of reliability with the Air Force after that, that nobody else came ... that close with it. Well, we're there and, oh, let's see, what else is worth telling you about, now? ... Oh, we had to wait for weather, a big storm over there out on the coast and up in the Atlas Mountains. To cross the Atlas Mountains, we couldn't go up to altitude, because we had two passengers onboard that had no oxygen mask. So, we were told to keep below altitude, below ten thousand feet there. So, the only way we could do that is to go up a mountain pass, through the Atlas Mountains. ... To identify them, you're flying alongside of them and there's four or five passes that went north over them. You've got to pick the right one. You pick the wrong one, ... they're blind alleys. So, a couple of them picked the wrong one. In fact, ... one of our planes was found crashed into an Atlas mountain about three years ago. ... That's where he'd been since World War II, where they ... ran into the mountain. He picked the wrong pass, and we find out that other aircraft, following them, a lot of them picked the wrong pass, because they didn't give us too good [of] an identification on it, and we had three or four aircraft that ran into the mountains there. ... Oh, coming into Dakar there, and following my calculations and the other calculations, we find out, after we land, first thing they want to do is, they want to see the navigator that was there. So, I'd been up [for awhile], you know. Christmas Eve, we were up, didn't have anything to eat all of Christmas Day, we're up all night long again, and we're finally on the ground. ... They wanted to see the navigator on it that came in and [I said], "What do they ... want me for now? I'm here. ... When do I get ... time off to go to bed or something? ... I've been up for thirty-six hours and hadn't had much to eat, except the turkey sandwich that I couldn't eat, because it was too late and I was all by myself and it was too cold," or something. Anyhow, ... they wanted to see me and, come to find out, they'd been listening to me on the radio and they knew that I was arguing with the radio that claimed it was Dakar. ... When I didn't get ... the password from them, they listened to his conversation and [were] trying to get a fix on him. They wanted to know exactly where I was. You know, when I was talking to him at ... 9:32 in the morning, where was my position? So, I gave them my position. They had a fix on me, where he was telling me to go and a fix on him, and I could spot him. The Germans had a submarine out there. They knew that we were coming across the ocean, had a submarine out

there, giving us false readings; so, good thing the Pilot decided to go with me instead of the Co-Pilot. So, then, the next thing we ran into [was], we get up to the Atlas Mountains and there's a big storm opening there, and we got orders that ... we had to check-in at a certain spot. If we didn't check-in at a certain spot, ... they had us landing in the middle of the Sahara Desert out there, where they'd just put up a station, a radio station, and they wanted us to land there, to get a clear weather clearance before we continued any further. Well, we found a little oasis out there, where they wanted us to land, in the middle of the Sahara, and we come in, landed. ... We find out that what they'd done to make a runway [was], they'd taken a bulldozer and scraped the sand off the top of the desert there and smoothed it out a little bit. "This was ... the runway," they said, and we said, "Okay, we see where that is," and he says, "Where are you?" and he says, "Well, at the end of the runway, there's a little, white building. We're in the building there." "Okay." So, we land, go in the building and ... tell them who we are, and [they reply], "Yes, okay," but, when we're landing, we're coming in for the landing and [were] just over the end of the runway when, all of a sudden, the whole ground comes up to meet us. "What's this about?" We're trying to figure out what it is and, there we are, we're trying to land on top of a flock of locusts, a whole, big cloud full of locusts that you couldn't see through. It looked like the same color as the desert, but it was up about fifty, sixty feet above the desert, the top of the locusts. So, you're trying to land on the top of a field full of locusts. Well, the other thing is, we went around the cloud. We scared that [cloud] away with our going past it, or just over top of it, and that [it] got away from the runway there, and we're down on the runway and what do we find that they did? When they cleared it, they scraped the top off of the desert, the sand off of the desert. They scraped it down, pretty much, so [that] all they had left was the hard rock of the desert, which was flint, and we had three flat tires when we stopped rolling. So, now, we're stuck out there in the middle of the Sahara Desert, where the temperature gets up to 135 during the day. The tank of water they had was too hot to wash in. So, that's the only thing we had for drinking, and [we would] try and get it in, to get some water that was in the shade, where it would cool down a little bit, so [that] you at least could get a drink of water without burning yourself. ... While we were there; ... oh, what did they call these things, riding around on the Sahara? ...

SI: A camel?

GS: No, ... a whole bunch of them; the caravan.

SI: Nomads?

GS: Yes. A caravan comes in, full of [goods], on (the Arabian?) there, and this place we landed, there was a little oasis there. ... Did you ever see ... *Beau Geste*? You ever see the movie *Beau Geste*?

SI: No.

GS: Oh, well, it's the story of this desert place and where Beau Geste was, where he [served]. It was a fort there and the oasis, and the character runs around ...

SI: Oh, B-E-A-U?

GS: Yes.

SI: About the French Foreign Legion?

GS: Yes. ... That's the place we landed, and, if you recall the moving picture, the guy ran around, ... propping up the dead bodies in the parapets and firing his gun and [he would] go to the next one and fire the gun down the parapet. That's where it was, and we climbed all over that parapet and up into the [towers?] there. The Arabs didn't bother us then, but there had been some battles fought there. Anyhow, we were there and, while we were there, this caravan came in, like it's been doing for thousands of years, I guess. ... So, they came in, pitched their tents outside the oasis there a little bit, and we went over to look at them and see what they had. Well, they had all kinds of things for sale, mostly were artillery shells, ... brass artillery shells, that had been hammered into, oh, it's surprising, the things they'd make out of them, snuff boxes and, oh, lanterns and pitchers and all of that. So, we didn't want any of that. We looked at it and [said], "Haven't they got anything that we can use?" "No." "So, okay, let's get out of here." Well, we're finally leaving and this guy came up to us and said, "No, no, no, wait a minute." So, we [said], "What do you got now and you want to show us?" and he shows us a can of sardines and we look at the can of sardines. Well, it's unopened and everything and it looks like it's nice Portuguese sardines, skinless, boneless, the most expensive kind you could get, I guess, and he had a pack. I said, "Well, how much you want for them?" Well, we're ... dickering with him and, finally, we find out he wants about twenty-two dollars in French *francs* for it. So, we told him, "No. For a can of sardines? We can do better than that. We don't want to get your sardines." "Oh," and he brought out a little thimble full of real hot, sweet tea and offered that to us as a bribe. "No, it's still not worth twenty-two dollars." Well, he came down to nineteen dollars and, I don't know, I guess we were down to about twelve dollars, and I finally told him, "Give him a couple of bucks and let's get out of here," because I'm with the Bombardier at that time. ... He says, "No," he says, "I'm not going to pay [more than] two dollars for a can of sardines. I'll give him the two dollars." "Well, he's ... not going to accept it." "Well, all right, here, give him another three dollars and tell him we're going," and so, we give him another three dollars. I think we spent five dollars for a can sardines, and, as we're leaving, ... he won't let us leave yet. He says, "No, no, no," and he goes back in his tent, comes back out with a whole case of about forty-eight cans of sardines in it, hands it to us, for the five bucks. [laughter] So, he probably didn't know what he had. He probably stole them from somebody, too.

-----END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO-----

GS: And we had sardines there for awhile and, I remember, I wrote home and told my mother about the sardines we had and wanted to know if she could send me some biscuits or something to eat them on. ... She sent me some Saltines or something, and I think, to get the Saltines to us; this is by the time we got up into Italy there. We had the sardines that we were going to make, going to eat, but she sent me Saltines to eat them [on]. Well, to get the Saltines over to Italy, they had to send them by boat, and I think they had to drag them behind the boat when they sent them in. ... By the time they reached us, oh, by the time they got as far as Africa, they unloaded them and hauled them across the desert, where a bunch of elephants trampled them down a bit. So, the boxes of Saltines she sent us weren't very good. So, we told her, "No, see if you can't find something that comes in a can. Can you find a bread ... [of] some kind that comes in a can

and we'll settle for that?" Well, the only thing she found was some date nut bread that came in a can, Crosse and Blackwell's Date Nut Bread? I don't know if you're familiar with it.

SI: No.

GS: Well, you might find it in some of the supermarkets, someplace. It's just a brown bread with dates in it, and nuts, and so, we had date nut bread, which went very good with sardines.

SI: Had you had any preconceived image of Africa before that point? It sounds like you had seen some movies about Africa.

GS: Oh, I don't know whether we did, or I don't recall. Well, the Sahara Desert is not [the] Africa you think of, with jungles. That's just a sandy desert for thousands of miles and there's nothing there, but ... a few little oases.

EB: Did you know that this was just going to be a stop-off point before going to Italy?

GS: Not until we were called down. ... We took off from Dakar that morning, heading up towards Marrakech, I think we were supposed to go to, and, when we got up as far as the mountains, between us and Marrakech were the mountains, and on both ends of the mountains were the big storms brewing. That's when we found out that they wanted us to land there. So, we landed there, and then, when we got there, we found we had flat tires. We had to wait three weeks ... to get tires flown into it. Then, we had to change the tires and get the bulldozer they had there, that scraped the sand off of the flint stone, ... get it to push some more sand back on top of the flint stones, so that our tires didn't sink in too much and get chewed up. So, like I say, we landed there and we ended up with about, oh, forty-eight cans of sardines, or forty-five cans of sardines we had, nothing to eat with them until we got some [bread]. We got up to Italy and my mother finally got a couple of cans of date nut bread ... over to us and we said that was very good. ... After we got off of this little oasis in ... French Morocco, the French Foreign Legion was out on a tour, patrolling the desert between Spanish Morocco and French Morocco. ... When they found [that] we had access to the jeep that was there, they wanted us to go hunting gazelle. ... We found out that what they really wanted us to do was to ride them over to the border between Spanish Morocco and French Morocco, where they could shoot up a few of the Spaniards. ... Finally, when we got our tires fixed and everything, we went over to Marrakech, went on up there, and we were one of the first Americans coming through North Africa there, and so, ... the Shah [Pasha] of Marrakech invited us out to his palace, and so forth. ... I don't know what it was supposed to be, but we went there and he gave us ... an ice dish of, oh, some orange-flavored drink that he had, ... which was very nice and all. It was his orange ice he'd had there, was very tasty and very formal. ... Well, we didn't have a dinner, just the orange juice and a couple of cookies or something. ... Anyhow, well, I might as well give you the next part of that story. We're over in Italy, about, oh, six months later. Other crews are coming through and one fellow had sent home for some goodies and told his mother to include some packages of Jell-O, because he can make the Jell-O there. ... As far as keeping it cool, at twenty thousand feet, we didn't have any [problem]. We had our "automatic refrigeration" for something like that. So, he wanted a nice Jell-O. So, we were invited over to his tent that he was living in ... for some Jell-O and dessert and everything. We go into the tent there and what's he pull out on us? the

solid gold dishes that we were served by the ... Shah [Pasha] of Marrakech. He'd stolen about half a dozen of them and that's what he was serving us Jell-O on, homemade, on the Shah's gold dishes. So, anyhow, let's see, ... I guess the next thing we did was, after we left Marrakech, we went up to Tunis and, from Tunis, ... that's the first time we found out that Grottaglie was open. ... In the meantime, we thought we were going to be bombing Italy from North Africa. They had changed our ... destination for us to, instead of (Tolegro?), ... we'd have gone up to a place called Grottaglie. Well, in Grottaglie there, we finally find out that, of the sixty-four aircraft that we had ... when we left Nebraska, only fifty-four of us arrived in Italy, and that was by January 5th, or something like that. So, we were now over in a combat zone and on, I think it was the 5th, the 5th or 6th, of January, they decided we would have a mission. So, we had a mission, with live bombs, over to a place called Mostar, Yugoslavia. [Editor's Note: The 449th Bomb Group flew missions against Mostar on the 8th and 14th of January 1944. On the January 14th mission, the B-24 piloted by Second Lieutenant Harold E. Pickard (718th Bomb Squadron) was struck by bombs dropped from the B-24 piloted by Second Lieutenant Vincent K. Isgrigg (716th Bomb Squadron), resulting in the loss of both aircraft.] It wasn't too far away and it wasn't much of a target they gave us. It was a railroad that went through there and the Germans were sending supplies in and out. I don't know who they were sending them to or who it was. Between [the Partisans under Josip Broz] Tito and [the Nationalists under Dragoljub "Draza"] Mihailovic, it was hard to tell who was on whose side, and you had to be very careful if you bailed out over there. ... The first guys that would pick you up, you've got to make sure that you make them think that you're on their side, or they're on our side and that we believe that they're on our side, because, if not, they'd stand you up [against] the wall and shoot you. ... We'd lost some men that way, because they didn't give the right answers, but, anyhow, we were there and we had practice missions, where we had the one plane that blew up because ... one of our own bombs hit it, and we had others. We ran into flak. We had some holes in the aircraft where flak had hit us. ... I think, by the 22nd of February, it was, ... we're down to where we had thirty-two aircraft with crews capable of flying on a mission. So, we started off with thirty-two aircraft that day. ... The mission was a tough mission. [Editor's Note: The target for February 22, 1944, was an aircraft factory at Regensburg, Germany.] We were going up into Germany, up into the Ruhr Valley. We're going to use up pretty much all the gas we had left, you know, a full load of gas. We'd have nothing left by the time we got up to the target, dropped our bombs and came home again. So, you had to conserve fuel on the way up and on the way back. ... When we got as far up the coast [as] to the top of the Adriatic there, we had a place called Udine, "U-dean," or, "U-dine," I don't know if you're familiar with this, and Trieste. Trieste ... was a country owned by itself at that time. I don't think it belonged to either the Italians or the Yugoslavians. They were dickering over it, but we had to go past those two, and, anyhow, ... we got up there and we ran into a bunch of German fighters. I'd say a bunch of them. ... Well, I counted eighty-eight of them. The Germans claimed that they had over eight hundred aircraft up that day, looking for us. So, anyhow, we were going up there and, one by one, we start losing aircraft. ... Well, we finally reached the target, anyhow, and we're ... pulling into the target there and we're on the bomb run. ... We're up at altitude now, about twenty-two thousand feet, to keep away from flak, but, still, the Germans got up there with their flak and they were pretty accurate and ... pretty dense. ... I'm up in the nose there with the Bombardier, and he's kneeling down over his bombsight and I'm standing over top of him, when there's a big explosion right underneath us, right where we're looking. ... The plane looked like it jumped in the air about thirty feet before it settled down. ... We could hear, ... oh, the metal tearing in our own airplane, looked like

