

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
MATT FREDRICH
U. S. Air Force, World War II
2000

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Fredrich, Matthew A., (1924-), Oral History Interview, 2000.

User copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 135 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 135 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video: 1 videocassette (ca. 135 min.), 1/2 inch.

ABSTRACT

The Milwaukee, Wis. native, discusses his World War II service as a fighter pilot in central Europe with the 404th Fighter Group, 507th Squadron, his account includes many anecdotes about both basic training and flight missions. He talks about Infantry training at Fort Sheridan (Illinois), course work at Gettysburg College (Pennsylvania), and becoming a fighter pilot even though he was too tall. Fredrich compares the technology between several airplanes including the Vultee Vibrator, the P-40, and the P-47; he also compares the different types of armament he fired while in the service. He describes his first mission during the Battle of the Bulge, seeing his friend's airplane hit by German fire, and having his own plane hit by flak. Fredrich comments on the operation of a flight crew, perception of age during service, and recreation activities on base. He touches upon his feelings when he sees fighter planes in movies and his use of the GI Bill. Upon discharge, Fredrich joined the Reserves and talks about his participation in summer training. He also mentions joining the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion and attending veteran reunions.

Biographical Sketch

Fredrich (b. September 21, 1924) served in the Air Force with the 404th Fighter Group, 507th Squadron during World War II. He flew fifty missions before being discharged and joining the Reserves.

Interviewed by James F. McIntosh, M. D., 2000

Transcribed by Wisconsin Veterans Museum Volunteer John K. Driscoll, 2002

Transcript edited by Abigail Miller, 2003.

Interview Transcript

McIntosh: Okay. We're off and running. We're talking to Matt Fredrich and it is the 11th of May, the year 2000. When were you born, Matt?

Fredrich: September 21, 1924.

McIntosh: I am 15 September, '23. Where did you grow up? Where were you born?

Fredrich: I was born in Milwaukee and grew up in Milwaukee.

McIntosh: And when did you enter military service?

Fredrich: Let's see. November of '42.

McIntosh: Go through that, now. Where did they send you first and so on.

Fredrich: Well, first I thought I was in the infantry. They sent me to Fort Sheridan.

McIntosh: Oh, were you drafted?

Fredrich: No, I enlisted.

McIntosh: I was going to say.

Fredrich: I spent a cold day down there in a storage room, or something, running around naked. And then they sent me to Fort Sheridan. And I was there for about a month and a half doing basic drill for infantry. And then the papers came through and they sent me to Miami Beach, Florida, for basic training in the Air Force. I ended up down there.

McIntosh: What did you fly down there?

Fredrich: I didn't fly anything down there. That was just the basic training where we ran instead of marched. And then we were in Colonel Kimberly's Concentration Camp, as it was called by Walter Winchell years ago because he skimped everything. Damn near starved us to death. Maybe I shouldn't say that word, but damn near starved us to death. Because I went down there and I think I lost about thirty pounds while we were down there. Because, well, when we went out in the morning, you know how Miami Beach can be. It was awfully cold. Of course, having been previously in Fort Sheridan, I had two sets of winter underwear. Well, I put a set of winter underwear on. Well, by the time we got on the drill field, by noon, it was 103, you know. And they allowed us, for about forty-five

minutes, we were in the ninth floor of the hotel. We had to run back to the hotel, run upstairs, and all we could do was wash our face. I managed to take off the inside shirt and go to what we called chow. And then from there, well, we survived. And then from there I went to Gettysburg College, in Pennsylvania. Beautiful country. And we were treated wonderful by the Pennsylvania Dutch there. They had the gals serving us breakfast and lunch and dinner, and I put on the thirty pounds I lost because we had a lady in the snack bar, of course. It was across the street from the campus, actually, where we were stationed. We were stationed in an old dorm, incidentally, which was used for Civil War purposes. And we had the lady across the street in the snack bar, I don't know what time it was. Maybe ten o'clock. We had ten minutes break in class times. Well, we'd quick run across there and she'd have a big piece of chocolate cake and a glass of milk for the two of us. Anyway, because we went to class at five thirty in the morning, right after breakfast. And then we were in class until, well, with various breaks, until about five thirty in the evening. And that went for six months. I got almost three years of college credit for that. Although I was disappointed when I asked for my resume, when I went into teaching. I was one of the top, I was the top one in the class and when I got the grades they were 73's, 78's, 81's. Holy smoke, what did the rest of these guys get? But, anyway, that was an experience. Delightful. And then we were sent to Nashville, Tennessee, which was a classification center, where they determined whether you were going to be a pilot, or a bombardier, or a navigator.

