

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
GEORGE DURNFORD, JR.
B-17 Navigator, Army Air Forces, World War II.

2000

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Durnford, George, Jr., (1923-). Oral History Interview, 2000.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 40 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 40 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 40 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Military Papers: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

George Durnford, Jr., a Richland Center, Wisconsin native, discusses his World War II service as a B-17 navigator with the 725th Bomb Squadron. Durnford talks about enlisting in the Army Air Corps, basic training at Sheppard Field (Texas), and flight training in Texas. He tells of washing out during advanced flight training and being reassigned to navigation training at Monroe (Louisiana). Durnford reflects on putting extra effort into navigational training because he was afraid of washing out again. Assigned to a B-17 in the 775th Squadron, 463rd Bomb Group, he speaks of being shipped to Foggia (Italy). Durnford touches on his first mission to Linz (Austria) and describes missions in general: mission length, use of turret guns, and anti-aircraft fire. He details his participation in the Berlin Air Raid, when his plane was heavily damaged. Wounded in the arm on the raid, he details medical treatment on the plane, emergency landing in Yugoslavia, and his long healing process at various hospitals in Italy and the United States. He expresses gratitude for the doctor who saved his arm. Durnford relates only keeping in touch with the crew's pilot over the years, using the GI Bill to attend Beloit College, working several years in finance before returning to school for his teaching degree, and receiving retirement pay from the Air Force. Durnford reflects on his silver star citation giving him more credit than he feels he deserves for navigating to Yugoslavia while wounded.

Biographical Sketch:

Durnford (b.1923) served in the European Theater of World War II with the 725th Bomb Squad, 463rd Bomb Group, 5th Wing, 15th Air Force. He was wounded during the Berlin Air Raid and, in 1946, was discharged from service at the rank of 1st lieutenant. Durnford taught economics at Monona Grove High School and eventually settled in Monroe (Wisconsin).

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2000

Transcribed by John P. Danish, 2009

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Interview Transcript:

George: Oh, didn't know I was gonna have this.

James: Oh, yeah. We'll go big time, George.

George: [Laughs]. It looks like death warmed over this morning, I imagine. I don't—oh my.

James: Everybody looks fine.

George: Yeah, well.

James: There, you look pretty.

George: It's—

James: Okay, talking to George Durnford. It's 10 July, year 2000, and there you go! I'll patch you up to the house current here. That works better.

George: See.

James: Okay, just let that set there. George Durnford, 10 July, year 2000. Where were you born, George?

George: Richland Center, [Wisconsin].

James: In 1923.

George: 1923.

James: Same as me.

George: Oh.

James: What month?

George: December.

James: December.

George: Yeah, December 1st.

James: I got you beat by a couple of months.

George: Ah ha.

James: And when did you enter Military Service?

George: Um, let's see. In, oh, let's say—I've got the date on the sheet there. I'm not—19—late 1942.

James: In '42, though.

George: Yeah.

James: Okay. Were you drafted or did you volunteer?

George: No, I volunteered. I saw a sign in front of the Post Office that said, "You too can be an aviation cadet," so I—[laughs].

James: That's for me, huh?

George: So, I went down to Truax Field to take the exams.

James: Ah ha, and then what happened?

George: Well, luckily, I passed everything, and I didn't realize the significance of being colorblind, but so many of them were lost because of that. But then I went to Sheppard Field, well, after waiting for a while before I went in. I, when I first went in, I went to Sheppard Field for Basic Training, I guess.

James: Boot Camp?

George: Pardon me?

James: For Boot Camp?

George: Well, kind of a Boot Camp, I guess, yeah.

James: But run by the Navy?

George: Um, no, it was—I don't think so.

James: Oh.

George: I think it was Army.

James: Oh, you said you were joining the Navy Air.

George: No, no, no, no, no, the Army Air Corps.

James: Army Air Corps.

George: It wasn't the Air Force then. It was just the Army Air Corps then.

James: Okay [laughs].

George: And no, Sheppard Field for Basic and then, um, then, after that, I went to a College Training Detachment for some background—some academic background.

James: Where was that?

George: That was in Arkadelphia, [Arkansas]. Henderson State Teacher's College.

James: Oh boy, that's a small place.

George: Yes. It was really very nice there though.

James: Ah, huh.

George: And then I went to—then I went to—

James: That was about a three month deal?