somebody was tearing up a telephone book or something, the way this flak was hitting us. ... The Bombardier, he, all of a sudden, jumps up and knocks me upside down almost. ... I'm knocked down onto the floor of the nose there, where I can see the altitude that we're at and see some of our instruments there, and I see that we're going down in a spiral, it looks like, and then, we straighten out and we're flying [level] again. ... The Bombardier is calling over his intercom. He says, "I'm hit, I'm hit," and [I say], "Where are you hit?" ... He's holding his leg there, [at the knee], and the Pilot wants to know who's hit and I say; there was confusion all over the place there, because of [what] happened. ... The engines were running right, you know. The Co-Pilot ... was checking his engines and ... all four engines were running. ... So, the Pilot calls me in, or what happened was, then, I can see the bombsight instruments and I'm reading them and our telltale lights are going out, which means that the bombs are on their way down. ... You know, one would go off every five seconds or so, and, when the light went out, we knew that that bomb was dropped. ... I think we were carrying sixteen bombs at that time. ... With the Bombardier hurt, and the Pilot wanted to know who was hurt and how much he was hurt, ... I said, "The Bombardier claims he was hurt, but I don't see any blood or nothing, ... can't find a hole in his flight suit or anything. He's just holding his leg," and so, then, I looked through the bombsight, to see where the bombs were going. ... The crosshairs were still on the target, or close enough to it, that I had told the Bombardier to try and hit the target a little bit on the west side. I said, "About a hundred feet west of where ... your crosshairs ... are is where the bombs are going to hit. ... Yes, they're going to hit east, about a hundred yards east, and see if you can compensate for it by aiming a hundred yards to the west." This was part of the Coriolis effect we were talking about before, and a couple of other things that were inaccurate in the bombsight. So, okay, we're up there and the Pilot calls out, wants to know where the heading is, and I said, "Oh, I'll give you a heading in a minute, as soon as I find out how bad the Bombardier's hurt," and I said, "Follow the guy in front of you." He said, "There's nobody in front of us anymore." "Oh, well." I finally told him, "Look," I told him, "head south." He says, "Well, I don't have south. The compass is spinning around like mad here. Which way is south?" So, I told him. I said, "Well, a little bit to the left. Now, you ... see the mountains ahead of you?" "Yes." "Well, that's Switzerland. Keep Switzerland on the right. Don't go directly over the mountains; keep to the left of them." Okay, so, he straightens out. ... Then, I called the tail gunner and asked him; he was telling us, ... "We're losing planes like mad here." I said, "Well, how many people you got following us now?" He counts them out and says, "Well, we got fourteen." So, that was out of thirty-two, that we had left, to start the mission with. ... With myself and one extra, I think we had sixteen of them ... that reached the target. On the way home, we're still running into plenty of fighters. There were two or three of them always pounding on us. ... Well, I could see one or two of them going down every time I looked out the window. ... We finally got back to ... over Italy, Northern Italy there, and some of them wanted to know, "When are we going to bail out?" I said, "Well, we're not going to bail yet. We're still flying." So, everybody else was bailing out, he said, and we, you know, [would] keep track of the planes, where they went down, trying to find which plane it was and where they went down in the mountains, just off of the Italian Alps or Northern Italy. Finally, I got over the Adriatic, where we were pretty free from flak, but, going past Udine and Trieste, we got clobbered again with plenty of flak. Then, all of a sudden, we're out over the Northern Adriatic when, "Whoosh," something goes right by from behind us, you know, and [I asked], "What was that?" ... The tail gunner says, "You see that plane off on our left there? He's a JU-88." "Yes." He says, "He's loading up with rockets, and [it] takes him about ten minutes to get a rocket loaded up, and then, he pulls back underneath the formation and

lobs a rocket up into it. ... Every time he gets a rocket in the formation, ... we're losing one or two aircraft." So, we did that for the next hour or so, it looked like, and, finally, we're getting close to home, came in, landed. ... We landed and, as soon as we landed, a debriefer came over to the plane, wanted to know how we did, and we're telling him, "Well, we didn't do too good." He said, "Where's the rest of the planes?" and I said, "Well, we got some of them marked on the map, where they went down, but, if they're not here in five minutes, they're not coming, because ... nobody had gas left to go more than that." ... So, we were the only aircraft that came in. So, that's it. We've got Xs on the map where some of them went down, some of them, we identified, some of them, we didn't identify, but [it] looked to us like the outfit was wiped out. We had one airplane left, us. ...

EB: Do you remember the actual physical feeling on your first combat mission?

GS: You're too busy to have any feeling.

EB: Did you feel, say, nauseous?

GS: No. You're busy trying to do calculations, busy trying to fill in a log, to keep track of what was going on, and you didn't have any special feelings about anything. You were just too busy trying to get things done. ...

SI: Can you describe your normal position? Did you have a navigator's table?

GS: Well, the nose had a table that would fold down in front of us. It was a small table and only about, you know, maybe that wide and, oh, maybe six feet long, and they gave us a stool with it. There wasn't room for a stool up there, so, we stood up all the way through. The Bombardier, he would kneel down over his bombsight. Then, he'd get up and walk around or help something, wherever [help was] needed, and he's busy passing ammunition to the gunners and things like that. ... Like I say, it was just too small an area to do much with. The other thing was, that they did wrong with it, when they hooked us up in the airplane, you got in the air, you had an oxygen hose coming out here, you had an earphone coming out over here, you'd have an electric suit with a wire down here, you'd have oxygen coming up from down there, you know. ... So, we had all these hoses coming into us, maybe four or five hoses, and you could stand there, [but], if you tried to turn around, you'd get stuck this way. You couldn't turn that way. ... You want to go the other way? You can't, [you would] get stuck. You've got something holding you back here, and, between the Bombardier and me and the Nose Gunner up there in the front, all of these things tying us down, we finally invented our own system. We made one, what did we call it now? I don't know, one hose, taped them all together and ran them all out of the one side, and so, everybody had one place he could plug into everything. "An umbilical cord," we called it. We made an umbilical cord there and that's what we had. We didn't have room for anything else, and, if you did have room, these gunners, ... as soon they found out, they'd have to smuggle ... some cartridges onboard or some ammunition. Otherwise, they ran out of ammunition. We ran out of ammunition before we reached Udine there. ...

EB: Was your bombardier actually hurt?

GS: Well, when we got him on the ground, one of the first things we did was look to see how bad he was hurt, and he's still hopping around on one foot. So, we finally looked at him and found out that where he was kneeling down, there was a little plywood floor there that he would kneel on, and a piece of flak had come up through the bottom of the plane, up through the bottom of the piece of plywood, and it didn't break through completely, but you could take your hand [and] you could feel a little bump there. So, we dug the piece of flak out. We find out that he was kneeling right where that hit, see, and it's like being hit with a sledgehammer on your knee. [laughter] That's what happened, and here he was, ... his knee, it didn't even break the skin, but where ... he's kneeling on it, he turned black-and-blue for the next couple or three days or so, and he was in pain, he said. He wanted somebody to carry him every place or something, but we told him, "Look, there's no blood, because it didn't break the skin or anything, and so, you don't even get a Purple Heart. In this outfit, you have to bleed for your government." So, he got no more Purple Heart or anything out of it, except a knee that was giving him [problems]. Well, anyhow, we're back there on the ground and they tell us that, "All right, look, we understand that we took quite a beating today, ... but we don't want you going back and spreading the news that we got wiped out. We're not going to send you back to the squadron area. We're going to send you into town, put you up in a hotel, where you'll have clean sheets and a nice, hot meal and a nice, soft bed," we can sleep on, and all that. We said, "Well, we'll take it. [If] that's what you're offering us, you know, that's what we'll take." So, they finally loaded us in a truck and drove us out to the coast there, where there was a hotel, and this was a resort hotel along the Adriatic there, and we finally got there. I guess, by the time we got there, it was seven o'clock at night, anyhow, ... after flying all damn day and being debriefed and waiting for supper, and so forth. So, here we are, not going to go back to the ... squadron area and tell them that we're out of business. So, we get into the hotel and this hotel was a resort hotel. We find that it was filled up with a bunch of Yugoslavian Army, which we weren't sure whose side they were on, but, anyhow, they're in the hotel there. ... In the first floor ballroom there, they had an orchestra playing, or an accordion, at least an accordion and a clarinet, as I recall, something like that, and the Yugoslavian Army, when they travel or [go] on leave or something, they bring their women with them. So, here, we had a bunch of Yugoslavian girls. We'd smile at them, they'd smile back at us, and, ... some way, we communicated with them. ... Most of them spoke some English. They'd gone to high school. In all these foreign countries, they always taught English to everybody that was anyone. So, here, we could communicate with them a little bit, and we'd ask if they want to dance and, okay, they agreed. So, we soon found out, though, that there's really no fun dancing with a young lady when you find out she's wearing a couple of hand grenades in her brassier. So, we decided that's not the best thing we could do; we'll forget about them. Besides, ... they were bringing food out now and we were hungry. We didn't have that much to eat. We missed breakfast and missed lunch and, [while] waiting for supper, they sent us out here. Now, we're ... finally going to get the nice, hot meal. Well, the hot meal consisted of a stew made out of one castrated billy goat. You'd have to find the oldest and gamiest piece of meat that was ever invented, [at] its toughest, and they put this in a pot, cut it up and put it in a pot, and started cooking it. Well, it's wintertime, ... February 22nd. We're looking for vegetables in the stew and what kind of vegetables [do] they have? What grows in the wintertime? Oh, not much of anything; they had turnips, rutabaga turnips. We had some, oh, here and there, a leaf of broccoli you'd find in there, or something like that, some of the broccoli seeds. ... Oh, I can't think of what else they had, vegetables they put in, some celery here and there, and garlic and onions, and they'd put this all in a pot and start cooking it up. Now, this

hotel was a resort hotel and it was built on a hot spring. Now, a hot spring is usually sulfur water, which smells like rotten eggs and tastes worst. So, here, they ... fill the pot full of this and put in the vegetables and the meat. ... They're serving us this meal, see. Well, ... they had some cheap wine there that was served, and, like I say, the Yugoslavs were having a good time, drinking and singing. ... We were just sitting there, watching them drink and sing and trying to get something to eat worthwhile eating, when, oh, I guess we finally decided that, "Look, it's after eight o'clock; I'm getting tired. Let's go to bed." ... The room they gave us was on the seventh floor of this hotel. So, we have to walk up. There's no electricity in it. We've got to walk up, carrying a kerosene lantern or a candle, and we would [climb] seven floors. We're walking around; the way the floors were arranged, they had a stairwell where it went around and up and around and up. Every time you'd get around, you'd get another floor. ... So, we're climbing up there, trying to go to bed, you know. ... The Bombardier, he's lagging behind a little bit, gimping away, and we get up about five or six floors there and he's a floor or two behind us, because he's limping up the stairs, you know, and complaining about [it]. ... We took the candle away from him before he set fire to something, anyhow, and we told him, "Come on, let's get up here." I said, "You've been a nuisance all day long, claiming you're hurt. ... Like I said, you're not hurting enough to get a Purple Heart. You can't ... fool us." ... Finally, we're kidding him about it, you know, and telling him, "You were just a nuisance all day long. You had a nice ride. We showed you the Swiss scenery and everything, and what are you doing? You're just holding us up. Come on, let's get some sleep out of this thing." I said, "Good thing that I was there to drop your bombs. If I hadn't been there, you'd never know where ... they would have gone, with you hopping around like mad." ... So, anyhow, we're kidding him. ... I told him, "You were a nuisance. Come on, let's get up here," and I said, "It's a good thing I dropped your bombs for you, because you'd never know where they were going to hit if I hadn't dropped them." So, he said, "Well, I'll show you," and he leans over the handrail and he says, "Watch this." He's got a couple, about four, bottles of wine that he stole out of the mess hall there and he's [saying], "Watch this." "Bing;" "Bombs away." Down the stairwell it goes, "Splat," on the marble hall lobby of the hotel. So, "Don't do that," we told him. "You're going to get us in trouble." He says, "I'll show you. Watch this one," another one. I think he got rid of four bottles of wine before we could crawl back downstairs and grab a hold of him by the shirt collar and drag him up two stories to stuff him in the bed. So, of course, right after that, the hotel manager and his wife are coming upstairs, you know, and we're looking over the railway and she's saying, "No, no, no, don't." ... So, we get in the room there, close the door, put him in bed and sit on top of him. ... First thing you know, there's a big knock on the door and there's the hotel manager and his wife, wanting to know who threw the wine ... down the stairwell, you know. I said, "What do you mean? Who threw the wine down? We don't know anything about it." He says, "Somebody threw the wine down the cellar and it's all over the lobby now, with glass and everything." "Boy, what a mess, you know," she's telling us. ... "Well, it couldn't have been us. Tell you what we think; listen to ... those crazy Yugoslavs you have down the hallway there, with all the noise they were making. They're all singing and dancing. It's got to be them. They did it. We didn't do it." So, she ran down the hall to see if she could find them. Well, that's the last we heard of that. We got her convinced that it wasn't us. We told her, "We're Americans. We don't do things like that." So, anyhow, ... finally, we get to go to bed there and about, I guess it's eight-thirty or so when I finally got in bed, ten-thirty, a knock on the door, "What's up now?" "*Tempo di bagnare*." I said, "What do you mean, '*Tempo di bagnare*'?" "*Tempo di bagnare*; time for a bath." When we checked into the hotel, we asked for a room with

a bath, you know. Well, they don't have them that way, a room with a bath. The baths are down in the basement, where the hot springs are, and they have this great, big bathtub there. It was about ten feet long and, apparently, the custom there is, two people have a bath at once. So, you always have somebody, have a partner, to take a bath with. So, anyhow, the Bombardier, he didn't want it. He was going to sleep. ... As long as he was asleep, leave him asleep; he could create more trouble if he's awake. So, anyhow, I went down with the chambermaid. She takes me down to the basement there, where the hot bath is, and she's got a little cube of laundry soap, about one-inch square cube of laundry soap that she gives me, and a washcloth, a little terrycloth rag, about six inches square or so. ... Okay, she's got this big tub about half full of water there, where I could float back and forth in it and back and forth, and, anyhow, she finally leaves and I'm in there, soaking up, you know. Finally, ... [the] bath is over, you know, or, no, she comes in to tell me the bath is over, and I'm there, ... still in the bathtub, you know. So, I take this little six-inch square of terrycloth to protect my dignity while she's making a grab for it and, finally, she grabs a hold of that terrycloth and grabs it away from me. I'm wondering, "Now, what am I supposed to do with her?" because she was more the *Gestapo*-type. So, anyhow, I finally find out that what we're fighting over was the piece of terrycloth. She wanted it because it's ... part of her job to scrub my back. So, as long as that's all she wanted and expected of me; I finally had a bath there and we finally went back to bed. I guess I got back in bed about two o'clock, or something like that, because it was about three-thirty or so when [there was] a knock on the door again. "Now, what's up?" "They want you back at the base right away." "What do you mean right away? We didn't even finish sleeping yet." "No, they need you back at the base. A truck's waiting for you, so, hurry up." Now, what's up? Well, they get us back to the base. ... They decide that, they now have found out where a couple of the planes that went down were, and we had the only plane operating on the field there, they wanted us to run up there and see if we couldn't help them get airborne, or a couple of them that ran out of fuel before they got any place. They just needed some fuel and another one needed a new carburetor, and so, they wanted us to fly up a couple of mechanics and fly around up in Northern Italy yet and rescue them. Well, we did some of that. We got a couple of them back. I remember one field we went into, it was a cornfield and the corn hadn't been touched for over a year, I guess, because all the cornstalks dried out on the field, some of them still standing about eight feet high there, but ... that's the field, the only field you could get into, was on a hill, too. So, he ... came in down low on the hill and taxied up on top. So, he didn't need too much brake to get the plane stopped, but he did need some fuel, and we had a couple of drums of fuel we loaded on to our plane and a pump to pump it into him, and so, anyhow, we got him airborne and went to another one. Now, this other one was just below the lines, where the enemy was. ... In fact, we no sooner got in there when they started dropping [in] some mortars, just off the other end of the runway, and everybody wanted to get out of there as fast as they could. So, the crew that had cracked up in there, they took our plane and went back. We were stuck with their plane, which we couldn't get running until we put the new carburetor in, and, oh, I guess ... it's getting dark out now, because of nighttime. We finally got a carburetor in and I remember, ... I was busy trampling down corn. We taxied the airplane up and down that hill a couple of times, to trample down some more corn, but, [also, to] see if we couldn't get this thing out of there. We finally took off and we took off and I told the Pilot, "Okay, a left turn to, oh, 1-7-2," or something like that. I gave him a heading back [to the] field, and I get up and we get airborne and the first thing I know, he's making a right turn. "I said left, left turn." "Don't worry about it," he said, "We've got it under control." "What's under control?" Well, I find out that, while I was out trampling on corn, the