McIntosh: Do you recall what the criteria was that made them choose for you?

Fredrich: Well, we had to go through various tests. Like putting square pegs in round holes while they were standing around in back hassling you and everything else. And I qualified for all three. I don't know how. But I qualified for all three. But I wanted to be a fighter pilot in the worst way. Because we had flown in college, we had flown Piper Cubs for like ten hours or so. It was included in our training.

McIntosh: At Gettysburg?

Fredrich: At Gettysburg. Yea. Then, went there and determined that I could take my choice. Well, you had to be under five-ten to be a fighter pilot. And I was about five-eleven-and-a-half, maybe almost six feet. And when I got on the scale, I can still remember this sergeant. I kind of ducked down. And he said, "Five-ten," and he winked at me. I'll never forget that.

McIntosh: Boy, that was a gift.

Fredrich: It was. Because if I'd have gone in anywhere, I'd have been disappointed. I probably would, I don't know if I would have lasted. Anyway, then we went to

Camden, South Carolina, for primary training. And that was in the wintertime in 1943. And it snowed, believe it or not. We had one fellow in the barracks who had never seen snow. And he was out there in his shorts and t-shirt rolling around. We had to drag him back in.

McIntosh: He was so excited.

Fredrich: So excited. But, then those were open cockpit Stearmans. Oh, they were a joy. Yea, they were a delight to fly. I really enjoyed it.

McIntosh: All the Air Force guys I've interviewed say they loved that Stearman.

Fredrich: The Stearman was great.

McIntosh: It was a very forgiving airplane.

Fredrich: Right. And I learned how to, I got in trouble there. Because there was a bridge over the Chattahoochee River which no longer exists, as I understand. Because we went back there for a reunion several years ago, and I told them, I had flown under that bridge. Upside down. And the major was watching. I didn't know that at the time. But then all of a sudden I saw this guy trying to trail me. Well, I was, I don't know, I had quite a few hours, maybe ready to go home, ready to go on. And I noticed this guy trailing me. And I thought, well, I'll keep him behind me, whatever. But he got my number, and when I got back in I walked tours for the rest of my stay there. In front of the major's office, with a full backpack and GI boots and a rifle, and an overcoat. Of course, it was, I can't remember what months it was. But it was rather cold, anyway. And, you know, you had to make an about-face, and present arms, and all this kind of stuff. And I wore a path in front of the major's office. But I survived that. And then we went to Busch Field, near Augusta, Georgia, for basic training in the Vultee Vibrator, the VT-13. And I learned how to fly that airplane on my first experience. I had an instructor from Chicago who was about five-five, and he was five-five across the shoulders, too. He was a really nice guy, but he was built like a brick-you-know-what. And my first experience, well, the week before, four cadets done in in the traffic pattern in another basic training center. And we looked at that Vultee Vibrator, and we were scared to death of it. Well, the first time I took off, it started going across the runway with the torque. Yea. I was trying to push in the right rudder, to get it to stay. I couldn't get it to stay. All of a sudden, I heard from the back seat, "Right rudder! Right rudder! God damn it! Right rudder!" And that right rudder went down and the plane went off in all kinds of angle. From then on, I had no fear of the aircraft, and I know dog-gone well he was holding that left rudder pedal.

McIntosh: Yea, he was giving it to you.

Fredrich: But I got even with him later on, in acrobatics. I caught him with his seat-belt off, and I rolled it over.

McIntosh: Oh, my.

Fredrich: And I bounced it a couple of times.

McIntosh: You almost lost him.

Fredrich: He called me a few uncouth names.

McIntosh: Well, why didn't he have his belt on? It was his fault.

Fredrich: That's what I told him. But he didn't say much. But he said, anybody else do that to me, he'd have washed him out. But we had an experience there with one of the fly boys from the Air Force. Second lieutenant. This was a civilian base, as was the primary base.