George: I'm not sure how long it was. I don't remember exactly. And then I went to San Antonio, [Texas], and—

James: That's where you got your first chance to fly?

George: Yeah. Yeah, I, in fact, I went into flight training at first and I went through—I went through pre-flight, of course, and then primary training, basic training, and then I was in advanced training in fighters, ah, single engine, advanced training at Foster Field in Victoria, [Texas].

James: You were flying AT-10s then?

George: AT-6s.

James: AT-6s, I mean.

George: Yeah, yeah. And then, to make a long story short, I was—I was going out to—on the flight line for a night cross country and had

an accident and I was—the terminology used then was “washed out,” which was very, very rare in advanced and so I couldn’t understand it, and my instructors really couldn’t understand it too well. But back to a short time ago, one of the fellas that was in advanced training with me called me on the telephone from [Ohio] and said, “Is this George ‘Dutch’ Durnford, who was in advanced fighter training at Foster Field in Victoria [Texas]?” I says, “Yeah.” And he said, well, he said, “This is—.” Then he told me what his name was and I wouldn’t want to repeat it. But he said, “I just wanted you to know, I think you got nicked.” You know, he used different words than that, but then he told me. He said that—he said that none of those guys that were in that class finished out in fighters. They all went into bombers because they didn’t need fighters. Fighters, the Luftwaffe was pretty well knocked out by then, so I think they were—I always felt as if they were looking for reasons to get rid of people. Of course, maybe I wasn’t all that good anyway, but—

James: So what did they do with you?

George: Well, I went—then they sent me—they checked to see if I’d qualified for navigation school, and I had qualified for navigation school. So they sent me back to navi, so—sorry about that. I say back to Monroe, [Louisiana], for navigation school, yeah, and—

James: How long did that course—?

George: I’m not sure how long that was. And then late in November, or late in ’44, I went overseas, and—

James: Wait a minute. You haven’t got an airplane yet.

George: Huh?

James: You haven’t got an airplane yet.

George: Oh, that’s true. That’s true.

James: How’d you join your—you had to join an airplane—

George: Yeah, I think the navigator was the last guy to join the bomber crew. And I joined them down in [Louisiana].

James: Oh, they—you got your squadron in [Louisiana]?

George: Yeah.

James: What squadron was that?

George: 775th Squadron, 463rd Bomb Group.

James: 775 Squadron.

George: Yeah, I think it's on there. So, yeah, here it is.

James: There it is. Oh, that's it. 15th, yeah.

George: Yeah, 15th Air Force, and at that time, of course, we didn't—we weren't assigned to the 15th Air Force then. We weren't really assigned to even a squadron then.

James: Right.

George: Actually, but we flew out over the Gulf of Mexico and—

James: Oh.

George: Get around.

James: 24?

George: B-17.

James: 17, okay.

George: Yeah, and then we went overseas and—

James: Do you recall what month that was?

George: I'm not sure of that even.

James: What year it was?

George: '40, ah, '44.

James: '44.

George: Late '44.

James: Okay.

- George: Yeah, and we didn't know—we didn't know at the time whether we were going to the 8th Air Force in England or the 15th Air Force in Italy.
- James: Italy.
- George: In Italy, which were the two major bombing Air Forces in the European war. In fact, I think, as I recall, I spent some time making preparations for flying over because sometimes you flew planes over. And then sometimes you went over on Liberty Ships. Well, as it turned out, we went over in Liberty Ship rather than flying over, so—and went through the Strait of Gibraltar and so forth, ended out in the heel of the boot of Italy at Foggia, [Italy]
- James: And how was that? A big base?
- George: Yeah, it was a big base. It was where our particular squadron was based, and I think—I think a number of others were there, too. I don't know whether the whole group was there or not. I'm not sure. I don't remember. I wasn't—I wasn't as observant and as mindful of what was going on around me as I guess as I was concerned about what was ahead [laughs].
- James: Tell me about your navigation. Did that come easy for you?
- George: Well, the math part of navigation came easier than I thought it would. I guess Miss Merly in high school did a better job, even, despite me. I think I guess she did a better job than I gave her credit for. But 'cause I really gave her a hard time in algebra, geometry, and so forth, but it was—I worked very hard, because I wanted to make sure that there wasn't going to be some reason that they could get rid of me in navigation school like they did in pilot training. In fact, they used to call me the "worry-wart." They said, "Dutch, why are you worried about it? My land, you're so—" I finished high in my class, so, but I had to work for it because I was no—I was far from being any genius.
- James: Did they give you any training in your—the flying of that B-17?
- George: No, no, no. In fact, I don't even think the crew even knew that I'd gone through pilot training.
- James: Okay, and how did you enjoy flying the B-17?
- George: Oh, it's a wonderful aircraft. It's aerodynamically, I guess, they always figured it was one of the best.