crew decided that what they were going to do [was], they had some ammunition they brought with them, too. They were out of ammunition and out of fuel. So, they were loaded up, a couple of guns, and everybody had a turret or something, except me. I'm navigating, but the couple of the crew members he had ... had a turret, and, as we took off, we flew over where these mortars were coming from. ... I didn't see anything down there except a truck, but they opened up with machine guns on the truck and a couple of other things that somebody saw. I don't know what they were, but I didn't see them, and we got out of there, ... splattered this truck full of machine guns, which was about all we had. We didn't have any more bombs with us. That was it. There is another one [story] that we had, that we had a fellow in the outfit and he received a telegram one day, "Wife and baby doing fine. Telegram follows." So, okay, wife and baby, "What was it, a boy or a girl?" He says, "I don't know." He says, "They didn't say." Well, every morning, we'd get up, you know, and we'd see him at mail call, "Did you ever find out what your kid was, a boy or a girl?" ... "No," he said, "nothing yet." So, going off on this mission, that morning, you know, ... the first thing we do when we see him, he belonged to one of the other crews, though, when we see him, we ask him, "Did they ever find whether it was a boy or a girl?" "No, not yet." I said, "Did you tell them where to look?" "No," he said, "I don't know ... what it was." So, anyhow, here we were, this poor guy had a baby that he knew was about two or three weeks old, but he didn't know what kind it was. So, we're up there and I remember that his plane got hit with a ball of flak, flak he was in, and we watched and about four parachutes came out of it and the rest of it crashed and burned. We marked on the hillside where it was and it was just in enemy territory there, where it crashed. ... About two weeks later, when the infantry moved up "the Boot" slowly, they took charge of where this wreck was, and somebody decided, "We could now tell where the wreck was. Maybe if we went up there, we could find out what happened to them." Okay, so, we had a smaller plane we took up there, to see what happened to them, and found the wreckage, right where ... I had marked it on the map, you know. I found that, and, [on] a hill overlooking it, there was a nunnery up on top of the hill. So, we decided, "Well, we found the wreckage, but we don't know how many people survived it or where they went to or who it was. They must have come out of ... the back of the plane. We saw them coming out, but we didn't know [about the rest]. It looks like the ones up in the front of the plane never got out." So, anyhow, we went up to this nunnery and asked [the] mother superior there what she knew about them, you know. ... She told us, oh, yes, she remembered it, and it was only a couple of weeks ago that it had happened. So, she told us, yes, that the four parachutes came out of the back of the plane and they landed and there were four bodies that were taken out of the wreckage. That counts for eight, but there's two more that they didn't know anything about. They don't know whether they were captured by the Germans or anything. ... We asked around, couldn't do anything more. She said that what happened was that the ones that had bailed out [and] landed safely, the Germans captured right away. ... They had them dig graves for the ones that were in the airplane, that didn't get out, and there were four and four graves up in the front. Then, they shot the ones that were digging the graves and put them in, too. So, here we are, ... you know, one of the major atrocities of the war, shooting people that have bailed out of an airplane like that, and we figured, "Well, that's going to happen to us. If we don't come home, that's where we're going to end up, someplace. They're not capturing American flyers; they're just shooting them on sight." So, anyhow, that's about ... all we could do for them, except that [it] continues later on. About three years after the war, I'm in New York, coming out of the Astor Hotel, and I see a guy that I recognize. ... He recognizes me and he says, "Hey, Skid, how you doing?" "I'm doing all right. You, you're dead. I saw your grave. I know where it was."

He says, "Yes, ... they reported us killed and missing-in-action." "Well, what happened then?" He says, "Well, we dug some graves, and then, they took us away. We buried our own, and we had about six of them that we had to bury, that it happened that they were found near there, when the infantry moved up "the Boot." ... We said, actually, we had quite a cemetery there, with about fifteen people that we had buried," you know. ... "But, we heard that you were all killed right away." "No," he says, "they captured four of us and took us back and we served our time in a POW camp. ... Six of them were dead in the fuselage of the aircraft." "But, anyhow, what was it, a boy or a girl?" Because he's the guy that [did not know], and I'm thinking, "Now, that can't be the same kid he's got now. This one's walking," ... or the one that he had was not walking, was in a baby carriage he was pushing, and the one that was walking ... was with his wife there, you know. ... The kid was three years old, I know, at least, anyhow, but it goes to show you, you can't believe all the war stories you hear. Even when you know that they're true, you can't believe everything that everybody tells you. ...

SI: Was it a boy or a girl?

GS: Oh, I don't remember. [laughter] That long after the war, I never know. Everybody asks me that when I tell them the story, and I don't know, or I don't remember, and I haven't seen him in any reunions or anything in a long time. So, I don't know what it was.

SI: Did it ever seem odd to go through horrific air battles like this, with all the fighters and the flak, and then, at night, you could be dancing in a hotel with Yugoslavian women, to go from one extreme to another so quickly?

GS: Eh, like I say, the dancing with the Yugoslav with hand grenades in her brassier wasn't really [great]. You just don't get that much of an impression on her, or she doesn't make that much of an impression on you, or maybe she does make more of an [impression]; I don't know. ...

SI: Were there men who refused to go back up after going through something like that?

GS: One, we had, and they threatened him with court-martial if he refused to fly and he just absolutely refused to fly. So, the other thing was that ... the CO told him, "Well, all right," he says, "I don't want you to go flying on a mission, but I'm going to use you on the ground for awhile, to see if you can get over this. I want you to taxi a couple of these airplanes from out on the field there, bring them into maintenance, ... bring them into the engineering shop. Just taxi them across the runway and that's all we want from you," and he went out to taxi that airplane across and he got it stuck in the mud. ... They were trying to get it out and I remember watching them there, gunning that thing, and the more he gunned it, the more the main landing gear, the nose gear, sank in the mud. ... So, we finally told him, "Forget about it. You're going in deeper all the time." One more try he was going to make, to see if he could pull it out of the mud, and he really gunned the engine up and, all of a sudden, "Ka-boom." We hear a big snap. The main landing gear, he snapped it off, stuck in the mud there, and the plane moved up about ten feet, away from its landing gear that was broken off. The props went down and dug in some more of the mud. The one wing was bent up. The whole airplane was a mess. So, after that, he got transferred out, and I don't know where he went to, but never heard from him again and had no

way of contacting him. ... But, that was [a case where] he just told them, you know, that he had to quit. He said, "I know that I'm going to kill somebody if I keep flying." He says, "I don't understand enough of this airplane to really be safe flying it."

EB: Did you have the same plane throughout the war?

GS: No. [laughter] The plane that I flew across the ocean in had one [mission]. Well, we flew it and it had one mission; ... oh, in fact, I was riding on it in this one. The plane behind us was tracking enemy fighters as they came through and he sent a couple of his machine gun slugs into our plane and they went in right where the wing joins the fuselage. ... You wouldn't think so, but, with the fifty-caliber bullets hitting the wing right where it's fastened on, it bent the wing up. So, the wing was up. ... The right wing was two feet higher, the tip of it was two feet higher, than it was supposed to be. ... We called him, you know, and I told him, "That wing is bent. How can it be bent and still flying?" and we found out that, basically, ... the wing had almost fallen off. It was only a thread holding it on, and why it didn't fall off is hard to tell, just that we made a nice, smooth landing. If he'd bounced it on the runway, that would have snapped right off. ... We had people from Consolidated [who] came out there, a couple of their engineers, which all they did. We knew what was wrong with it, ... but we needed a new wing first, and then, new props and new engine mounts and a couple things like that. ... They just decided, "Well, we'll use it for spare parts then," but they finally fixed up some of it, put some extra rivets on the wing to fasten it on, but that wasn't really going to do it much. We flew it up from our base, about fifty miles, to headquarters base and had their engineers look at it, and their engineer says, "Ground it." He says, "You can't fly it. It's a 'hangar queen.' Take what you want off of it." But, it never flew again.

EB: Did any of your planes have artwork on them?

GS: Oh, yes. [laughter] Everybody painted things on them.

EB: What was on one of your planes?

GS: Well, the one we flew across the ocean, why, they just painted "Hot Rock" on it.

EB: "Hot Rock?"

GS: Yes, and had a big, flaming rock on the side of it. ...

EB: What about some of the other ones? Did you have names for them?

GS: Oh, yes, we had, oh, I don't know, *Old Man River* and things like that.

TK: No pin-up girls?

GS: Yes. Well, I don't know what all, I can't remember. I've got a book that has about seventy-two pictures of some of the artwork on these aircraft.

TK: You got way ahead of me on this interview. I just wanted to be sure; in your flight to Dakar, did you talk about the false radio messages?

GS: ... Yes, I mentioned that.

TK: You got that.

GS: We had that one.

-----END OF TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE-----

TK: What hotel did you and I stay in on the Via Veneto, [a street in Rome], when we were both on leave, Hotel Roma?

GS: No, Americana.

TK: Americana.

GS: Yes.

TK: Which was your 15th Air Force officers' leave motel.

GS: Yes, I think so.

TK: That's where you were and I met you there.

GS: Yes.

TK: Yes. Did you tell them about your little voyage down the stairs and your demonstrations? You didn't tell them that.

GS: No. [laughter]

TK: This is a visual thing. I don't know how it comes over on tape. ... We're in the lobby of the hotel and Skid was telling me that all these young flying officers are coming over to him, because he's a veteran by now, he's had a number of missions, and they're asking him, "What's it like?" and so on. So, finally, he gets the idea, the hotel has a ... big, curved staircase, coming down like that. So, he said, "Watch this." I'm down in the lobby with the rest of them. He goes up to the top of the stairs and he starts down the stairs, like this. ... There's a silence, and the guys around me are all looking up and one of them says, [whispering], "That's an old-timer. He's had I don't know how many missions, but look what happens to you." [laughter] That doesn't come over.

SI: For a description, Mr. Kindre was walking like a hunched-over, older man. How soon did you become a "veteran?"

GS: I don't know what you mean, a veteran.

SI: One of the old-timers. How many missions did it take?

GS: ... Well, after Regensburg, I was the only one, you know, we only had one crew left. ... Well, actually, it was a little bit better than that. We brought back two or three of the wrecks. We finally went and salvaged them, and then, they sent us another five or six aircraft, ... brand-new ones, with a new crew and everything, or a couple of them came in without any crew. So, we had to use our old people that had been there that were on these planes that we salvaged, [they] didn't have a plane anymore. We used them for it. ... Well, like I say, we had sixty-four aircraft that were given to us in the first week of November. ... Oh, I forgot how many of them took off from Fortaleza now. ... By the time we got to Italy, we had fifty-four of them left. So, that's eight aircraft ... that we lost before we ever even got to Italy, and the rest of it, I don't know, they kept filling us with aircraft as fast as they got shot down and new crews came in, so that, well, I guess by April, or the following year, ... '45, was it? yes, when the Germans surrendered, about March or April of that year, we had over seventy-two aircraft that were operational on some of these missions then.

EB: Was there a point system, that you flew so many missions, and then, you would be sent home?

GS: Well, yes, but they didn't do it. They started out telling us twenty-five missions. Anybody got twenty-five missions, they talked them into, "You have to go another [tour]. You're ordered by the Commander, that we'll give you easy missions if we can, but you're going to have to stay here another three or four months," just like they're doing now, again, over here in [Iraq]. "Your tour is up, ... except we've extended the tours for you." ...

EB: When you first got to Italy, what did you know about the previous missions and how the war was going?

GS: There were no previous missions before we got there. We were the first ones from there that went to Italy. Yes, we were ... the first outfit that went to Italy.

EB: Did you read the *Stars and Stripes* when you were there?

GS: Yes, when we could get it. It came out once a month or something, that we saw one every three months, or something like that.

SI: You were the first group from the 15th Air Force in Italy.

GS: Yes. Well, there were four groups that went there, two of them came out of Africa and the 449th and 450th that came out of the States, and the ones that came out of Africa didn't last too long. They disbanded them after awhile, and the other one that came from the States with us, they were clobbered just as bad as we were.

TK: Have you talked yet about your Wiener Neustadt mission?

GS: Yes; no, no, not that one yet.

TK: With the Major.

GS: That's the end of the war.

TK: Yes, and how about Ploesti? You went once to Ploesti.

GS: Yes, about six times, we went over to Ploesti.

TK: Six times.

GS: Yes, that was one of our major targets there.

EB: How long was each mission, generally?

GS: Well, we carried fuel for about eleven hours, and most of the missions were designed to be a little bit less than that.

EB: Did you bring food?

GS: No, we didn't have any food.

EB: No food.

GS: No. ... They started making sandwiches for us to take on a mission and Doc says, "No good. ... You don't have refrigeration. You can't take sandwiches that were made two days ago and expect to be eating them and coming back without the bellyaches," or whatever goes with stale food. So, we had no food on the plane that we didn't bring back down on the ground. ... What we would do, if you wanted ice cream or something, at twenty thousand feet, with temperature minus forty or something, we could mix up a batch, ... take a watermelon up there and get it frozen, any kinds of daiquiris you wanted, with the crushed ice in them and all. We could have all of that stuff. Just to cool off a case of beer, run up to twenty thousand feet and come right back down and it was frozen solid. ...

EB: What did your uniform look like?

GS: We had ... coveralls for flying on missions. You'd put on a uniform, and then, you'd put on coveralls on top of it. Then, you'd put on a sheep-lined jacket, and maybe you had an electric suit, that didn't work, or you plugged [it] in underneath, and temperatures of; well, the lowest temperature I ever saw was seventy-three below. ... I remember looking up, in a handbook I had, that gasoline, at seventy-two below, was solidified, or it ... was useless as gasoline in a gasoline engine.

TK: It becomes a gel, doesn't it?

GS: Yes, it would gel up a little bit. ... The compounds that are in gasoline, a couple of them would filter out a little bit, or they'd ... freeze up before, and that would take some of the energy away from some of the other petroleum products they had in there. ... Well, I'm watching the temperature there and, at seventy-two, I'm figuring the engine's going to quit on me. It's going to plug up with the gel or whatever it is, paste. ... So, it went down to seventy-three and I'm looking at it and it didn't move, didn't go down any more and it didn't go up any more, but the engine didn't stop running. So, whatever the handbook said about gasoline at seventy-two below was wrong. It goes at least to seventy-three below.

SI: What were some of the targets where they would say, "We are flying here," and everybody would groan?

TK: Too far.

SI: The targets that were too far or too dangerous, or the last time you went, you lost a lot of men.

GS: No, I don't know, ... they probably were groaning anyhow, but it didn't do them any good.

EB: What was your primary objective? Would you say it was plants?

GS: Trying to win the war. [laughter]

EB: I mean, what did you typically bomb, like, factories?

GS: Yes, we always had a target to bomb. ... It was never just [to] bomb a city. You'd read in the newspaper, you know, that, "In England, this such-and-such a city was bombed," or you'd read the newspaper there, "And bombers bombed Berlin or Ploesti." ... They didn't really tell you, but we ... would have separate buildings we would have to hit when we went to a town, the railroad yards, where the rail freight trains were all lined up, waiting to get out, bringing supplies in or out, and docks on the Danube, wherever they were bringing stuff down the Danube, and, again, like Ploesti, ... Ploesti is a series of oil refineries, much like Linden, New Jersey, up here. There's more than one refinery there and more than one storage tank. So, we would have, oh, Americana-Romana [Romana-Americana] Oil Company and these little spots in Ploesti. You'd have a little corner of the village where this little refinery was stationed, or, then, you'd have where the storage tanks were. ...

SI: Can you tell us about some of the Ploesti missions you flew?

GS: Well, we had some pretty rough flak there. It was heavy and accurate, and it's a long ride from where we were, back out there and back again. ... We never saw any target there. Long before we got there, the Germans could see we were coming and they would put their smoke pots out, and all you'd have, when you'd get there, and you'd get to the valley there, it's filled with smog. You couldn't tell one end of it from the other, ... just there was nothing to see there. We dropped our bombs through the clouds where we thought they were going to land. ... Towards

the end of the war, we found out how to get through the clouds, with radar, and drop bombs more accurately, but, in the beginning, we just went there and it looked the same as the rest of the [valley]. There was all this smoke, so much smoke you couldn't see the ground.