McIntosh: Oh, run by civilians?

Fredrich: Run by civilians. And, every so often, you had a check flight from an Air Force pilot. Well, this guy took us up and was going to wash all four of us out that was in it. His name was Johnson.

McIntosh: He was doing this Vibrator thing.

Fredrich: Yea. In this group. Because we didn't know how to break a spin. And so he said, well, tell you what. I'll take you up and you show me what's wrong. Well, when he came back, he was beet red. He took this guy up against the wall and he said if you tell me my students can't fly anymore, he said, I'll knock the heck out of you. Well, that guy never came back to our base again.

McIntosh: The Air Force fellow?

Fredrich: Yea. The Air Force fellow. He probably just got through basic.

McIntosh: Just a little bit ahead of you.

Fredrich: Yea. Just a bit ahead. So, we had a wonderful time there. And this guy's name was Johnson. I don't remember what his first name was. But he was fantastic.

McIntosh: Sounds like a good instructor.

Fredrich: And then the commanding officer was a captain who had come back from the South Pacific and flew a P-39.

McIntosh: Aircobra.

Fredrich: He was about six-three. And we wondered how the heck he got into that Aircobra. Because he told us when he fired the cannon, you went backwards. But, wonderful, wonderful commanding officer. And then from there I went to Mariana, Florida, where we eventually got our wings.

McIntosh: Got into the real Air Force.

Fredrich: Yea. Then they put me in P-40s.

McIntosh: That advanced trainer, didn't you fly that?

Fredrich: Oh, yea. The AT-6.

McIntosh: That was a great airplane, as I understand it.

Fredrich: Oh, I would love to have had that after the war.

McIntosh: I see a lot of those. You know, I get to Oshkosh and I see a lot of those. Those are favorites of a lot of guys.

Fredrich: Yea. Yea. Because they are an easy ship to fly. And they are economical. We could have had a P-47 after the war was over. For \$50. But we had to fly it home. So where are you going to get the gas?

McIntosh: So you went in, the first fighting plane you got then?

Fredrich: Yea. It was a P-40, and I had twenty-five hours on it.

McIntosh: It was very serviceable. It was just the wrong war.

Fredrich: I think I built up my right leg in that because it had such a high rudder load.

McIntosh: Wow? Tell me why, or how, that happened.

Fredrich: It apparently was the design of the aircraft, or the aircraft engine, because I think that was an Allison in-line engine.

McIntosh: In-line, I know.

Fredrich: And it just had a tremendous torque to the left. And the trim-tabs are way in the back. You couldn't actually reach the handle, so you tried to fly it with the rudder pedal. And I hated that airplane because, another thing, when you pull it up to land, all you could see was a little V up here, you know. You had to hope like hell that you stayed on the runway. But, let me go back to basic training.

McIntosh: Do it.

Fredrich: We eventually decided to solo after, I don't know, four or five and a half hours, or something like that. Took me over to an auxiliary field which had a gravel runway. One runway. And the first landing, I came in and I thought, "Oh," you know, "I'll crab it." The wind was off to my right, or which side, I don't know. Anyway, I crabbed into the wind perfectly and I came down, I settled down, but I settled down in the same crab that I was flying in. And, naturally, when I slipped sideways, it bounced a little bit. I thought, "Well, this ends that." But he was waving his cap, "Go around again. Go around again."

McIntosh: Was he behind you?

Fredrich: No, he was on the ground. I was soloing. So then the next time I came in, I thought I'd just drop the wing, instead of crabbing. So I dropped the wing and I landed on two wheels. I got it down, eventually. And I could see him throw his hat down. I thought, "Well, this is the end." The third time I came in, I did everything right. But he got back in and he said, "You know, you're damned lucky you did that third one right."

McIntosh: That would have put you out?

Fredrich: I don't know. I assumed.

McIntosh: It wasn't a fixed wheel?

Fredrich: No. But, eventually, I got through. And, as I said, we got the P-40s. Well, then they finally sent us to Seymour Johnson Field, for P-47 transitional training.

McIntosh: I don't know where that is.

Fredrich: It's in Goldsboro, North Carolina.