- James: Uh-huh.
- George: Very nice.
- James: Yeah.
- George: Never, never any question about the aircraft, and the ground crews were very, very good in keeping them up.
- James: How many—how long did you practice with your crew and your airplanes before you were sent to combat?
- George: I'm not sure. That was in the United States and I'm not—I don't even know how long—I don't remember how long it was. I guess I hadn't thought about it for many, many years and I just—I don't remember.
- James: So, how many missions did you have?
- George: Well, I'm not sure of that. I'm not—and I was looking this morning, when I was filling out that form. I was looking to find out. In fact, people ask me where some of the missions were and I can't—if they'd say, "Were you at such and such," I would remember whether I was there or not, but I don't—can't just—well, I know my first mission was with another crew because they'd lost their—they'd lost their navigator, and that was to Linz, Austria, which was Hitler's hometown, and there was a lot of anti-aircraft there.
- James: Uh-huh. Was it a big, big group you were in? On that day?
- George: I'm not—I'm not, well, flying to Linz? It was typical, I think, typical Air Force bombing raid. I don't know how many groups were involved, but—
- James: Generally, how many on a mission? How many B-17s would be flying on that kind of day?
- George: Well, you know, I just—I never was—I don't know. I look around. There was a lot of them. Especially on my last mission, there was an awful lot of them.
- James: Your squadron, the 775th, how many planes are in that?

- George: Well, we always had—I think each squadron had six on a mission, and then there was several squadrons and maybe several groups, depending upon the size of the mission, yeah.
- James: Yeah. So, those missions, how long did they generally last?
- George: Well, of course it would depend on how far you were going, but I guess I didn't—I guess I wasn't necessarily mindful of how long they did take, but we left fairly early in the morning. We had briefings the night before and went to bed, then got up early, fairly early, in the morning to take off, and then usually we got back in the—I think we usually got back in the early afternoon.
- James: Still daylight?
- George: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Yeah, yeah.
- James: Did you eat on the plane?
- George: No. All they had was coffee and I don't drink coffee, never did. Still don't.
- James: You didn't take your K-Rations or anything along.
- George: No, not that I know. I never did, anyway. I don't think so. Not too many of them, anyway.
- James: Did you—were you also checked out on the guns?
- George: Ah, yeah. The navigator was responsible for two .50-caliber machineguns which were up in the nose of the plane.
- James: Oh, not next to the bombardier.
- George: Well, the bombardier. The bombardier had two turret guns right in the nose.
- James: I see.
- George: And there was a turret gun. And on the—on the cheek of each side of the front end of the plane there were—there was a gun on each side and that was the responsibility of the navigator.
- James: Ah ha. I see.
- George: Yeah.

James: Alright, and generally—

George: I don't—I never hit anything but—

James: You didn't?

George: You—I—I guess—I guess I'm glad I didn't because, you know, as a general principle. But at the time we were all—

James: Did you encounter a lot of flack most of your missions?

George: Yes, on most of the missions. Yes, very little fighter interception because the Luftwaffe was pretty well knocked out by that time.

James: Yeah, they and your plane never saw permanent damage?

George: Oh, yes. In fact, on my—on my last mission, why, we were hit pretty bad! We'd—

James: Had trouble landing it?

George: Well, I was told that we had over two hundred holes in it and we had six of us were wounded. Two of them died.

James: You were wounded?

George: I was wounded then, yes, and—

James: From—from rifle fire? From anti-aircraft—

George: Anti-aircraft, yeah, shells. I—

James: How—tell me how that went.

George: Well, I got—I got—when we were—it was the longest mission in the European war. It was from southern Italy to Berlin and so they had—they had a emergency field on the coast of Yugoslavia for planes that either that they didn't know for sure about gas and damage to planes and engine problems, all those things. So, they—they had an emergency field in, ah, on the coast of Yugoslavia in the Partisan area, of course. But on the mission when we were approaching Berlin, well, somebody hollered “flack” and so I reached for a flack suit, which you don't wear ordinarily, because it weighs quite a bit, you know. It's kind of pleated. It's kind of

like a catcher's type of thing, you know. Protects your, um, body parts.