SI: Later on, you got the 2X. [Editor's Note: The interviewer misspoke, but was referring to the H2X radar set, nicknamed the "Mickey" radar set.]

GS: ... No, later on, we had radar, which would look through the smoke and you could see it.

SI: How did you feel about using the radar bombing system?

GS: Well, it was something new. ... It came out new and they gave it to us, and then, they sent one or two instructors over. The instructors didn't know any more about it than we knew and we were left to figure out for ourselves how it ran and we invented our own systems, our own bombing systems. So, [as] I say, we threw the Norden bombsight out and did ordinary Greek geometry to figure out some of it, but we had to invent our own systems there, to make them work. ... Oh, I've run into a navigator from up in England, [the Eighth Air Force?], and he was telling us about his system, where he combined the Norden bombsight and made some corrections on it, so that he could use it ... [in] conjunction with radar. ... He had as many fallacies in it as the Norden bombsight had before. His system, ... it would work all right if you were down below ten thousand feet. Once you got up about five miles, or something like that, it was useless, but that's the way it worked.

SI: What altitude would you typically bomb at?

GS: Usually, we were about between twenty to twenty-six thousand feet. ... Trying to get up above twenty-six thousand feet with a load of bombs, you'd be putting a strain on the plane and using up more gas than the extra thousand feet seemed to be worth. ... Going any lower than that, their flak was usually more accurate and we'd lose more aircraft. So, you keep it up as high as you can without endangering the flight of the plane. The B-24 was a unique bomber in one thing; it had what they called a Davis wing on it and the Davis wing was a high-lift wing. It was designed to carry heavy loads, but not go too fast. At slow speed, ... you get enough speed so [that] you could get lift out of the wing, and you've probably seen, or heard them tell about, the shape of the wing, how the airflow over the top of it forms a suction or something on top. ... Well, it doesn't actually form a suction, it just forms less pressure, and this wing was designed to take advantage of that, ... but, because of that, it had a few strange characteristics. [Normally], if you're flying along and ... you might want to go down, you put the nose down a little bit. When you put the nose down, the air speed picks up. The air speed picks up, you get more lift. ... Here, you're going along, you put the nose down and the plane would rise up, which is different from most aircraft, which confused everybody and which cost them more, [or] as many, planes as they salvaged. It just wasn't designed to fly normally, but it was a good, efficient airplane when you flew it right.

TK: That must have been tough on landing.

GS: It was. It was a little bit awkward to land and, on flying, you don't just pull back on the stick and think it's going to go up. ... You pull back on the stick and it has less lift, and so, it sinks down on you.

TK: Another B-24 pilot told me that a principal problem with the Davis wing was that the plane was not ditchable because of that wing. Is that true? You couldn't ditch a B-24.

GS: Well, it's going to come down if you had to, but, like you say, as soon as you pull the nose up, it comes down belly first, flat. ... You don't want to do that with it and you don't want to point the nose down, too much. You get the nose down and it's going to rise up. You miss the airport; it's behind you. So, it's an awkward airplane to fly. ... People that used to fly two-wing airplanes, the old Wacos and World War I-type aircraft, it didn't fly right.

EB: Were you religious?

GS: Not really.

EB: Did you pray at all?

GS: Oh, I didn't have time for it. [laughter]

SI: Were there any superstitions associated with flying?

GS: Oh, I don't know, ... probably.

EB: Any lucky rabbits' feet?

TK: Were there things that you did before a mission, like put your thumb on your head or any odd things, for good luck? [laughter]

GS: Didn't have time for it. We didn't have time for it.

EB: How long was it between each mission?

GS: Overnight. Many times, you're going three or four days in a row, you'd have missions. Then, the weather would close in and you'd have three or four days with no missions.

SI: What would you do on the days without missions?

GS: Well, I'll give you another story for that one. When we went to Italy, [when] we arrived there, ... all we had was what we brought with us in the aircraft. We had no facilities for housing or anything. We didn't have any kitchens, no mess hall. We had nothing, just what we brought with us in the airplane. ... We're there about a month when, ... finally, our ground forces arrived and they brought some stuff. ... We found out that one thing they brought with us was some tents, these pyramidal tents that the Army's noted for. So, we came back from a mission and ... the story was, "We have tents, so, everybody can ... get a tent now, and we'll put

them up in a line down here," and so forth, and so on, find out who was living in which tent, and all that stuff they wanted to do. So, we get over there and start looking for a tent and we find out, by the time we got back from the mission [and] had a chance to get over there, and could borrow a jeep to bring it back to our tent area, there weren't many tents left. So, we finally went and found one, took it back to the area, tent area, opened it up and found out it had big letters on the front of it, "I. C.;" "I. C.: Inspected and Condemned." [laughter] So, we opened it up some more. We found one of the flaps was missing, completely. No flap in the back end there, and the stakes they gave us with it, or poles they gave us, we had no pole, no main pole, and only two of the end poles or corner poles, and one of them was too short, the other one was too long, and so, this is what we had. Well, we complained about it. ... The major that was supposed to supply this and keep track of it for us, he wasn't much help. He said, "Well, that's the best we can do for you," and, well, I didn't get along with that major from then on. He had a buddy, an Italian friend, a buddy that he made over there, and this buddy was a barber. So, he was going to open a squadron barbershop. He gets his barbershop opened up and we find he's got a brand-new tent. "What happened to our tent? That's all he had, he said; he can't do anything for us." Well, anyhow, we took the tent that he gave us, ... with the flap missing. We scoured the country there a little bit. Italy, in that part of Italy, they had a lot of stone fences. It was alongside of a; oh, what do they call it, a stonecutter's place? quarry. The quarry would cut up the whole mountain there, with one quarry after another. In fact, Grottaglie, "*grotto*" is "cave" and "*taglie*" means "manufactured" or "human-made." So, here, we had these caves that were made by humans, and [across] this whole mountain, and there's a lot of these over there in Italy, that part of Italy, and southern Spain, too, you'll find them, people living in caves. ... Some of them have carved out, oh, pretty good mansions, ... well, not mansions, but they're caves with, oh, four or five bedrooms in them, and the back part of it might be for two goats and a couple of geese. ... They'd put in rugs in them and kept them fairly clean and they were livable. So, anyhow, we went to the quarry there and found that they were manufacturing bricks about the size of a cinderblock, and they had a standard size that they made these bricks out of, building bricks. ... You could buy them or something, but we found that most of the old buildings down there that were bombed out had piles of these bricks. ... The Italians would chip the plaster off of them and sell them to you at ten cents apiece, or something like that, as long as we could haul them away. ... So, we took these brick stones, you didn't have to have much mortar on them, in fact, we had no mortar at first, and just piled these stones up, one right after the other, as long as they were ... comparable sizes, that it would fit. So, we filled up ... [the area left by] this flap that was missing. We built a wall there, out of these bricks, and that worked out pretty good. We went to the other three walls and we built them up with bricks, leaving one for the door and a window here and there, or something. ... Then, we came up with a roof for it. We had four walls, no roof; so, we've got to make a roof. Well, what we made the roof out of, we had enough, here and there, ... some boards, but we didn't have many of them, and the ones we had were too short, but there was also a railroad [that] ran by us and they'd replace some of the rails that were worn out. They were cheap iron rails, instead of steel, and they were half worn out anyhow and, when they replaced them, well, they just left the rail there alongside of the tracks. So, we went over and picked up these rails and cut them up into pieces. We had some steel beams. Well, the tracks were originally, I think, about forty-four feet long. So, we'd cut it in half and we'd have ... twenty-two-foot beams, and the pyramidal tent was fourteen feet. Well, we could extend it, ... so that the place we were living, which was no longer a tent, we called it a hut or our shack, and this is where we were living, but the roof, we could take ... a couple of

tracks, ... pieces of railroad track, twenty-foot long, or over twenty-foot, and place two or three of them, oh, this way. Oh, we'd have a little bit of slope on them, and the distance between two beams there would be maybe seven feet and, if we found enough wood that was eight-foot long, we would take it. Well, you couldn't nail the wood to the steel, but what we could do, we'd drill a hole in the wood and run some telephone wire through it and tie it on to the beams we had. ... Well, over in Italy, everything ... that we ate came in cans. We had lots of tin cans there. It didn't take long before we'd have a big pile of tin cans. They were all grapefruit-sized cans. ... Mashed potatoes, string beans, peas, corn, everything came in a tin can like that, grapefruit juice. It's about the same size as your standard grapefruit juice can. I think it was known as a number ten can. So, we had hundreds of those. Well, we took them and cut the ends out of them and slit the seam, unrolled them, put them between two planks and ran the truck over top of them, hammered them a little bit more and we had a flat piece of tin, shingle, about, oh, I think they came out about thirteen inches-by-seven-and-a-half, or something like that. So, we had hundreds of those. We made them into shingles. We didn't have any nails, but we had chain-link fence. So, we took a piece of this railroad track and drilled a hole in it. Oh, you would take a piece of the chain-link fence, you cut a piece off that was straight, you'd poke it down in this hole, and you had the curved part on top, where it came out about a quarter of an inch. ... You'd cold forge that by hammering on it, and we did make thousands of those, I think. ... These are our shingle nails. So, we would shingle these tin cans on the roof there, and we were fairly comfortable with it. Only one problem, ... well, two or three problems we had; one, when we built it, we didn't put enough slope on the roof, it was a little bit too flat. ... The other one was that these tin cans, once you flatten them out and you put them up on the roof there and the sun would come out and heat them up a little bit, then, it would rain on them and ... snow on them, ... they started curving up again on us. Well, when they curved up, they would leak. So, we'd have to replace them every now and then, and, like I say, some of the help I had didn't realize which way to put the shingles on, so, they'd curve up or curve down. So, we had some that went up and some that went down, but, anyhow, for awhile there, ... we were comfortable with them. ... Well, I left the squadron for awhile to go study radar. When I got back there, the Major had moved into this little shack we built, because, ... well, we had a floor in it. We took, from the quarry, ... some stones, a lot of stones, that they'd paved the sidewalks with over there, and they were only, oh, about, I guess, maybe fourteen-inches-by-eight-inches. ... We had thousands of these stones that were in the wreckage there and we salvaged them, put them into the floor. We took an oil drum and cut a door in it, ... or a small oil drum. I think we used about a ... twenty-five-gallon drum, ... which would sit on the floor about so high, and put a door in it, took some tubing out of a wrecked Italian aircraft they had there and put a Jerry can up in the tree, an olive orchard tree, behind us, ran this tubing we took out of the old Italian aircraft there, some of the aircraft tubing, ... pinched it together over a needle and had a petcock there, where you could turn it on, put it into the stove, turn the petcock, open it up and threw a match in. If it didn't blow up, we'd have a stove with a blowtorch-type flame coming out of it and the top would get red hot in a few minutes, and then, the rest of the stove would be warm. ... [For] a chimney, we took these number ten cans, one on top of the other, and sewed the edges around them with wire, that we punched little holes and put the wire through it, tightened them up, one on top of the other, and ran them up through the roof, and we had a stack on it to ventilate some of the fumes. Why nobody ever died at night ... sleeping in there, sound asleep, why we woke up in the morning, instead of dying off ... from carbon monoxide or something, I don't know. It just didn't work that way. We just came out a little bit ahead of there, but, ... oh, we did find some small angle

iron there and welded it into a frame and we took, oh, the sleeping bags we had and we filled them full of hay that we found in some farmer's house. So, we had mattresses on a frame that we wired up with more German telephone wires. We had a special weave that didn't give it much spring, but it was softer than the floor, and so, we were living pretty good there, for awhile. ...

EB: This was your permanent base that you would come back to after every mission.

GS: Yes, and, yes, from the time we got to Italy, we stayed on that one base. ...

TK: You were never supplied with any living quarters, officially.

GS: Nothing. No, we had no living quarters. This is what we made ourselves, and everybody else tried to copy it. We had a little village there. It looked like something on Newark Railroad Yard during the Depression, all these little shacks, a little garden behind this one and some flowers growing, you know, in a window box somebody would put on it, and others were growing carrots. ...

EB: You said there was a train there. Did you have a constant supply source?

GS: No, this train ... just ran across "the Heel," [the southern half of the Puglia region.] It was a short spur and, oh, it ran probably into the main town, main village, down to Taranto. I think it ran from there to Taranto, and then, out to the coast. ...

EB: Did you have a problem with supplies? Did you always have ammunition and food?

GS: Oh, yes. I don't know if you ever heard of the disaster at Bari. [Editor's Note: Mr. Skidmore is referring to the accidental release of poison gas during a German bombing raid on the Allied-held port of Bari, Italy, on December 2, 1943.] Well, the disaster at Bari was our supplies coming in, and they didn't come. Bari was, ... why they had thirty-two ships, supply ships, in one little seaport there, where you could only have two docks, you couldn't ... unload more than one ship at a time, [I do not know]. So, they parked the rest of them out in line, waiting. The Germans came over, and this is the second [worst] disaster, second only to Pearl Harbor. Pearl Harbor, I think, had ... 3,041 people killed. Bari had 3,021, and the big thing was, ... it had a couple of ammunition ships there and the Germans came over with a ... small air force and bombed it and hit the ammunition ships and they blew up. They found out then, or what happened was, they didn't really find out about it, but ... one of the ships was filled with mustard gas. Now, what were we doing with the mustard gas there, during the war? That was illegal after World War I. So, we had a supply ship full of mustard gas. Well, it never came out until, I think, about 1971 or so, where it was finally admitted that the ship was full of mustard gas, but who did they blame the mustard gas on? The manifests were all signed by Winston Churchill. So, whose side was he on? So, we never thought much of him after that, but that's where our supplies were. So, we were skimping as much as we could. Anybody else that needed supplies, they were up on the frontline, up near where Tom was, [as an ordnance officer in the 34th Infantry Division], and we couldn't scare anything out of them, went over to Africa, tried to get some supplies ... out of Egypt. Well, Eisenhower had a supply base there in Cairo, or just outside of Cairo. He had that filled with supplies, in case the Germans ever started

marching back down "the Boot" in Italy, or in case they [the Allies] decided to start another front coming in through Greece and up, to get a hold of Ploesti first, and that seemed to be a logical plan for them. So, we had missions where we were supposed to, well, we bombed Ploesti enough, but [to strike] where the supplies would come in and where ... we'd have to make a landing if we were going to come up through Greece. We would bomb the routes up through there, where the Germans had supplies coming down, and try to convince the Germans we had a plan to come up through Greece and [open] another front there in Europe, which ... Hitler couldn't handle. He had enough with coming in across the Rhine and coming up through Italy, over in Russia. So, anyhow, I forgot what your question was all about now.

EB: I had asked you about supplies.

GS: Oh, yes, supplies. Well, that's what happened to our supplies. We just didn't have them.

...

SI: Did you ever fly any missions that had more to do directly with what was happening on the frontlines?

GS: Well, yes, we flew missions; you know, the Army at Cassino was stalemated there. The Germans were up in the hills, guarding the pass, and you couldn't get anywhere unless you went through the pass, and so, we bombed. One thing we had, ... we got in there one morning, a mission, and we looked to see where the mission was. It was over on the west coast of Italy, and what are we bombing? a mountain. "What's the mountain going to do for us?" and [the briefing officers said], "Well, it's just a hill. We want you to hit this hill." So, we hit the hill, and then, we find out, afterwards, that it was fairly successful. What we did was, we blocked the road by knocking the mountain down on top of the road, and there was no way that the Germans could bring their men from Anzio, or from Cassino, rather, up to Anzio, because the main highway was blocked. The coastal highway, ... the mountain was down on that, and the main highway, I think it was Highway 5 or something there ...