McIntosh: That's one air field I never heard of.

- Fredrich: It was beautiful, it was a nice place. And I can remember going out and looking at this P-47, and looking up, and I said to the captain, "Does this thing really fly?" And that very same day, two pilots had come together, wing-tip to wing-tip, and smashed those wing tips of the aircraft, and came in to land. He said, "Could you do that in a P-40?" So that started my transition training in a P-47. And that was like a Cadillac compared to a P-40.
- McIntosh: That big engine. It must have scared you. Huge engine.
- Fredrich: At first. I thought, yea. But this thing get off the ground, you know. But when you poured the coal to that, it really took off. So I ended up--
- McIntosh: But it turned out to be easier to fly than you anticipated.
- Fredrich: You bet. It was really easy to fly. Fact is, I was one of the guys who decided that I want to see what that aircraft can do. And one day, over Goldsboro--
- McIntosh: Not under a bridge, now?
- Fredrich: No. No. The opposite way. I wanted to see how high it would go. Well, I got to 52,000 feet. I'll never forget that.
- McIntosh; It wasn't rated that high.
- Fredrich: No.
- McIntosh: It was rated about 30, wasn't it?
- Fredrich: Between 30 and 40. And I decided to see if I could, how high I could get it. Well, I was up there, I was scared to death. Because every time you took a breath, the oxygen needle went down. And you'd try to make a turn, and it would take about five seconds for it to decide to go into the turn because the air was so thin. And the gas gauge was going down the same way. And, believe it or not, I could see the dome over Pittsburgh. You know, Pittsburgh always had problems with their steel mills. And you could see, that is how high I was. I could see. It was a beautiful day.
- McIntosh: Smog.
- Fredrich: Smog and fog and smoke from Pittsburgh. But I decided I'd had enough. So I put that P-47 in a dive and, you know, the brain don't work. Same way as anything else works. You know. And all of a sudden, bout 15,000 feet, I thought, gee, I better start pulling this thing up. And I couldn't pull the stick back, because it was

in, what is the word now? I can't think of it. Everything was frozen. So I just reached over and slowly pulled the trim tabs back, and I think I eventually pulled it out about 5,000 feet.

McIntosh: Scary.

Fredrich: Scary. I never did that again. But I did everything in that aircraft that was possible to do except tear the tail off and everything else. Because I did acrobatics. Because I was glad I did. I challenged anybody. From the time I started flying, to come up and beat me. Maybe that is--

McIntosh: How would that contest go? I mean, how would you judge a good airplane.

Fredrich: Well, you'd get somebody on your tail and, in order to, I'm speaking now of a P-47, in the States, somebody from another group get on your tail. And eventually if you got on his tail, the battle was over.

McIntosh: That was the way you won it?

Fredrich: That's the way you won it.

McIntosh: The reverse position.

Fredrich: Right. I challenged anybody. Because I was cocky. Sure, I was cocky. Twenty years old, nineteen at the time.

McIntosh: Oh, you were invincible, so why not? And nobody dies at that age.

Fredrich: That's right. You're too dumb to die, for one thing. And, but anyway, we got through that and then I was assigned. Well, we went overseas.

McIntosh: Where?

Fredrich: First of all, we went out to Long Island, Westhampton Beach, for gunnery school, over the Atlantic Ocean. We did a few pylons around the lighthouse out there on Montauk Point. Drove the lighthouse keeper crazy.

McIntosh: You tried to get as close as possible?

Fredrich: You bet we did. We could see the guy in the tower when we were going around.

McIntosh: Big eyes.

Fredrich: Yea.

McIntosh: One of these times they'll get us. They're not going to make it. Right. And I'm going to get it.

Fredrich: Well, we made sure he didn't see our number. You know.

McIntosh: He'd have reported it.