James: Uh huh.

George: Because they—if you ever get hit there, why, it's real bad. Not much they can do about it because they [unintelligible] [laughs].

James: Oh boy.

George: Not much you can do to stop the bleeding. But I—but when I was picking up [my flack suit], I got hit by a little piece of flack here, so I dropped [my flack suit] and—and [the flack] burned in my shoulder, so I put this arm up like this, as it burned in my shoulder, and another shell took out what you don't see there.

James: Oh, I see.

George: Yeah.

James: Took out the rest of your [unintelligible].

George: Took out the elbow.

James: Elbow and the—

George: And the tricep muscles and about six-inches of the humerus muscles.

James: Boy, your arm was just dangling there.

George: Yeah. Yeah, it was.

James: It was just dangling.

George: Yeah. I thought at first that it was shot off because we—having those—we were having to wear those heavy clothing—heavy clothing and all I could see was the jagged edges, the blood and that sort of thing. And so then I could feel my fingers, so I looked back there and I pulled the darn thing out and, sure enough, [my arm] was—it was just dangling but it was still on there. So I put [my arm] up on my desk or my—yeah, and that's when I—and I kind of moved around it as I needed to but—

James: Lucky you didn't bleed to death.

- George: Well, they put tourniquets on, of course. You don't—you never do use tourniquets anymore but—and that was at the time that penicillin and—and sulfa drugs were—were first invented.
- James: Yeah, but they don't stop bleeding.
- George: No, they don't stop bleeding, but they did pour a lot of sulfa powder on there, you know, and that sort of thing. And then they put tourniquets on, and every twenty-minutes, why, they'd release them and so forth and took pretty good care of me and then—and then—
- James: You stayed conscious George.
- George: Well, I'm pretty much—I guess I—I'd—on and off, I would just kind of doze off a little bit, I guess.
- James: This was on—as you were leaving Berlin, when you got hit.
- George: Well, we had—anytime you're hit you got to leave formation because you can't—if you can't keep up with the formation.
- James: Well, the plane was—was slowed down that much.
- George: Oh, sure. Oh, sure.
- James: Took out an engine or something.
- George: Yeah, we lost our—our left inboard engine.
- James: So that you immediately dropped out and started heading back.
- George: Yeah, to—to Yugoslavia
- James: And you got as far as Yugoslavia.
- George: Yugoslavia, yeah, and we—the pilot deserves an awful lot of credit. The guy that was my pilot, he was on that plane with—but at the time he was a 2nd Lieutenant and the other guy was a 1st Lieutenant. So my—my pilot flew as a co-pilot, although he was the guy that really—in my judgment, he was the guy that—
- James: Flew the airplane.
- George: Oh my. He was wonderful.

James: It was hard to manage—

George: Wonderful, wonderful pilot.

James: The balance. The balance and all this as—yeah.

George: Wonderful pilot, yeah. Donny. And then they met us there for emergency aid. And then, that night, they first—

James: Yugoslavia. What—what medical facilities did they have?

George: They just—they had a doctor and a nurse, as I recall. In this—what—in terms of what I was told, they had—had a little bit of a—just a temporary set up there.

James: America.

George: Yeah, yeah, American doctor and a nurse, and they gave us emergency help and then they—then that night they flew us back to—after there would be no worry about fighters in the area and so forth, they flew us back to Italy.

James: And then what'd they have to do?

George: Well, the first—as I recall, in terms of—because I was—I was going, you know. This—

James: Right.

George: This kind of [unintelligible]. As a doctor, you understand what—

James: They put you in the hospital that way.

George: Yeah, I went to—in Bari, Italy.

James: Bari.

George: In Bari, yeah, on the heel of the boot there. And the first—the first orthopedic fellows that I ran into, I could hear them talking and they said, “Well, there’s not much, you know, there.”

James: Take it off.

George: Yeah, yeah, the two young ones and then—and I kind of pleaded with them. I’m sure I did because I said, “Hey, I got my feeling in my fingers,” and so forth, and they checked and so forth and they

could hardly believe it. But then they—they called a Dr. Meyer Goldner in and—who I always owe—owe so much for the rest of my life. He—he came in to the hospital and he worked on me for over six hours. And when I woke up, why, my arm was hanging up there like a piece of meat. But it was hanging up there anyway.