TK: Seven.

GS: Seven, okay. I knew it was ... something like that. That highway was, again, blocked. As long as ... we could get airplanes over it, we could bomb that and keep them from moving, but directly, yes, we had almost everything. [If] we had a mission, they gave us an explanation for it. Whether it was valid or not, [I do not know]. Like I say, ... we had the one mission there to Bucharest, ... bomb the railroad at Bucharest, because the Germans are moving supplies down there. What are the Germans doing, moving supplies down to Bucharest, except, unless they expect us to come in through Greece, you know, with another front? So, we went over and bombed Bucharest. ... We hit the thing and it was a very successful mission, because weather was bad ... and navigation was tough up there in the hills, you know, ... going through the ... clouds in there and hitting a railroad there. ... They said, "We really destroyed it. They're not going to be bringing supplies down through Bucharest anymore, into Greece."

TK: You weren't in on the bombing of Monte Cassino, were you?

GS: No, ... we didn't bomb that one. Our neighbor outfit bombed it. We bombed the highways outside of it. ...

TK: I watched the planes come over.

GS: Yes, but we never bombed Cassino itself. We were always bombing the highway out there, but, getting back to Bucharest there, what it was, they said it was such a good mission, you know, ... hitting the targets and destroying it completely, that they decided that, "Skidmore, you ... haven't got any medals yet; we're going to give you a DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross] for this one." So, I get the DFC, and then, by the time I got it, we found out more about what happened at Bucharest. It seems that, yes, the Germans were moving trains and trainloads down through Bucharest, down towards Greece, and we [thought], "If that's what they were figuring on, you know, the way it was explained to us, it looks like they're going to come down through Greece and stop us from coming up to take Ploesti," and so forth. So, that's what the mission was, but, then, we find out that ... that wasn't what the mission was, or what the mission finally ... developed into. What was moving down through Bucharest was a couple of trainloads of refugees and POWs and we knocked them out, and why they were coming down through there with it, [I do not know]. ... Their prison camps were getting pretty well filled up and the Greeks were someplace down there. They decided they'd move them down there and we came over. From twenty thousand feet, you can't tell who's on the train or what's not on the train. ... It seems that, ... early in the morning, when we showed up on the horizon there, I guess maybe ten o'clock in the morning or something, and let our bombs go at ten-fifteen, ... about, oh, nine o'clock in the morning, we were crossing the coast there, over Yugoslavia, coming across, heading for Bucharest. So, they sound off their air raid sirens and people that were on these trains [got] off the train, [went] into the woods. So, they chased them all off the train, into the woods, see. About noon, no air raid showed up, we didn't show up, we were still quite a ways away there, and they [said], "Okay, you can get back on the train again." Well, they got back on the train and found all their baggage had been pilfered. So, about noon, air raid sirens go [off] again, "Oh, no, we're not leaving our stuff on the train, where it can be pilfered again." So, that's when we came over, and we didn't know where they were or who they were, and we were told that they were German troops that were being transferred. It was a bunch of POWs. So, I gave them back the medal and said, "I don't want a medal for this one," and, oh, they insisted I have it, but I very seldom wear the extra medal, because it's ...

TK: Do you have any idea how many people were lost in that raid?

GS: I used to know, but I don't know what it is now.

SI: How did you feel after that?

GS: Not too good. ... From there on, we didn't trust intelligence too much, either. So, we didn't trust intelligence, we didn't trust our major, we didn't trust anybody. [laughter]

SI: Were there other cases where you got reports of the bombs falling into the wrong area?

GS: No, I don't think too many. We had some where they missed the targets, but, as far as doing damage to anything else, [I do not think too many], and I think that the ones that ... used to cost us this, I don't know whether [it is true], we had a couple of bombardiers that would miss the target on purpose. ... In fact, I was very suspicious of two of them I knew. They never came within ten, twelve miles of the target before they would drop their bombs and head for home. ... You'd get up near the target, within ten miles of the target, and you'll see some flak up ahead, five or eight miles ahead; to turn around and go home, or drop your bombs, turn around and go home, I thought they should have been strung up and shot, but we never did get anyplace with that. There was enough problems with us without creating them for everybody else. But, we did have two bombardiers that ... it wouldn't have taken me much to testify against them in a court-martial, because I was sure that they were just either "flak happy" [or] just afraid of flak. They had us go off on a mission, and then, drop the bombs ... when they knew we're not going to have a chance of hitting anything.

EB: Did you have much interaction with the Italian people, the villagers?

GS: No, they kept to themselves, pretty much to themselves. ... Well, the part of Italy we were in, [it] was down in Southern Italy, was not the ideal spot or tourist spot. ... The way the people were living, they were living in caves and the systems they had hadn't changed for two thousand years. They weren't very industrious and, as far as getting to know [them] or [do] anything with them, not really. We went to a couple of the concerts they put on, which some of it was good music and some of it wasn't. I remember going to the opera and I guess half the actors had flu or cold or something. You could hear them all through the performance. There was more coughs coming from off the stage than there was in the auditorium, and, with everybody coughing on the stage, it wasn't a very good opera that we went to.

TK: Your squadron developed some interesting sports.

GS: Which ones are they?

TK: When I visited you down there, ... somebody asked me if I wanted to fox hunting, somebody in your squadron. I said, "Sure, I'd love to go fox hunting." Fox hunting, 15th Air Force style; you get a three-quarter-ton weapon carrier and a carbine and you go roaring across the field. Now, this truck is bouncing up and down and you scare out a fox and you see the fox and you chase the fox and you're sitting there with a carbine, trying to shoot that fox. I hit one, purely by accident.

GS: Really? We had one. I don't know whether it was the one you hit or not.

TK: And your man cut off the tail and awarded it to me.

GS: Yes. Well, we had the fox tail on our jeep antenna, the only jeep that I remember that had a genuine fox tail on the antenna.

SI: Were there other things that you did for recreation?

GS: Oh, I don't know, not that much, not that involved anything similar. We went fishing once or twice, and we were near a beach. We'd go swimming in the summertime, if we didn't have a mission to fly, but they'd keep us pretty busy with everything else, besides getting our own food, because the supplies weren't coming through. ... We did hunt wild boar, had a B-25 we flew over the swamps there, over in the other side of "the Boot," and fired at a wild boar, then, went after it with a truck, you know. After we hit it, we brought it back and had some pork chops. They were kind of gamey, too.

EB: Were you writing letters home?

GS: Yes, we wrote, every now and then.

EB: Was your family sending you anything?

GS: Yes, we'd get something from somebody in the family, every now and then, too. I don't know, ... I won't say we got it daily. ... At least averaging more than once a week, somebody from home would write to us.

SI: Do you remember any cases of sabotage around the base?

GS: Yes. ... We had one, a German airplane we shot down, and the pilot was wandering north of the field there. ... Somebody had reported a German pilot there, and then, we were out looking for him, or on our own, really. ... We weren't really looking for him, but we were just going out to see what's going on in this countryside there, maybe buy some food or get something we could eat, and we heard about him, that the German pilot was in the area. So, somebody caught up to him one time and he tried to escape and he was shot right away. ... So, then, we figured we're going with him [the threat died with him?], but, then, come to find out he had some friends down there in Italy, too, and they were planning on sabotaging our aircraft. In fact, somebody had a grenade fastened in one of the planes, with an altitude attachment to it, so that if it got to ten thousand feet, the thing would go off. Well, we discovered it before he got up to ten thousand feet, and that it was placed by some of the Italians there, but where it came from was from the German pilot that was shot down. So, that's the main sabotage. No, I don't know of anything too much else. ...

TK: Tell about the Major and your Wiener Neustadt mission.

GS: Well, okay, this one, I wasn't going to tell you too much about, but as long as I'm going to be able to strike half of it out after I finish it ...

TK: You could also embargo it, if you wish.

GS: Yes. No, we had the Major that I wasn't doing too good with. He didn't give us supplies, and what he did get, he had first choice of whatever we brought in, or something like that. ... One of the main things was, we had a crew that was pretty well shot up over in Yugoslavia. ... I think he had two engines out. So, he was going to try and make it across the Adriatic on two engines. ... In order to do that, he had told the crew that he was going to try and make it across

the ocean, across the Adriatic Sea, back to Italy. He said, "If we can even make it to the beach, we'll crash on the beach. We're better off than [if] we go down here in Yugoslavia, because we don't know whose side these guys are on," and so, all right, ... he says, "I want you to take ... anything that we don't need fastened down, undo it and throw it overboard. Now, we don't need the bombsight anymore; there's thirty-two pounds. Get rid of that. Everybody has a flak suit. You've got thirty-five pounds, ten flak suits; that's 350 pounds. Get rid of it. ... The machine guns, the waist guns, we're not going to meet any fighters over the ocean. Let's undo the machine guns and throw them overboard. That's another three hundred pounds," you know. So, we're unloading everything that we can, ... or they were; I wasn't on this one. They unload it all and he finally gets it across the Adriatic and lands on the beach there in Italy. So, everybody thought he did a good job, made a good decision. We got the plane back and everything. The machine guns, they were easy to get replaced. The bombsight, we had plenty of bombsights around, by that time, that weren't used, and we can get them in there, whatever else he needs, you know, the seats for the waist gunners to sit on. "Take the seats out and let them stand up for awhile," you know, and anything you could rip out.

-----END OF TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO-----

EB: This continues an interview with George Bernard Skidmore on Friday, April 27th, in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

GS: Okay, I'm back again. ... Now, what was I talking about, Wiener Neustadt?

SI: This other crew was throwing all of their stuff out.

GS: They threw it all out and, when they came back, the pilot was given a medal for saving the crew and the ship, and so forth, and everybody thought it was all right. The only thing was that they had the airplane and they could get machine guns and things back in it, but what they didn't have were some flak suits, because there just weren't any available, ... practically no flak suits. "So, what do we do? We're going to have to share flak suits with somebody else ... [or] pull lots, you know, and find out who gets a flak suit and who doesn't, or what?" ... This major came up and said, "Well, they threw them overboard. That's their fault. They'll have to fly without a flak suit." Well, in the beginning of the war, we didn't have flak suits, so, some of us were used to flying without flak suits, but these were new crews and they'd brought flak suits with them when they came over, but they didn't have any now, because they threw them away. So, anyhow, we got another new crew [that] came in and they had brand-new flak suits. ... I went to them and asked them where they got the flak suits from, and he says, "Oh, down at wing headquarters. They've got whole truckloads of them down there." "Well, why the devil can't we get flak suits for these guys?" "I don't know," he says, "The Major didn't apply for them," or something. So, anyhow, oh, I was running radar at the time. So, I'd studied for radar and, unless we had bad weather, I didn't fly on a radar mission. ... When we had bad weather, where we were soaked in, like this morning was, where it's thunder storming, that's good flying weather for me. [laughter] That's the way they would [assign me], but, anyhow, ... when we found they had none and I found out that they had them down at wing headquarters, I borrowed a jeep and ran down to wing headquarters. ... After I finished studying radar and it wasn't raining that day, I'd have a nice, sunny day, I could go fishing or swimming. As long as I wasn't assigned a mission,

what did they need me for? So, the Major, he decided, "Well, we have a job. Skidmore, you are now a temporary chaplain." We have a chaplain who would come around once a month, but some of the guys were complaining about it. They want [a full-time chaplain]. He says, "Well, Skidmore, you're not doing anything? You are now temporary chaplain. So, Sunday comes, I want you to have a service for them." "Okay, you know, all right, I'll do that." Well, he had a couple of other jobs for me. One was personal equipment. He was having a problem. Somebody came and said, "Hey, our parachutes haven't been repacked for two years now." Each parachute is supposed to be opened every six months, and then, signed off by the parachute packer. "Skidmore, I want you to find out that these parachutes are all checked out." I said, "I can't do that." "You're going to have to do it." I said, "Well, it's a four-man job and we don't have any facilities for parachute repacking. Where do you dry them out? They're supposed to hang from a ceiling for twenty-four hours, to air out and dry out. The rubber bands that have been in them for two years are no good. They're going to have to be replaced." I said, "I don't have people or men for that." "That's your problem. You're in charge of personal equipment." Okay, he wrote up orders and said I was in charge of personal equipment. Well, being in charge of personal equipment, that was flak suits. "Okay, so, I'll run down to headquarters and see what I can do." So, I went down to headquarters, told them we needed some flak suits. "See the sergeant over there." He says, "How many do you want?" I said, "Well, I want about a hundred, but I'll settle for fifteen." "Okay," he says, "back your jeep up over here," and he puts fifteen flak suits in the back of the jeep. So, I drive back home, found the crew without flak suits, said, "I've got something for you. Here are the flak suits." "Wow, good." Well, it soon got around that Skidmore ... got some flak suits for these guys, and somebody went to the Major and said, "I see here we got new flak suits. How come you couldn't get them?" and, oh, boy, [the] Major wanted to know where I got the flak suits from. I said, "I got them out of [headquarters]. I didn't steal them." I said, "I signed for them, you know." He says, "Well, don't you ever do anything like that again." "Like what?" He says, "You don't go over the head of anybody that outranks you." "Who did I go over the head of?" He said, "You know very well that if I had known there were flak suits there, I could have gotten them and got the credit. Now, this word's gotten around that you got the flak suits," and he says, "That's not the way we do things in this outfit." I got bawled out good, you know, for getting flak suits from [headquarters]. Well, from then on, I began to decide that this guy wasn't a guy that I was happy with. Well, anyhow, what Tom wants me to tell you about now is Wiener Neustadt. ... Well, we're getting near the end of the war. What's his name had crossed the Rhine and was heading for Berlin.

SI: Patton?

GS: Patton, yes, and the Russians were chasing the Germans out of Russia a little bit. It was the winter that was tough on the Americans and Germans and everything. It was tough on the Russians, too, but, anyhow, all right, we're getting there in, I guess, about around April of '45, and Hitler, ... he's trying to save Berlin, because he knew very doggone well that if Berlin fell, the war was over. Well, one way he could save it, the way they pictured it, he had started building some new tanks, which were modeled after the Russian tanks. They were, oh, I don't know what all they would do, but these new German tanks were fantastic, the new Eagle tank. ... The little ones, what were the ones that Patton had then? He had ...

SI: Shermans?