Fredrich: Right. Well, even before that, when we were down flying nights, night flying over Goldsboro, well, that was near the Wilmington shipping yards, Wilmington, South Carolina, and we plotted out, you know, you had four levels that you were flying at. And you flew in a zone. Well, come a certain time for ships to go through the channel, where they were putting the ships out, the shipyards, a big notice came on the board, 250,000 man hours was lost last night. Well, let's see how many we can do next week. And it was us four. We decided who was going to go, you know. And when. Because doing your night flying, they couldn't tell where you were anyway. And then we'd turn our wing lights out. So then we'd get back up in the zone and everything was fine. And I think they were about an hour flights, or so, you know, you are up there and strictly, most of the time, on instruments, because there wasn't a horizon. And it all paid off. We were able to do that. Well, when we got up to Westhampton Beach, on Long Island, we were supposed to do everything out to sea. And we dropped smoke, screening smoke, and we towed out own targets. And that was almost fatal.

McIntosh: For the target tower.

Fredrich: Yea. For the target tower, because we were towing targets around 35,000 feet.

McIntosh: Were there women, the WAAFs? They didn't do the towing targets?

Fredrich: No. They flew the planes in.

McIntosh: Yea, there was one at Menominee Falls, you know. Turned out to be [unintelligible]. Nice lady.

Fredrich: Yea. Well, I got to go back now. That reminds me of another story. Back at advanced flight training, we went to Eglin Field, for gunnery. In that AT-6. With one .30 caliber machine gun in one wing. And one day we were sitting there waiting and some WAC came in with an AT-6 and said "The relief tube doesn't work." Well, the remarks that were starting to be made between the pilots. The captain finally had to come out and say, "Shut up. There's no walls here." We were trying to figure out how she used the relief tube. Or how she found out.

McIntosh: [Unintelligible.]

Fredrich: I never used a relief tube in my life.

McIntosh: You never did?

Fredrich: Never did. Because I figured, well, when you used the relief tube, they took the airplane out of commission for two days, because they had to flush that little thing out. And everything else.

McIntosh: I see. I didn't know that.

Fredrich: Where I could have used it was one time near the end of the war. Believe it or not, an eleven and a half-hour mission in a P-47.

McIntosh: [Unintelligible.]

Fredrich: No. It was. I didn't use it. I waited until we landed. And that was about two hours later. Well, I'm kind of jumbling these stories around.

McIntosh: That's all right. I'm enjoying it. Tell me, before we leave the gunnery, tell me, was that hard to learn?

Fredrich: Extremely.

McIntosh: When you are at Long Island.

Fredrich: Yea. Extremely difficult.

McIntosh: You carried what, four .50s?

Fredrich: Four .50s. Yea.

McIntosh: And that's all?

Fredrich: Two in each wing.

McIntosh: But that airplane was a bomber, too.

Fredrich: It was a fighter-bomber. Yea.

McIntosh: At the end of the war, that was the major fighter-bomber, wasn't it. That and the

A-26.

Fredrich: Yea. We did mostly close support work, once we were over in Europe.

McIntosh: That was what that airplane was really good at.

Fredrich: Oh, it surely was. It sure was. I got a picture somewhere at home, and I can't find it. It was lost in my divorce. Of seven guys standing in a hole in the wing. When the plane came back. Seven pilots standing in the hole in the wing, and it came back.

McIntosh: It also could carry what? Four five hundred, or two five hundred pound bombs?

Fredrich: We carried, okay, a typical mission was a five hundred pound bomb under each wing, a two hundred and sixty pound frag bomb in the belly.

McIntosh: One?

Fredrich: One. And eight four inch rockets. Four under each wing.

McIntosh: Oh, that came out at the end of the war.

Fredrich: At the end, yea.

McIntosh: You could carry all that?

Fredrich: I flew one mission with rockets. I almost did myself in. [Laughter] Cause they told us, when you fire the rockets, make sure you pull up. It was different from firing those eight .50s. You know.

McIntosh: You can't keep barreling in.

Fredrich: No. But I did. I didn't thought of it. And you could fire them two at a time, four at a time, all eight at a time. Well, I fired two at a time and it was, it looked like a farm house but it happened to be filled with explosives, I guess. And I fired two rockets, and all of a sudden, I thought, Oh, I'm supposed to pull out. Well, the stuff went up, I went under, and it came down. I didn't get a hole. Not a bit. And I was lucky. But after that, I remembered, when you fire your rockets, to move. Because the rockets came down on the same path--trajectory.

McIntosh: But it took some practice to be able to direct your .50 caliber. That's what you said? And that wasn't just a piece of cake to do that?