James: In a cast.

George: Yeah, and then my—well, actually, I don't—I'm not sure if it was in a cast. I'm—I think there was a secondary closure on it. I don't know the terminology you use, but it—

James: Ah, if it was a secondary closure then it wasn't in a cast, then.

George: It was a mess, yeah, you know, but it was just—well, it was hanging up there and it was—but—and so then I—I was—I was—I stayed there at Bari for a little while. And I don't know if you wanted my—

James: No, George. Just keep on going.

George: Well, I'm not sure how long I stayed any particular place, but then I went to the 300th General Hospital in Naples. That's where I was when they got the word that President Roosevelt had died. And that was a sad situation and a moment, because, at that particular time anyway, I think we were all a little bit dubious about Truman coming in as president. If you recall, that may have—that may well have been the case for you as well, but as it turned out he—he was a pretty good president but—

James: Very good.

George: We were very dubious about him at the time but—and then I—I—and then I spent a little bit of—a little bit of time (and I don't even know how long. I don't think over a day or two) at Casablanca. And then I came back to the States.

James: They had to re-operate your arm, I'm sure.

George: Well, they—they—they had several, yeah, several—several things and then—and then long, long, long period of—period of—of—of—

James: Physical therapy.

George: Physical therapy and—

James: Sure.

George: Um, I remember so well—boy, when they were doing this kind of stuff, you know, and, oh, that hurt so much. But I'm sure glad I did it because—

James: Sure.

George: Because I can—I can—

James: Yeah, you got good function.

George: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

James: Terrific.

George: Yeah, in—yeah, and in fact—in fact, my doctors very often don't call in orthopedic fellows and [laughs] sometimes—sometimes—some days, they'll get a hold of this finger and say, "Well, can you feel that?" And I says, "Yeah, I can feel that and this." And, "Can you feel that?" and said, "Yeah," and I grab their hand, squeeze it, and they'd see. As I understand it, the muscles and everything for this hand are right on—tied on the end of this—this bone here.

James: Right.

George: How that man did all that! I mean—

James: A very good job.

George: Oh, yeah, so—but you're right. I did spend time in several different hospitals over a period of time.

James: Did they ship you back to the States pretty quickly?

George: Well, I don't know exactly how long it was, but yeah, fairly quickly. Two or three months.

James: And where did you go there?

George: Well, I was in—I was in Miami Beach, [Florida], at first and then I went to Clinton, [Iowa], and then I went to southern [California]. I'm not sure.

James: All these different hospitals.

- George: And then, yeah, and then up to Fort George Wright in [Washington]. That's where I was. That's where I was.
- James: Washington, the state of Washington.
- George: The state of Washington, yeah. That's where I was retired, yeah.
- James: When was the last—where was the last hospital you were at?
- George: That was it. That was it.
- James: Oh, that was it.
- George: That was it, yeah.
- James: That's where the last bit of surgery was done.
- George: I didn't have any surgery done then at that hospital.
- James: It was all done before.
- George: Yeah. In fact, one of the orthopedic guys took the—the flesh out of my right leg to try to build a—didn't work, but—and I've had problems with that leg ever since because it never—never did—never has been—in fact, a short time ago, I—I slipped on some land that we have. It was raining. It's been raining a lot this year. And I slipped on some—on some wet leaves and I pulled the—the quads there.
- James: Oh.
- George: And I had—I'm just getting over that kind of—because of that—but anyway, my doctor said that if—if it had been the other leg, it probably wouldn't have happened. But my right leg is still pretty weak because I've lost that—yeah.
- James: Okay, and have you kept track of the other boys?
- George: Not really. The pilot, yes. He and I have been friends over—over the years.
- James: What is he like?
- George: Well, he lives in Milwaukee, [Wisconsin], and I taught economics at Monona Grove High School and he just happened to be the

executive director of the Wisconsin State Council for Economic Education.

James: Uh huh.

George: And so we were—we were in touch pretty much. But not with the other—not with the other guys, really.

James: Did your—how many missions did you complete?

George: Well, I'm not—I'm not—there seems to be some dispute about that. I'm not just sure.

James: Roughly.