GS: Sherman, yes, his Sherman tanks, and only the fact that he had so many of them was what was saving him, but, as far as being a match for the Russian tanks or the German-built Russian copies, ... well, they were no match. The Germans, with these new tanks, would really walk all over Patton. He wouldn't move another five feet once he ... ran up against these. So, Hitler was convinced to get some of these tanks off the Russian front and put them in front of Patton, between Patton and Berlin. So, he moves them in there and the only way he can move them [is], they're too heavy to be running on the highways and all, but, to move them, he has to put them on ... freight cars. So, he got these, I don't know how many battalions, though, they had, or how many tanks he had in it anymore, but he had quite a few of these Eagle tanks, that were far superior to these Abrams [Shermans]. ... His generals finally convinced him to pull these tanks off the Russian front and put them between Patton and Berlin. Well, like I say, the only way he could move them was by railroad. So, he's moving them out and he's gotten them; why, I don't know what the date was anymore. ... I think it was in April of '45. He had some of these tanks moved out of the Russian front, loaded on flat cars and was moving them to get in front of Patton. He'd got as far as Vienna and ... he couldn't move them right on through. ... If he wanted to move them, he could only move them at nighttime, when the planes weren't after him, and he had to be careful to keep them camouflaged and hidden in the daytime and all. So, he was having his problems. So, they decided, "Well, we've got to stop him before he does get them in front of Patton," and it was raining like this morning, just like this morning, ... a real front coming through, and the front was all the way from Italy there right up through, almost through, Berlin, you know. ... To get to them, they figured, "Well, we can't fly a formation up there. A formation, ... [when] you go through storms like that, you can't see fifty feet in front of you. You're going to take planes and put them in a formation and expect them to stay fifty feet apart?" and so, they decided, "The only thing that we can do is, a single aircraft can go up there. ... If we can get a couple of ... two-thousand-pound bombs on the railroad tracks up there, to hold them up another day, then, we can get sixty or seventy aircraft to go after them, but, in weather like this, ... you'll be lucky if you can get one aircraft through it." So, anyhow, ... somebody said, "Well, Skidmore can get a plane through. He's shown us before that he can see through the clouds and figure out where the targets are. Let's get a hold of him." So, they call me on it and we said, ... "Our squadron doesn't have any radar aircraft." What has happened to it is, ... originally, they sent us six radar ships, or pathfinder ships, whatever they wanted to call them. ... Well, like I say, you couldn't fly them in formation, but a single ship might get through and drop a couple of two-thousand-pound bombs on the railroad yard, so that no trains are going to come through for two or three days. ... "By that time, [if the] weather clears up, we can get the rest of the Air Force up there." So, I said, "Well, all right, give me a crew, and [one] that knows what radar is about, and [let us] see if ... we can get up there. The only thing we can do is try it." So, all right, we get up four o'clock in the morning and [we are] briefed on where the target is. ... Next stop down the line was Wiener Neustadt, a little town outside of Vienna, and that's where some of the railroads were held up there. ... Somebody had dropped a couple of little bombs there before and they were waiting to go off and we had hand grenades or something. [Editor's Note: Mr. Skidmore may be referring to antipersonnel or cluster bombs, in which bundles of small explosives were dropped into enemy concentrations.] I don't know what all it was, but the trains were stopped outside of Vienna at Wiener Neustadt. ... "Okay, we'll see if we can go find it," you know. I get up there, we get to the target and it's overcast. ... I have to drop the bombs through the overcast and, after I dropped them, I turned the plane around, ... or

had them turn the plane around, and go back over the target. ... We could see black smoke coming up through the clouds. So, black smoke at ten thousand feet meant something down there was burning, and black, oily smoke [meant] we must have hit something [carrying] oil. ... These trains that were hauling it, each one had a tank car that was carrying fuel for the tanks, and some of them just had tanks on them that would [carry fuel], and we had tracks there that were to be blown up and everything, so that there we are. I dropped the bombs through there and checked the target out and came back home and reported that we'd had a pretty good mission. Well, we get back on the ground. ... Oh, wait a minute, I'm a little bit ahead of myself there, yes. We're leaving the target. Now, I've had my eyes glued on the radar scope for about, oh, at least forty minutes before we got to the target, picking it up as far away as I could, keeping track of which way we're going [in] on it. So, my eyes are pretty well glued in that machine. ... Finally, we're leaving the target again, for the second time, and I look at them and say, "Well, okay, let's go back over the target and see this smoke again." "We can do that," and then, let's see, where am I figuring? Oh, yes, when I take my eyes off the radar scope; ... from where I sat, the radar was on the flight deck, with my back towards the pilot, and I had it on a desk in front of me. ... After taking my eyes off the scope a minute, you know, and rubbing them, because it's [a case where I was] blurry-eyed from staring at that scope going around in a circle for two or three hours there, ... I happened to look up at the turret and there's nobody in the turret. ... I was called, my status on the plane was, "Mickey." That was my, I don't know whether it was a codename or what, but I was a "Mickey" operator, the one that ran the "Mickey Mouse" contraption. So, [I said], "Mickey to Pilot." "Go ahead." I said, "Do you know that the top turret's unmanned?" "What do you mean?" I said, "There's nobody in the top turret." "Oh, where did he go?" We had a top-turret, you know, had a man in the turret when we left, but, now, where is he? "I don't know," he says. "Well, I'll have to send somebody back to get him," you know. About that time, the Nose Gunner calls out, "Bogey, twelve o'clock high, right in front of us." I look up over his shoulder, over the Co-Pilot's shoulder or the Pilot's shoulder. Straight ahead, I see four little dots up there, about, maybe, two miles ahead, and we know that they're bogeys because there's one thing; even though you can only see a dot, the German aircraft had flat windshields and Americans, we had curved, Plexiglas windshields and all. Germans had a flat ... piece of heavy glass there in the front, and that would reflect sunlight, ... if the angle was right. So, if you look up two miles in front of you and you see a flashing light of sunlight, you see a bright flash of light up there, you know what it is is sun off the windshield of a bogey coming in. So, the Nose Gunner had called this off, that there were four German aircraft up there, heading right for us. Well, by the time he tells me this and I look out over his shoulder and can see them, "Zoom," they're going by. You know, you've got a closing rate of about six hundred miles an hour there. So, they go by fast. You don't really have time to see them. ... The Nose Gunner, he lets go a blast, and the waist gunners, I could see them, they're letting go on them. The Ball-Turret, he picked one up, you know, and he's firing at it. We have no top-turret. ... "Cripes, you know, where is that [guy]?" Well, about that time, the second one comes through and he's coming through and, "Wham-bam," ... we can hear his shells hitting us. ... I can see the shells from our nose gunner, the shots from our nose turret, bouncing off the belly of this plane as it went by, and the Tail Gunner calls through and says, "It's hit. He's going down in flames," ... or both of them, I think, two of them, were going down in flames, into the clouds. The next turn, [we were] waiting for, he turns off before he gets to us, within range, and the fourth one follows him, out of range. He turns away, but where was our top-turret gunner? Well, in the meantime, [during] this "wham-bam" stuff, I feel a blast, a big blast, of cold air and I

look up and the windshield is gone. ... In front of the Pilot, no windshield there at all; it's been shot out. The Co-Pilot, he's holding his gloved hand up over his face and he's full of blood. I don't know what it is, from his hand or his face or what. So, I'm looking at him and I look at the Pilot, to see what he's doing. He's just staring straight ahead, and I call him and ask him if he was all right. I don't get any answer from him. He just stares straight ahead. Well, his eyes are hidden a little bit underneath his helmet. So, I walk up, reach up and lift up his helmet and I look underneath his helmet there and he's got about a half-inch or so circle of blood ... right in his forehead. I move him and shake him a little bit; he's not moving, and it's easy to tell that he's dead. He's gone completely. I look at the back of his head. He's got a three-inch hole in the back of his head, where the exit was. So, I call the Bombardier and ask him if he ... can give me some help up here on the flight deck. I said, "We've got problems up here," and, about that time, the Waist Gunner calls and says, "Number three engine's giving smoke." ... I called him and said, "Okay, we'll see what we can do about it," and I'm reaching over the Pilot to feather the number three engine, and I feather that. ... I no sooner get that feathered when the Bombardier shows up, I think, and I ask him how much pilot training he's had. "None," he shakes his head, "no pilot training." Well, I had had about an hour-and-a-half of pilot training, too. The way we got it was, ... the first squadron commander we had, this is when we were back in the States, he wanted all officers on the plane to at least know enough how to fly the airplane to make an emergency landing. So, that sounded like a good idea. So, all of the officers on the crew were taken up and given training enough to [do that]. We shot three or four landings, and that's about all the training we had. ... That's what I had. I could make three or four landings, couldn't remember all the power settings on it, but they weren't that critical, I figured. Air speed was the critical thing, but, anyhow, I finally get the Pilot [Bombardier] up on the flight deck with me and asked him if he can give me a hand lifting the Pilot out of his seat. So, I'm trying to lift the Pilot out, and he was heavier than I was, quite a bit, because I was a little, skinny thing, about 128 pounds, or, no, I guess I was down lower than that. I was 128 when I got drafted and I was 123 when I came out, a couple of weeks later, anyhow. ... He must have been at least 180, 185, this pilot that was dead. So, between me and the Pilot [Bombardier], we're trying to get him out of the seat.

TK: You and the Bombardier.

GS: Or me and the Bombardier, we're trying to get the Pilot out of the seat. Then, I took the Pilot's parachute, opened that up, and, with my knife that I carried, I cut it into some strips ... for the Bombardier to patch up the Co-Pilot's face, where he had a whole face full of fronds [shards?], fronds from the window. ... Otherwise, that was the only thing that he had, but there was more blood than anything else there, because a lot of glass was in the cheek and in the eye, and so forth, or Plexiglas, it was. Well, anyhow, ... the number three engine was on fire and smoking and, sure enough, about ... twenty, thirty seconds later, the Waist [Gunner] is calling me and telling me that there's flame in that engine, it's not only smoke. ... I look out and I could see flame there. ... This was a new aircraft and one thing they'd put on the B-24s, that wasn't asked for and really didn't work out too good, they'd put a ... fire system or extinguisher system [in]. They had a couple of tanks of CO₂. I don't know what the pressure on them was, but it was high-pressure CO₂, and, if that was released, if you had a fire in the engine, most of the time, it would come around the carburetor ... or [the] fuel lines that led into the carburetor were broken. So, there, oh, we're trying to salvage it. What they did, they put [in] a fire extinguisher and a big

tank of CO₂, a couple of big tanks of CO₂, and little switches; you could flip them on and off. So, if number three engine was on fire, you'd throw the switch on number three and a big cloud of CO₂, frozen or dry ice, would engulf the whole engine. ... After I pulled the lever on that one; well, oh, what we did, ... if anybody hit one of these tanks, with three thousand [pounds of] pressure in them, with a machine gun bullet or something, the whole tank would blow up and, instead of having a little bullet hole, you'd have a hole about four foot in diameter wherever the thing hit. So, usually, when we got an aircraft from the States, we had to modify it to suit our own needs. ... Well, one of the things we removed was the fire extinguisher system, and another thing we removed was, or we did, we took the windows [out]. You couldn't see [out] the windows, because you couldn't stick your head out to look down. So, they put bubble windows in, and, [with] those, you could stick your head out in the bubble and see right down under the plane. ... They changed the ... prop governors. They changed those on them. That was something new that came in, after we ... had the planes delivered to us, and, anyhow, we did little things like that whenever we got it. Well, here we are, up there now, and I'm wondering if this fire extinguisher system was even connected up. ... The only thing I can do is punch it. So, I punch it in and a big cloud of smoke comes and the Waist Gunner again reports, "The whole engine blew up," and he says, "It's all full of white smoke." I said, "Well, that's a good sign, I think." ... I said, "That's not smoke. That's dry ice." I said, "That fire is out now." "Oh," he said, "well, yes, it looks like it's out, no smoke coming out of it." So, there's something else that didn't work on the airplane. ... I was telling you, we found that the bombs doors didn't work, too. So, here, this was one that didn't work, ... because we were lucky it did work, because, if it hadn't worked, we'd have been burned up there. So, anyhow, we finally get back to the base there. We come in on ... radar. I can find where the field is, and it's raining like it was here this morning, like mad, there. So, I'm trying to remember what the power settings were for landing.

EB: Was the Co-Pilot helping at all?

GS: ... He couldn't, and he wasn't much of a co-pilot. I find out, later on, that he was a full colonel. He took the job of co-pilot on a plane because, in order to get his flight pay, he has to fly at least one a month there. ... So, he picks a single-engine plane ... or something where he can get credit for something, but he decided he was going to co-pilot, and I find out he didn't know any more about co-piloting than I knew about piloting. He was practically no help at all, especially with his face all full of blood and holding ... the parachute padding we had up there. ... The only thing we could get with him is, I could get the Bombardier to help him out of the seat and told the Bombardier, "Get ... [him] out of the seat and, if you see the Top Gunner, send the Top Gunner up here again. We may need him," and so, they took the Co-Pilot out, put him down in the bomb bay, where, in case he had to get out of there in a hurry, all he had to do [was], you know, you could shove him out the door and hold on to his ripcord and he's floating down [to] the ground, was about the best we could do for him, but he couldn't see much, with one side of his face [injured]. He had one eye that was half closed, the other one was completely closed. ... Anyhow, we're coming in for a landing now. We're coming in, and I'm trying to remember ...

TK: What about your singing gunner?

GS: The singing what?

TK: Singing gunner.

GS: Oh, the missing gun?

TK: No, the one whose foot was shot.

GS: Oh, yes, yes, that's right. Yes, we did. ... In the back of the plane, we had one of the gunners and the Tail Gunner calls in and says, "Well, we got rid of him [a German fighter], you know. He's going down in smoke." ... I forgot which one of the waist gunners it was now, he said, ... "That son of a bitch, he shot my foot off," and [I asked], "What do you mean he shot your foot off?" Well, the [other] gunner tells me, "Yes," he says, ... "his foot's completely shot off." ... [I] said, "Well, can you get a tourniquet around it or something?" "Yes," he's putting the first aid on him. ... He was taken care of in the back of the plane and, up in the front, we had the Co-Pilot. We got him down, sitting in the bay, in the bomb bay there. The Pilot, we had him ... laying on the floor up there, on the flight deck, and I'm coming in over the field there and I don't see the ground. I get down to six hundred feet ... before we saw the ground, broke out just over, oh, about three miles from the airfield there. We crossed over the airfield. I turned south on it and saw the smoke from the smokestacks and figured out which way the wind was blowing and figured, "All right, we'll bring it in, head to the north this time." I think we took off to the south, but, now, the wind had changed a bit. We're coming in from the north, but it was raining like mad and the water is pouring in through the open windshield. ... The temperature of that water felt like it was about minus forty-six, coming in there with that air blast on it. Some of it, I know, was frozen. ... Fortunately, I had a pair of goggles and a helmet and I had a pair of goggles that I had [that] covered up half my face, and the other half was covered with the oxygen mask.

TK: What was your gunner singing?

GS: Oh, that guy with his foot. Yes, they gave him a shot, or a couple of shots, of morphine, because we all had a little package here that had morphine in it, and that's the other thing, a morphine story. We had an inspection one time. A general came through and he wanted to make an inspection and he found out that [something was amiss]. He looked at some of the first aid kits, and I don't know whether he was Medical [Corps] or what he was, but he saw it and he takes this first aid kit and rips it off the parachute harness and looks at it, opens it up. ... He finds the morphine syrette was broken. So, he says, "I want every ... one of these parachute packs opened and inspected. I don't want to come in here and find morphine not available to anybody." "Well, what are we going to do?" "Well," he says, "I'll take care of that." So, about a month later, a package arrived for me, from Colonel So-and-So, Medical Department, something. We open it up and it had about a thousand morphine syrettes. Now, what am I going to do with a thousand morphine syrettes? I went to the Flight Surgeon, our flight surgeon. He says, "Well, I'll take about ten from you, but I don't think I want any more. You'd better get rid of the rest of them before you get locked up with that." So, I decided, "Well, all right, what am I going to do? I'll save two for me, two for you, two for you. That's all, and I'm not giving any more away. I'm just going to get rid of them." So, under the floor of our tent there, I dug a little hole, put them in a little, like a cigar box, full of them, buried them there. Oh, what was it, fifty

years ago [later] that I went back over there? ... Where our tent was, they'd already put an eight-lane superhighway through there, and so, underneath that superhighway was where my morphine was. ... Anyhow, it could have been [that I could have] had a fortune if I'd have salvaged that and sold that. Anyhow, now, where was I on?

TK: The gunner.