Fredrich: No. Well, when we were in gunnery, we only had like one tracer for every--

McIntosh: Four?

Fredrich: No, it was more than that. Maybe eight. So, by the time you fired a tracer--

McIntosh: You may have been off target quite a ways.

Fredrich: To start with. Yea. And it was kind of hard, because you couldn't look at your instruments while you were firing, so you had to be automatically kind of--

McIntosh: You couldn't, or you wouldn't?

Fredrich: You wouldn't. You would have to be coordinated, somewhat, and when you are making a turn, I don't care if you have two thousand hours in, you still have to look at that needle for airspeed. And all the time you probably are in kind of a slip, or something doesn't quite coordinate, and very seldom you'll get a hole in the target.

McIntosh: Did they recommend firing in short bursts?

Fredrich: Yea. Short bursts.

McIntosh: Running out of ammunition was not a problem, generally? Or you always had plenty.

Fredrich: Always had plenty. And, of course, when we got over to combat, there was no restrictions on anything. You watched what you fired because if you fired too long, it would melt the gun barrels.

McIntosh: That's what I was getting at. Was there danger in continuous firing?

Fredrich: Yea. We only had one time where a pilot came back with all eight guns drooped over because he fired, he must have fired about, oh, I don't know.

McIntosh: He just laid on it.

Fredrich: He had just laid on it. Right. And when he pulled out of the dive, he didn't have any more ammunition left. In fact there was a couple of them went right through the barrels, after they were down. And they don't, probably drop maybe ten degrees.

McIntosh: Yea, but that is enough to ruin the gun.

Fredrich: Yea. But, other than that, we watched it pretty close. You fired short bursts.

McIntosh: So, after Long Island, then you went overseas?

Fredrich: Yea. We went right overseas.

McIntosh: To where?

Fredrich: To Linton, England. Don't ask me where it was. It was southeast of London, somewhere. And we did some transition flying there. No combat flying. Just some transition flying. In the fog.

McIntosh: Did you start doing group things? By this time? You know, flying in formation, or that type of thing?

Fredrich: No, I didn't fly in formation until we got with the 404th Fighter Group, which was then engaged in the Battle of the Bulge. And that was in December of '44, was it?

McIntosh: Yea.

Fredrich: That is when I joined the group. And, well, we had flown simulated combat flights over in the States. You know, four ships.

McIntosh: But your first combat experience was in the time of the Bulge?

Fredrich: Right.

McIntosh: And when you were in the 404th, was that your fighter wing?

Fredrich: That was the fighter group.

McIntosh: What was the number again?

Fredrich: 404th Fighter Group, 507th Squadron.

McIntosh: 404th Group.

Fredrich: 507th Squadron. And on my first mission, we lost a friend. On my very first mission, we lost a friend.

McIntosh: Tell me about that.

- Fredrich: We were dive-bombing the marshaling yards. And apparently he was hit. As he pulled away from the target, the airplane just made a loop and went right back to the target area.
- McIntosh: Never got up in the air.
- Fredrich: Never got up off the ground, hardly. And I still get goose-bumps when I talk about it.
- McIntosh: Yea.
- Fredrich: Yea. That was the first time that I lost a close friend.
- McIntosh: What is the essential of that? That he got a direct hit that hit him and he lost control?
- Fredrich: Yea. Because he was a good pilot.
- McIntosh: And the aircraft was very rugged.
- Fredrich: Oh, I'll tell you.
- McIntosh: It could tolerate so much that it is hard to believe that they could have destroyed enough of the controls to make it flip that quickly.
- Fredrich: But apparently he got hit first.
- McIntosh: That's what I mean. He must have been hit.
- Fredrich: It had to be from the front or the side, or something. Because from the back it was too hard. And, of course, when you are on a strafing mission, or dive-bombing mission, most of the flak came at you from the front, anyway. And so it must have been a direct hit because he never did recover. And that was a shock to start with.
- McIntosh: Did you see any German aircraft at this time? Was it late in the war? Or were they sort of careful about that?
- Fredrich: Well, we saw, we strafed a lot of aerodromes. We didn't get, actually, we didn't get any in the air hardly at that time, at all. I had one opportunity to shoot down a jet, and I was real patient. And as I pulled up behind him and was ready to pull the trigger, and a great big cloud of smoke came out. I thought my wing man got him. We were on radio silence. I shook my hand on him and went. But, apparently, it was a jet and apparently he saw me just when I was going to be firing, he put on

the after-burners. And I never did see where he went. So, I thought, two seconds! before I had fired.