George: Well, I've—I—I think, eight or ten. I'm not sure. It wasn't really all that many, but on my—on my sheet that they give you that indicates all that sort of—it's—it's kind of smudged and I'm not sure. I'm not sure. Well, but if somebody had asked me where I flew to I wouldn't know. I don't remember. But if they ask if I went to Berlin, I'd remember that one and I remember Linz, [Austria], because that was my first one.

James: Didn't make the Ploesti Raid?

George: Oh, that was long before me. Those were, yeah, those were tough raids. And then they had a lot of fighter—fighter problems there.

James: Oh, sure.

George: Yeah.

James: Did you, did you know about the War Birds Group in Janesville, [Wisconsin], of old pilots and—

George: Oh, I saw that on TV last night. Was that last night? Yeah, I had never heard about that before.

James: You didn't know about that?

George: No, I didn't.

James: Okay, and—

George: I know they included navigators, but—

- James: Oh, I imagine.
- George: I don't know.
- James: When you got—got home, did you use your GI Bill?
- George: Yes, yeah, yes, and it was very nice.
- James: Where did you go?
- George: I went to Beloit College.
- James: Alright. You got a BA degree there?
- George: Yes, yeah.
- James: Was it in economics?
- George: Political science, economics, yeah.
- James: And then you went into teaching right off the bat.
- George: No, no, I actually—it paid my matriculation fee to law school in Marquette, but for some reason or another they didn't start a new class. I finished the middle of the year at Beloit College because I went summers and so I—and so as a consequence, I—I was offered an opportunity to go into business for—for—with the financing and so forth and so on. So I did that and I—I was in there for nine years.
- James: Okay.
- George: And eventually the—it was tough on the family because it was long hours and so—and so on. We lived up over the store and so forth and so on. But, anyway, pecuniary-wise it was fine, but—but a really good friend of mine was head of the Education Department at Beloit College and he said, "Dutch, I think you'd be a good teacher." So I went back to Beloit College for a fifth year and got a teaching degree and then I went into—went—taught, and I—I have never been sorry for it. I really, really enjoyed it.
- James: In the long term, teaching for—
- George: Yeah, yeah. And I know after the—after the OJ Simpson thing and the—the Clinton thing this past several months and years, I—my

wife said, “Dutch, I’m glad you never became a lawyer” [laughs].
But at any rate.

James: Did you join any veterans’ groups?

George: No, I haven’t. I don’t belong to the DAV or the VFW or the American Legion. I don’t belong to any of them.

James: How much disability did they award you?

George: Well, the—the V—VA, 60% and—

James: Social security?

George: Well, no. Well, no, I don’t have social security disability. No, no, but I was retired from the Air Force so I receive retirement pay.

James: Oh, you got a pension from the Air Force.

George: Yeah, retirement pay, which is a little bit more than the VA compensation. Although, I—I was advised at the time to take both because what—what the VA whatever—extra the retirement pay would be over the VA pay, and so I’d get the VA and then the retirement pay that would be in addition to that—whatever’s—whatever differential there is, I would get, you know.

James: Yeah.

George: And that’s the way I’ve done it, because they said I should do that. Because there would be a lot of kinds of things associated with my disability, and so on, that I might need a VA Hospital for.

James: Oh yeah.

George: So I kept both.

James: That sounds like a good idea.

George: Yeah, yeah. Although I’ve never—I’ve never been to a VA Hospital for over fifty years. Well, I—I went in the door, but—

James: Not as a patient.

George: No, nuh-uh.

James: Yeah, you don’t need any rehab or anything?

George: No. In fact, I never have any pain or anything with this arm. It's just—it's just—I just can't believe it.

James: It's amazing.

George: Yeah, and sometimes, you know, as a teacher, sometimes I'd get—I'd start—get it up there like this and it would drop off, you know, a kind of brace, and it would drop off. But it—my grandchildren, of course, they get a kick out of this.

James: Oh, sure, and all of that stuff.

George: You know, and all this kind of stuff. But, it's—it's with clothes I have to get—

James: Sure.

George: [Unintelligible] cut off but no problem. I consider it as just an inconvenience.

James: Yeah, it looks like you've adjusted to it marvelously.

George: I'm—I'm really very grateful. I'm very grateful to the doctors.

James: Survive.