GS: Yes, we gave him a shot of morphine there, a couple of shots. I think we gave him two shots or so, and he's sitting there, singing, "I'm tired and I want to go home." [laughter] So, anyhow, ... I'm coming in on the landing strip there and I flew across the runway, made a turn to the south. Again, when I got down there south, about six miles, turned it back around north, [I] was able to pick up the runway at about a half-mile away, and the ceiling was about six hundred feet. I'm down about five hundred feet and coming in, picked the runway out and made a pretty good landing, but I'm coming in too fast. ... "How do I slow this thing down?" "You can't slow it down any more." If I put the flaps down, you know, and try to climb it to slow it down, ... it's not going to do it with that wing working backwards. ... I wasn't sure what I was doing, but I figured, "Well, I'm going to get this thing on the ground. Maybe if we crash on it, we'll crash and burn up, but we're not going to stay up here much longer." ... We finally set it down. I feel the wheels touch down and we're heading in the right direction, but we're going too fast. ... I look up ahead and I can tell that we're more than halfway down the runway and this thing is still barreling like anything down the runway. So, I had the Bombardier sitting over there in the copilot's seat now and [I] asked him if he could help me with the brakes. I said, "Got any brakes?" He says, "No brakes; these brakes, no, no brakes," and you touched the brakes and the plane would slide sideways. "No, don't do that; don't touch the brakes." Let it slow down, if you can, you know. Pull full flaps and everything. That would slow it down, but don't try to get going too fast. It's just going to slide sideways and you're surely going to crash then. So, we're about three-quarters of the way down the runway when what happens? ... We run into this big puddle that we had trouble with on the take-off and it was just like putting the brakes on. It just plowed into that puddle, spray flowing out all over the place, and the plane slows down to ... a nice walk. [laughter] So, everybody thought I did a real good job, but it was a lot of luck. So, anyhow, the next thing we had was, we were in there and we fire off a couple of red flares, a signal for an ambulance after landing. If you need an ambulance, you fire two red flares. We fired the red flares. Nobody did anything; fired a couple more. The flares went up into the clouds at six hundred feet. Nobody saw them above that and they weren't watching for them. "Well, where is anybody? Somebody must have seen us coming in." We're waiting there and waiting, trying to get them done, and I'm trying to fill my log in, what happened when and where. ... Well, we still had the Top-Turret Gunner. ... He swore, "No, ... we were told, up there and on the bomb run, ... where there's ... no problem of a fighter attack during a bomb run, ... with all the flak around, ... you could leave the top turret then and get everything else you need [to do] done." I said, "I don't know who gave you those instructions," I said, "but, when you fly with me and you're ... flying the top turret, you keep that thing manned until after the engines are cut down." I said, "You don't leave your post just like that." Well, he was sorry about it, but he said, "That's what they taught us in gunnery school." I said, "Well, we're going to change gunnery school, if that's what they're sending us," you know, because I was really peeved about that. ... What the devil were we having a turret for if nobody's going to sit there? and, if he'd have been in the turret, we probably wouldn't have had as much trouble with the

fighters that we had. So, anyhow, we're firing the flares up there in the clouds; nothing happens. ... Somebody had a .45. Usually, we didn't carry our handguns with us. We found that they were useless until you got on the ground and, if you got on the ground, ... if you were captured with a handgun on you, the Germans claimed that, according to [the] Geneva Conference [Convention], or whatever it was, you can be shot on sight if you've got a handgun. So, anyhow, all right, again, we're trying to attract attention. ... I finally told the Nose Gunner, I said, "You think you can fire a short burst without hitting anything?" He says, "Why, what do you mean?" I said, "Well, see if you can attract somebody [by] firing ... a fifty-caliber machine gun. ... We're not getting anything done firing a .45 pistol," and it was raining like this morning out there, that (drill?). He takes his nose turret, aims it down into the puddle on the runway and he fires off ... three blasts, what is it? three shots a blast, "Brrp," and only one thing; I never realized, without the engines running, how loud a fifty-caliber machine gun sounds. ... I was overwhelmed by the fact that [it was so loud]. ... I was wondering what he was doing up there in the nose, but he fired it and it went down in the mud. Well, we'd been on the ground for almost an hour now and, finally, we got a jeep over. Well, I'd sent one of the waist gunners, the one that wasn't hurt. I told him to get over there and see if he can find somebody, tell them we need two ambulances and a weapons carrier and a couple of stretcher bearers, or somebody, to get us out of here, you know. So, like, finally, a weapons carrier shows up and I ask, "Where is anybody? Where's the officer of the day here? Somebody's got to be in charge of the guards that are on the field." We never left them unguarded. In fact, we had a special group of [guards]. There were black soldiers that were sent over just to guard the airport, and [I asked], "Where are they today?" "Oh, ... an announcement was made that there'd be no flying today. So, the field was closed up and no flying was going to be done. So, the Major sent everybody home." I said, "Well, what about us? We're flying." ... He says, "Well, you weren't scheduled to fly ... until the last minute," but, anyhow, that was getting me a little bit peeved, because nobody was there for us. ... We finally loaded the body and the Gunner and the Co-Pilot that were all injured, got them in the weapons carrier or the ambulance and had them head off. ... Now, I was in the 718th Squadron, so, my little hut where I lived was on the other end of the field, almost two miles away, or a little bit over two miles away, actually. ... They told me that the 718th, you know, when they left, they said, "The 718th's sending a jeep over after you." "Okay, as long as you think he can find me." ... They drove off then and I'm there all alone, in the rain. Well, the rain's letting up a little bit, but nobody showed up. So, I finally decide, "They're not going to come. How are they going to find me out here, in all this rain, and no lights on or anything? ... It's a different squadron. Where do they know the plane that picked me up was supposed to be? Unless I could build a bonfire, how are they going to find me?" I said, "I know this outfit. They're not going to send anybody over after me in this rain. I'm going to have to start walking." So, I load up. ... Oh, when the weapons carrier pulls away, he's just about ready to pull away and one of the waist gunners, the waist gunner that had his foot still with him, he called up and wanted to know what would he do about the other guy's foot. I said, "Oh, let me have it. I'll take care of it." So, he hands me the shoe with the foot still in it and they load him into one of the ambulances. ... Anyhow, I'm there with the foot and my heavy flak suit and my heavy wool flying suit, you know, the sheep-lined suit, coat, jacket and trousers that they had for us. So, plus, I've got some, oh, a little bit more technical, ... a couple of briefings, some calculations I'd made on radar, to see ... what's going to happen to them. ... I [was] waiting, finally decided, "It's getting dark." All of a sudden, it gets dark. It stopped raining while it was light a little bit. All of a sudden, it's getting dark again and I'm looking at six o'clock at night now and I hadn't

had anything to eat since ... before breakfast. I didn't get any breakfast, no lunch, no supper, it's raining like mad and I'm soaking wet, bloodied up with lifting the Co-Pilot out of his seat and his blood was running down the back of my jacket, all red, and I'm going to have to start walking. So, I walked the two miles, two-and-a-half miles or so. It didn't take me more than a half-hour to get there or so. So, I get there and the first thing I'm looking for is some water, to get washed up a bit. ... [I] turn on the spigot that we had coming from the Jerry can up in the tree that had some drinking water in it; turn the spigot and nothing comes out. I go up and look at it. The reservoir we had, out of a Jerry can, was empty. Somebody'd used all the water up. So, all right, I've got to hike up the hill with a Jerry can, get that filled up, bring it back down the hill, climb up in the tree where we had the thing, had our reservoir, ... which was another Jerry can, climb up there and fill that up. Then, I come back down. Well, if I'm going to ... wash up with warm water, I've got to light that stove ... we invented. There's no kerosene in there, either. That was used up. Now, I'm getting kind of peeved, you know. Where the devil is somebody to do some of this work? I'm doing everything and couldn't find anyone. The rest of them were all over in the mess hall, singing and dancing, making a lot of racket over there. So, I figure, "Well, I'll wash up a little bit and go over to the mess hall, see if I can get something to eat," because that's one of my other priorities, was hunger, and I get over there and I find that ... everybody's singing and dancing. Oh, I didn't tell you about what happened ... the day before this, when we were at the mess hall. The Major bangs on his glass, "Let me have your attention yet," and he says, "We've got orders of the day, you know, and we have some good news and some better news. Well, most of you ... noticed that it's raining outside, and it's just starting to rain. It's going to rain heavy all day tomorrow and we're not going to have any flying. The field'll be closed tomorrow, be no flying, no missions, no practice missions. Everybody has a day off," you know, and everybody's cheering, "Oh, good." "Wait a minute, that was just the good news. I've got some better news. We had an outfit up on the frontlines that just captured a gin still. So, we made a deal with them. ... We'll let you have;" well, how am I going to put this? We had the "Beef Trust" there, what we called the "Beef Trust." These were four Italian ladies, each one weighed about 250 pounds each. They were a little bit oversized and, for entertainment, they had a dance that they did. They could come out on the stage and dance around with only half their clothes on and everybody would clap at them. This was our entertainment there. So, we were going to lend them to the people with the still up in ... Northern Italy for about a week. "We'll lend you our "Beef Trust" if you give us the gin." So, how legal it was, I don't know. [laughter] ...

TK: I know where that gin came from, because it was my division, the 34th Division, that liberated the Benevento Distillery.

GS: I think so, Tom, okay.

TK: That was it.

GS: ... That's what we had. ... So, everybody was getting drunk on all this gin and they told me, "No food, it's all gone. Here, have a glass of gin." Well, I wanted a glass of gin on an empty stomach like that for nothing. I think I took a half a swallow and coughed half of it up or spit it up and was headed back to the tent that I had, or our tent, our hut, whatever you want to call it. I went back there to see if I could find something to eat, you know. Well, I went through my footlocker and I had a pound of sugar in there, I had some chocolate, hard chocolate, that was

supposed to be Hershey bars, or something like that, but ... they came over from Africa. They were chocolate [bars] that wouldn't melt. You had to cook it to melt it, or chew it like hard candy, almost, and then, there was ... a couple of vanilla pills, or something like that, and, oh, the butter. They had "axle grease" butter that was supposed to be edible, but it was about the consistency of glass. ... [It would survive] the desert out there in North Africa, where we finally got it from, I guess. So, what am I going to make out of this? I'm going to make some fudge. So, I got the stove going, poured in this butter that wouldn't melt until ... the temperature got up to close to boiling and put in some chocolate that wouldn't melt and stirred it all up with ... a couple drops of vanilla, or whatever else I had there, and was stirring my fudge when there's a commotion out there. "What's going on outside?" The Major comes in, "Where's Skidmore? I'm looking for him." "Here I am. What do you want now?" He said, "I want you to get up on the roof and fix that leak over my bed." I said, "I'm not a roofing business." I said, "Didn't you hear? I just got promoted to radar operator and I don't fix roofs anymore." He said, "You don't understand. I want you to get up on that roof right away and fix that leak over my bed." I said, "You don't understand. I don't fix roofs. I don't know how to fix your roof." "It's leaking." "Go plug it up yourself. You've got 850 men here in this outfit. Can't you find somebody else to fix it besides me?" "You built the thing originally." I said, "Yes, but ... I don't know how to fix it. I'm out of the roofing business now," and he says, "You don't understand. I'm giving you a direct order to get up on that roof and fix it." Well, I knew this roof wasn't going to hold me. When we built it, we had to climb up there, but, well, this is another story, too. We had a ladder, a forty-four-foot extension ladder. Where did we get it? Well, I wasn't supposed to know where that is, but, when we came through Africa, somebody smuggled the forty-four-foot extension ladder, folded up a little bit, into the back of the plane. "What are they doing? Who wants a forty-four-[foot] extension ladder there?" "Well, you never know when it's going to be handy." It wasn't one of our gunners, it was one of the passengers we were carrying that was the thief. He stole it. He also stole a bicycle from the post office there in Tunis, when we came through there. I don't know whether he was the one that stole the golden goblets that we had our Jell-O in, but he admitted to stealing the bicycle and the ladder, and there was something else he [stole], oh, yes, a bale of blankets. It was the Army blankets. They said, "US Army," on them. They were gray blankets, the color of the Civil War blankets. ... Oh, they smelled like a mixture between horse manure and camphor. ... We had those. Well, those came in handy. He distributed them, gave everybody ... in the crew a couple of extra blankets, which ... came in nice and handy. Well, okay, now, let's see, where was I up to? No meal ...

TK: The Major.

GS: The Major. He said, "You don't understand. I'm giving you a direct order. I want you to stop what you're doing and immediately climb up on that roof and fix that leak," and I'm looking at him and I didn't know whether he was drunk or kidding or what. I said, "Oh, go to hell." "What?" I said, "I told you to go to hell." "You can't tell me that." "I just told you." "Oh," he says, "we'll find out about this. I gave you a direct order; you know what the penalty is for disobeying a direct order?" "Yes." I said, "I know, and wait until they ask me to tell you [them] why?" "Never mind that. You're going to be court-martialed. I'm preparing charges against you right away." So, now, I've got charges against me for the court-martial. ... He went and got the CO and the CO came in and wanted to know what it was all about.

GS: Okay, he told the CO, you know, and the CO wanted to know, "Is that right? Did you tell him to go to hell when he gave you a direct order?" I said, "Yes, that's what I did. You want me to tell him again?" because I figured that he was wrong enough in ordering me up on a roof that wouldn't hold me, because, like, when we built the roof, we had ... the big forty-four-foot ladder there. Wing had already commandeered that for their own use and built us a control tower out on the one end of the field. So, they were using it. Without a ladder to climb up there and lay across between the beams, and the rest of the roof was held together with tin cans and a couple of homemade nails holding it together, ... nobody's going to walk around on that roof. It's going to fall through. With seventy-five pounds, I don't think it would hold. So, anyhow, he wanted to know what happened. I started telling him about, "I didn't have anything to eat. I'm tired, I'm wet and I'm aching all over." My back was aching from where I strained the muscle lifting ... the Pilot out of his seat. I said, "My back aches." I said, "I'm not going to climb up on there no matter what you want to do. You want to have a court-martial, we'll have it here, find out how you're giving out orders and all." ... I said, "Well, I'm not going to stay up and wait for you, or either one of you," the CO, too, and he ... took the Major outside and talked to him and came back in and I'm getting ready for bed. I'm figuring, "I'm going to get some sleep out of this, one way or another." So, he wanted to know if it was true that I had told him to go to hell when he gave me a direct order, and I said, "Yes, that was it." ... I said, "I'm not going to try and get out of this. ... If you want to kick me out of the war, go ahead, kick me out of the war. I don't have to hang around here ... if you don't want me," and he said, "Well, we're not going to put up with that. You can't disregard a direct order." So, [I replied], "Okay, I'm going to bed," and I went to bed, you know, and climbed in bed, and I didn't get out of bed when he called attention, that he was leaving or something. ... I told the CO, he came back in by himself, wanted to know what I expected him to do. I said, "Well, that's your problem. You get rid of him. He's been a nuisance to us. He's screwed up ... more in this outfit than anybody else you can think of. He was supposed to be officer of the day. He didn't show up for it. He wasn't on duty. What he did show up with?" ... I said, "Wait until they find out he traded the ['Beef Trust'] for the ... gin, when he traded that in for our 'Beefsteak,'" what we called our "Beefsteak," you know. I said, "You can arrest him first. We'll have his trial, to see if he's got anything left afterwards," and, anyhow, about that time, the operations officer came in. ... He says, "Skid, I understand you volunteered to fly to lead the group tomorrow." I said, "Tomorrow, what time is that?" He said, "Briefing's four o'clock." "Okay, I'm going to sleep now, if you're going to wake me up at four o'clock tomorrow morning." So, anyhow, I guess that's about it for that day, and I went to sleep. Four o'clock the following morning, I'm waked up and we have a briefing where I'm leading the group. ... The weather had cleared up enough. We didn't have to find the target on radar, we could find it visually, and they saw then that the bombs that I had dropped the day before had blocked the railroad pretty good. They dropped some more on them, to block the rest of it, and, with those two missions, you know, we kind of won the war. We could put Patton [ahead]. He [Hitler] couldn't do much after ... we had dropped those two days of bombs. So, that's how we won the war. That's all I can tell you. [laughter]

TK: Now, you ended up with, you signed a paper about this court-martial. What was that about?