McIntosh: There is a guy named Cliff Bowers in Madison. He flew a P-47. He shot down a 262.

Fredrich: That's what this was, a 262.

McIntosh: Yea. Right. Brought down [Unintelligible.]

Fredrich: Yea. But, Hitler realized too late that it took a lot of gas to get those things up. Never realized that.

McIntosh: He missed an opportunity there that was golden.

Fredrich: But, during the period that we were dive-bombing and strafing, most of the time I only flew four bomber escort missions. And that one was eleven and a half hours. We were based in southern Germany. I can't think of the name of the town right now. But anyway, we escorted A-26s down to Ploesti, in Italy, and when we got down there the smoke was already about 30,000 feet.

McIntosh: From the B-24s that had already been there.

Fredrich: Yea. And then we took in the A-26s to mop up. And that is where I got hit. An 88 went off right next to my cockpit. And only one piece of flak went into the airplane. Took the tip of my toenail off of my big toe.

McIntosh: Just the toenail?

Fredrich: Just the toenail. And no, it didn't even hardly draw blood. And it stuck underneath my other toe.

McIntosh: How big a piece are we talking about?

Fredrich: It's a piece about six to eight inches long, inch and a half wide. I still have it.

McIntosh: It could have taken your head off.

Fredrich: Yea. That is the only piece. But the concussion smashed my knee against the side of the cockpit and smacked up my knee. Well, I only had about ten missions to go, because I was on the next list to go home.

McIntosh: How many were you required at that time?

Fredrich: Fifty.

McIntosh: Fifty.

Fredrich: And so I was on the next list to go home. And they wanted me to go in the hospital because I couldn't hardly move my leg. And so I said, no, no, I'm not going in the hospital. You're not keeping me, not yet. And I was dragging. And I flew about ten more missions with that knee.

McIntosh: That rudder didn't get moved very much.

Fredrich: Well, I'll tell you, after we came back, when we were on the safe side of the bomb line, I moved the rudder pedal back. But then you had to go down and reach it with your hand because you couldn't pull it back with your foot. Or I couldn't, anyway. So I could come in to land. [Laughter]

McIntosh: [Unintelligible.]

Fredrich: That's right. And when we came in to land, it was always, you know, pull up. You had to, if you didn't pull vapors while you were, streamers, well, it wasn't a good landing. Because we came in in echelon. And you pulled up, dropped your wheels, and came right in to land the same way. We got more aircraft on the runway than any other, than any other group in the 9th Air Force, I think. Because, one day, well, actually, the war was over. Yea, shortly after the war was over, we had to fly a review for General Patton, General Hodges, General Eisenhower, two German generals, and a couple other big dignitaries. And the 365th Group was based on the same field as we were. And they went over first. And Colonel Murphy--

[End of Side A of Tape 1.]

McIntosh: What were they flying?

Fredrich: They were flying p-47's. But they went over, and we were the second group, and I think we had thirty-six ships up that day. And the ground controller said, "Hey, Murph! they did a lousy job. Come on you guys! Give them a buzz job!" So I think Murphy went over at fifty feet. And we were doing a split-the-stack under. I was the fourth element back and I had to go up to go over the bleachers. We had guys--

McIntosh: If he was at fifty, you were at ten.

Fredrich: At least. Because we had guys hit trees, brought tree branches back in. And

Patton, and all the rest of them were on the ground. Because when we came in, we came in low. And Patton got his knees on his jodphurs all muddy.

McIntosh: Were they on the deck, all of them?

Fredrich: All of those guys.

McIntosh: They didn't care about what was going to happen?

Fredrich: Nope. I don't think so.

McIntosh: What could happen? All they could do was send you home, right?

Fredrich: That's right. Send me home ten days earlier.