George: Dr. Goldner and I—I sent him a—I sent him a long telegram. He lives in Minneapolis, and, when he came back, I sent him a long telegram on the 25th anniversary of it. And he wrote back to me and he said he remembered and would like to see me. And I never did get up there before he died, but I still plan on going up there to see his children or grandchildren to let them know what a wonderful—

James: Oh.

George: Wonderful man he was. And what a wonderful job he did for me because he just—I just had to have had gotten the very best.

James: Well, it saved your arm and that's a blessing.

George: Yeah, yeah.

James: For sure.

George: Yeah, yeah.

James: Yeah, that's a great job because I'm sure that it was touch and go there. I'm sure a lot of the guys would have wanted to lop that thing off.

George: Yeah, these—the—their first ones did and I'm sure glad they got a hold of—

James: Well, they're in a hurry and they're younger.

George: Yeah.

James: Less experienced and they—

George: Yeah.

James: And it looked like an easy solution.

George: Yeah.

James: To the problem.

George: Yeah, and—and for a lot of—I suppose, for many, it probably would have happened that way, but thank goodness for those guys, too, that they got a hold of Dr. Goldner.

James: That's true. That's very true. Well, I—what medals did you win, George? Other than the Purple Heart.

George: Well, I don't know whether I won them or not, but in fact I'm very dubious about that. I don't—I got the Silver Star for that mission, but I—I—

James: Oh, really?

George: I am very dubious about whether I deserved it or not because—

James: They—they—do you have the citation?

George: Yeah, I do. I don't—

James: Where is it, at home?

George: I don't have it with me, no.

James: Oh. **[End of Side 1, Tape 1]**

George: Yeah.

James: Yeah.

George: Yeah.

James: The citation is for what specifically? Did they say?

George: Well, they—they—oh jeppers, they gave me a lot more credit than I deserved. I don't know. They lauded me for [unintelligible], you know, navigating back.

James: Navigating under the circumstances?

George: I wasn't—I should—I guess the best way you should—I should—I should have brought one—brought it with me. I didn't know that you'd need it. I could send it to you if you want me to, or something.

James: You mean a copy of the citation? Yeah, yeah. Well, those are the kinds of things that are unusual. They seem to like to see them.

George: Oh, it was very—when I saw it, I couldn't believe it, you know. I mean it's—they really—they really used the superlatives in those.

James: Well, that's good. You deserved them.

George: Well, I have always been—I know it.

James: You're just too modest?

George: Well, they never—you know, I always felt good about it in the sense that they arrived at that, I suppose, by interrogating the crew, because they're the only ones that know about it, what happened.

James: Right.

George: At the same time, I know I wouldn't—I never—I was never interrogated, so I—I would like to have been able to put in my two cents worth, too, you know, in terms of some of the other guys. But—but it's—it—it was a very wonderful—it was a wonderful surprise and very real surprise, I guess. I—I always did figure I did—did deserve the Purple Heart though [laughs].

James: Sure [laughs].

George: [Laughs] and the Air Medal and the Distinguished Unit Citation are almost kind of automatics, you know.

James: Those are pretty much out there.

George: Yeah, yeah, and then, of course, then the Combat Ribbons from the various—

James: Sure, sure.

George: From the various, you know, this.

James: This is my card, if you could make a copy of that citation and just mail it to me.

George: Okay.

James: I'd really appreciate that.

George: Yeah.

James: I'll keep it with your records, see.

George: Oh, okay.

James: Because then it has meaning. It's to go with this video tape and the audio tape.

George: Yeah, yeah.

James: It sort of wraps the whole thing up.

George: Yeah.

James: It would really be—would you do that for me?

George: Yeah, sure, I'd be happy to do that.

James: Oh, that would be awfully nice.

George: Yeah, yeah, be happy to do that.

James: Appreciate it. Yeah, just put it in an envelope and send it in.

George: Yeah, yeah, should do that.

James: Yeah, I'd appreciate that.

George: Yeah. Yeah, were you a—you're a physician. Were you a [unintelligible] physician? You were a what?

James: Urologist.

George: Oh, urologist. Oh my.

James: People plumber.

George: When people—people get my age they—

James: Right.

George: They have to be concerned about that.

James: Yes.

George: Yup, yeah, I—we're still—we're off the tape now, aren't we?

James: Yeah. We are now.

George: Yeah.

James: You don't have any more stories--stories to tell me?

George: No.

James: Okay.

[End of Interview]