GS: Oh, yes. Well, it went [on] a little bit more than that, because, a couple of days later, you know, he still wanted me, ... [was] ordering me around, and I told him, "I told you to go to hell before; you can do it again," you know, for the same stuff. He wanted me to get up on the roof and fix this leak. Oh, well, what I did then, that first night, ... when I was getting ready to go to bed; ... well, one other thing ... that he had me doing. He had weak kidneys and he was an older man and he didn't want to get up and run out to the latrine in the middle of the night. So, he had a tin can that he kept under his bed. So, the other thing, you know, ... I told the CO that I wasn't going to fix his roof and I said, "And, if you want to know, there's something else I'm not going to do, too, if you want to keep track of this." "What's that?" I said, "Now, I'm not going to empty his pee can anymore." He said, "What do you mean, empty a pee can?" I said, "Well, that's what he's got. He's got a tin can under his bed," and he stays in bed until ten or eleven o'clock in the morning, and he's the one that used up the water and the fuel for me. ... He took a bath. He had a bathtub he had and he's sitting there in the bath, at ten o'clock in the morning, just getting out of bed, and he used up all the water, so that when I got there, I had to walk up the hill to fill up my water, get the fuel for the fire again. ... I said, "One thing I'm not going to do anymore for him is empty his pee can," and he says, "Really?" So, he went out and talked to him again, came back and told me, ... "He's come to an agreement. You don't have to empty the pee can, but you're going to be court-martialed and get twenty years out of this if you refuse to get up on that roof and fix the leak." I said, "I'll take twenty years and you, you're stuck for emptying your own pee can." ... Well, with all those things going against him, ... before I went to bed that night, I took the pee can out from under his bed and I took the can, ... a number ten can, and I punched a hole in there and a hole in there, took a piece of coat hanger, made a handle out of it and I had a bucket. ... Making it easier for him, he could pick up the bucket and go empty it himself, if he wanted to, but, no, I took the pee can and up in the ceiling there, where the leak was pouring in most, right over top of where his pillow was, I drove a nail up there and hung this pee can on the nail, so [that] it's catching the water. [I] figure, "All right, that's all I'm going to do for him. He agreed to empty it; let him go empty it." Well, like I say, he didn't empty it and I'm off on a mission the next day. About nine-thirty in the morning, from what I hear from the other fellows around, this wind's blowing hard there and the tin cans are rattling up on the roof there. ... All of a sudden, this nail that I hammered in, the wood that I'd hammered it into split a little bit when I hammered it in, but it was too dark for me to see much of that, but that nail came out and down came that tin can, right alongside of his head, missed him by within three inches. So, he put it up to, "I put it up there. I knew it was going to fall down on him." ... He's charging me now with attempted murder. So, anyhow, I had a couple of court-martials pending when the war broke out, or when the war ended, and, oh, they hired me a lawyer and the lawyer told me, he said, "You don't have a leg to stand on," he says. I said, "What about complaining about what ... reasons I had for telling him to go to hell?" He said, "That doesn't count." He says, "They're not even going to let you testify that way. You told him to go to hell. That's all the charges are, and that's all they have to prove, and anything else you want to say, you're not going to be allowed to say;" at least that's what the lawyer told me. So, all right, ... I'm back here in the States now, ... while I wasn't out of the Army; the Army then was going to keep me in until they had this thing settled better. ... The other thing they wanted to do was, oh, somebody informed them that I had an engineering degree and they wanted to know ... why I wouldn't go to Russia and help build, rebuild, bridges. I said, ... "I'm not a bridge engineer." ... They said, "Yes, but we [will] give you," I forgot what it was, "a guarantee. You spend three ... years in there and you'll have a nest egg of twenty thousand dollars or so ... for your rest of your life," you know,

and I said, "Oh, that's a good deal." I said, "Give it to somebody else. [laughter] I don't want to have anything more to do with them." "Well, you can't leave this country. So, to watch that, you're going to be held and you're going to be transferred ... to the Reserves. You will be subject to call whenever they want to, but ... you can report on weekly meetings. Every Friday night or something, you have to show up at some place, and we've got a hundred thousand places where you can show up, any military base. As long as you show up there and sign in, we know that you haven't left the country," and, basically, that was all they wanted to do. So, they kept me on their list for twenty-seven years and, finally, they decided to give me a pension. So, I was pensioned off with seven hundred and something, like, a month, as if you could live on seven hundred dollars a month. ... Fortunately, I got in with the Reserve outfit there. I had a ... couple of sergeants that they assigned to us and we explained [to] them some of the problems I had getting back and forth to places and finding a place ... where they held Reserve meetings. ... I found a couple of them that were available, [in] different parts of the country where I was, and other places, ... I told them, I couldn't find where a Reserve [unit] met. Nobody seemed to know where the Reserve met and if there was any around here, you know. Places like Seattle, where I'm not familiar with, they had Reserve meetings there, but where were they? "Oh, in a town twenty miles away," and so, I put up with them for that, but it was about, oh, a year after I got home, and I'd been married and I finally get a letter in the mail, an invitation, from the Major, to attend a soiree. Well, he had an apartment, a two-story apartment, over on Fifth Avenue. So, okay, I said, "What's this all about? I wonder if he wants to apologize." I said, "I can't think of what else he wants to do." So, I figure, "Let me go and see what kind of a life this guy's leading," you know. He's got his big, swell, swank apartment, up on Fifth Avenue. He claimed it was worth twelve million dollars. He'd worked for Dunhill Tobacco Company. ... His big achievement for Dunhill Tobacco Company was, he just went around to all the department stores there and showed them their mannequins they had in the windows. ... He says, "You've got these guys, ... they look too dead. Give them a pipe and stick it in their mouth, you know, and they'll look more lively. ... We'll pay you to put a tobacco pouch there and see that [you receive], you know, a commission on what you sell." There it was. He was still raking in money from Dunhill Tobacco Company. So, I asked Peggy if she wanted to go to the soiree with me. She said, "What's a soiree?" ... or I guess I had to ask her what a soiree was. She knew, but I didn't. So, anyhow, ... I said, "Well, come on, we'll go up and see what happens. If he wants to apologize, you know, I'm not going to do anything about it." So, we went up there and he had all these fellows from Fifth Avenue and [everyone was] all dressed up in tuxedos and all. I show up in a business suit, and the wife was there. So, we show up at eight-thirty, I think he said. Eight-thirty, we show up and the bar is open, but neither one of us is going to drink that much, and, in fact, I don't think ... I even had one drink, and Peggy didn't drink. So, anyhow, we're waiting to see what happens. Finally, I'm approached. He's written a book, on his own, and he needs a hundred dollars from everybody there to publish his book. [laughter] Well, I told him to go to hell once; I was going to tell him the same thing again, but I held it back. ... We left early and I went down to, where did I go? 34th Street, with Peggy, and bought her a lobster dinner. ...

TK: What was the final status of these court-martial charges?

GS: Oh, well, this lawyer that I had, that they appointed for me, he had me convinced that I had nothing, no leg to stand on. ... He said, "It's just principle. The military will not stand for disobeying orders in wartime, and he made it plain that it was a direct order, even though ... he

wasn't right." I said, "I'm supposed to climb up on a roof that won't hold me and fall through and break my neck?"

TK: But, you weren't court-martialed?

GS: No. ... You know, when it got that far, the lawyer they gave me, he was recommending that I settle for ... not telling the stories about how bad he was and not allowing [them] to be published. So, the things that I told you today, I signed an affidavit, fifty, sixty years ago or so, that said I would never publish these and never [tell] these stories to anybody where it could do him harm. ... Oh, I forgot all the wording in it, but it was ... I'm not going to criticize the Air Force for their actions, and so, as long as I signed that, they were not going to charge me. ... All court-martials against me would be dismissed, ... and as long as I didn't leave the country, but I've gone to Canada, Mexico and South America a couple of times since then and nobody has bothered me. So, I think it's just pretty much forgotten. If it ever was any kind of a challenge, nothing's ever come of it. So, I figured, "Well, ... let him have his twelve million dollars. I wasn't going to sue him for anything." ... The Air Force, all right, I had other things against the Air Force that I didn't care for, but I was not going to advertise them, not going to tell them and have them published. So, that's about where I stand on that stuff. So, now, you've got it. I don't think you're going to put this out and do anything with it, even get it published, within the next five years, and the next five years, I don't know if I'm going to be around the next five years, either.

TK: Well, you'll have an opportunity to make your final decision when you see the transcript. You can excise portions of it or you can leave it as is and embargo it.

SI: You can either seal it for a few years or cut it out.

GS: Well, I don't think anybody's going to come to me and find me on it now.

TK: No.

SI: Nobody will do that.

GS: I'm sure now, you know, but back [in] 1960, attending Reserve meetings, and so forth, it was ... quite possible somebody wanted to bring it up, and so, that's the way it stands. In the meantime, like I say, I attended, oh, more than fifty percent of the Reserve meetings that I was supposed to attend, and I know that ... some people, they didn't attend the Reserve meetings and they were kicked out right away. ... Because I didn't agree to go to Russia and everything, and they were looking for me to go to Russia, ... I figured that they don't know who I am or what I was or anything about it. So, you've got more knowledge than anybody else, if you wanted to make anything of it. I don't think you can; you can blackmail me. [laughter] ...

SI: Can you just tell us briefly about what you did after the war?

GS: Oh, I didn't go to Russia. [laughter] ... Well, my father had a machine shop, like I said, and, when I came home from the war, he died soon after I got home. I got married and, right

after that, he died and, oh, his business that he had was doing all right, except for one thing. He had a lot of customers that owed him money and weren't able to pay and, on that basis, ... [if we] had to write off those that we couldn't get paid for, he didn't have much of an inheritance left. He had a machine shop, he had two people working for him and, oh, he asked me if I would come in and help him out a little bit, because he was getting tired of working. So, I was there. I think, ... two months after I went to work for him, he died. ... My mother was stuck with a lot of bills that were unpaid and ... bills that were uncollected. I think she had more bills that were uncollected than those that were unpaid. So, I went to work, trying to earn some money. ... Again, the customers would come to me, you know, and I'd ask them about paying the bill that they owed my father. They said, "Well, you get the machine running right and we'll pay the bill." "Well, what's the matter with the machine?" "It's not running right." So, I said, "Well, let me take a look at it and see what it needs." Well, what I found ... were things like, you had a machine and it had a bearing burned out in it. A ball-bearing would burn out. During the war, you couldn't buy ball-bearings that size, and so, [he asked], "How am I going to repair this if I can't get a new bearing for it?" So, all right, we'd take it apart and pull the ball-bearing out, fill the hole up with some ... lead and lubricate it, and he could get it running. You know, I'd get it running, oh, maybe three-quarters speed, tell him, "Don't run it too fast, and keep it well-oiled, and that's the best I can do for you." That's the best my father could do, too. So, the war was over. Now, I could buy ball-bearings and get the right size, punch the old one out and stick a new one in and collect on the bill. So, they said, "All right, you've got that one fixed. We've got another one that isn't working right. This wasn't your father's fault. He didn't fix this one, but I want you to take a look at it." I said, "All right." So, I found it was tough to get time to do all the work that everybody wanted fixed. So, I hired a couple of men, you know, and showed them how to work it. I built the business up, so that, oh, I think I had about, oh, I don't know what it really was, ... built it up into a couple-million-dollar business. That's not a year, a couple million dollars which was the total worth of the company he had. ... At one time, I had as many as seventy-two men working for me, which was getting kind of tough to keep up with it, and working on machinery, newspaper machinery, mainly, they're big. I don't know if you've ever seen them or [know] what they are. They're big machines.

SI: The big printers with the rollers.

GS: Big machines, with a lot of rollers and paper zipping through it. The paper goes through up to, I've seen them up to sixty miles an hour, webs running through, although the quality of the printing doesn't help any, at speeds like that. Ink doesn't stick to the paper, it gets thrown on and goes through the paper, and all kinds of problems they have. Forty thousand is a good speed for most of your newspapers to run at now, forty, maybe forty-eight thousand at the *New York Times*, or something like that, but, anyhow, I ran the company and built it up, like I say. So, I had as many as seventy-two men working for me, all around the country, or a couple of countries. I was out of the country, oh, a couple of trips, presses we put in France and over in England, down in Egypt. That was a weird job. We ... put the press in down there in Egypt, and I had a man over there and he said, "Well, it's all ready to go, but we haven't got any electricity yet. The electrician's way behind." "Oh, how long behind?" He says, "Oh, it's going to take him another two months to finish the electrical work on it." I said, "Well, you're not going to hang around there in Cairo." ... This was when, oh, King Farouk was running the thing. [Editor's Note: Farouk I held Egypt's throne until he was deposed in July 1952.] I said, "You're not going

to run around there. ... Come on home and tell them, when they get the electricity turned on, I'll send somebody over to get it started up for them." Well, about three months later, I finally got a call from them that they turned the press on to check it out, but it's going backwards. Here, it's going backwards. He says, "Well, it runs backwards." Well, I said, "What do you mean? ... I can't understand how it can run backwards. That's got to be electrical." "No, the electrician says that's right, but it still comes out backwards," and I'm arguing with him on the phone for about a half-hour. ... I said, "Well, wait a minute now, it doesn't take the ink off the paper?" "No, no, no, it puts the ink on the paper, but it's all backwards." So, I'm wondering about that one, how that can be. So, finally, I call my man in England back and tell him, "Look, get yourself [on] the next plane, run down there to Cairo, see if you can find out what's going on here." So, he was there about ten minutes and he called me back and said, "Yes," he says, "I've got it all solved." I said, "What do you mean?" ... He says, "It runs good." "Well, what was backwards on it?" He says, "Yes," he says, "In Egypt, when they print a newspaper or a book, the last page is the first page and the first page is the last page. You've got to read the book backwards. [laughter] You start in the back end, and then, you turn the pages until you get up to the front end. So, that's all the problem was." [Editor's Note: Arabic is written or printed right to left.] So, all he had to do was put the plates on. Where number one goes, now, you ... mark that number sixteen or number eighteen, whatever many pages you're printing; so, things like that. ... I finally got worked out that, oh, maybe about ten years after the war was over, I finally decided flying an airplane wasn't too bad, as long as nobody's shooting at you. So, I was running around the country, oh, I'd have four or five jobs running at once, and, finally, I gave up and bought an airplane, learned to fly it and used to fly from one job to the other. ... But, that got to be kind of a problem, too, because I still had too many jobs, not enough men. Always, in a job like this, ... you never can get enough men that know anything about it, and you can't teach them that fast.

...

EB: How many children did you have?

GS: Three.

EB: What is your wife's name?

GS: ... Oh, Peggy, Margaret. You may notice, in that form that I sent you, or you sent to me, that you asked for when and where my parents were married and I couldn't answer it. I called the relatives, couldn't find anything about it. As far as I know, they never were married then; you know what that makes me? [laughter]

TK: Probably never were, Skid.

SI: Is there anything else you would like to put on the tape?

GS: No. [If] you've got questions, ask me, I'll try to answer them, but that's the story there. We won the war. I don't think we're going to win this war we're in now, [the war in Iraq]. They're not doing it right, but I tried to tell them how to win the war the last time and we didn't do too much there, either.

EB: Is there one thing that you could point to as a way the war changed your life?

GS: ... Yes, like we were discussing, civilization and technology is growing pretty fast and they're developing and changing, but the people that are in the world aren't changing that much. They're as dumb as they were fifty years ago or a hundred years ago. We have a lot of technology that I don't think is really going to save our civilization.

SI: Thank you very much for the interview. This concludes our interview with George Bernard Skidmore on April 27, 2007. Thank you very much.

EB: Thank you.

GS: You're welcome.

SI: Tom, thank you for bringing him up.

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Reviewed by Christopher J. Bartolotta 3/5/08

Reviewed by David Fulvio 3/5/08

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 1/28/09

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 2/3/09

Reviewed by George Skidmore 3/09