McIntosh: You never heard any bad--

Fredrich: No. Because, when they came back, they were all in the officers' club, and we were all invited in to join with them. And the two Russian generals, Konius and I forget the other one, had vodka. And all we had was water glasses. And I don't ever remember drinking vodka before. They explained that when they said "skoal," you are supposed to swallow that whole bit down. And they filled those water glasses up half way with this vodka along the bar. And when they said "skoal," that went down and it went Wow! I thought my stomach was on fire.

McIntosh: Nobody said anything about you putting everybody on the deck?

Fredrich: Nobody said anything. Fact is, we were the most decorated group as far as in the 9th Air Force.

McIntosh: Is that right? You never had a one-on-one with a 109?

Fredrich: No.

McIntosh: Never saw any?

Fredrich: I saw a lot of them.

McIntosh: But they didn't bother you?

Fredrich: Fact is, one mission, I had to abort because I couldn't drop my belly tank and on my way back, I was all alone. I just looked up and I saw oh, a dozen Me-109s up above me. It was kind of a cloudy day like today. Well, not quite this but there

were alto-cumulus clouds. And I'd go in a cloud and I changed direction and changed everything, and pulled up, and those suckers were still up there. I got myself totally lost. I had a compass, but I didn't know what direction I was flying or where, so we had an automatic control. You pushed a button and then it would light up the ground control at the air base where we were at. And they they'd say, "Okay, Crocus Two, fly 361, or something like that. So, and then--

McIntosh: You'd fly in on a radio signal?

Fredrich: Transmit for a fix. Yea. It was a radio signal. They brought me right out at the base. Fact is, they did that in England, too. We came in one time it was so foggy, all you could see was the damned barrage balloons above the fog. And they said, "Okay, Crocus, you should be able to see the runway now." There it was, right in front. They said, "Drop your wheels," and everything.

McIntosh: Nothing, nothing, nothing, and all of a sudden you are staring [unintelligible] same time.

Fredrich: Maybe a hundred and fifty feet off. But, those were some of the things. And I was glad that I did all the flying I did when I was, you know, and all the concentration I did.

McIntosh: Well, you got your fifty missions in.

Fredrich: Yea. And, well, going back to this one eleven and a half hour mission, I ran out of gas on the approach leg. I had never dead-sticked an airplane in my life. And I thought, well, in this P-47, when the engine quit, it glided backwards, kind of. You know. I made the end of the runway, and I pulled the stick to land, and naturally no prop up there to pull the air, it kind of ballooned. And when the wheels hit, you know, you instinctively pull the stick back and give it the gas. So I pull the stick back, and no gas. And it kept going balum, balum, down the runway. And they said, "Okay, Crocus Red Leader," or whatever I was, "That only counts for one landing. Now get that aircraft off the runway." I said, "Ha, ha, ha, you got to come out and get me, because this is as far as I go." And I was, well, I was a good three-four thousand yards away from the ops shack. They had to come out with a cleat truck to get me. Well, it took them almost two hours.

McIntosh: This was in England?

Fredrich: Yea. No, this was in Germany. And it took almost two hours to get to where I was to bring me back in. But, those cleat trucks, probably went about five miles an hour. But, by the time they hooked me up and towed me in. And I got back and I said to the captain, "I can't sit." My rear end felt like there were two needles in it.

- McIntosh: You were there too long.
- Fredrich: So I went back. He said, "Well, go down and see the doctor." Well, the doctor said, "Take down your pants." I had two pressure blisters, one on each cheek. All he did was inject them and--
- McIntosh: You had two blisters. From rubbing.
- Fredrich: Yea. Trying to get comfortable.
- McIntosh: Eleven hours is quite long.
- Fredrich: Well, see, part of the way we flew, we were protecting an A-26 which was pretty well shot up. And we had flown up above him. No S-ing up above him, just flown above him with half flaps and about half of throttle. So we could just stay with him. Because he was cruising, probably, about a hundred and seventy miles an hour, is all. So we were able to get him back to the base. Which was the base that we were at in Russel months before. So we were able to get him back and I ran out of gas when we--
- McIntosh: Coming back home.
- Fredrich: Coming back home.
- McIntosh: When you were dropping the bombs, was it easy to hit what you wanted to hit, or not?
- Fredrich: Yea, it was.
- McIntosh: It sounds like it would be difficult.
- Fredrich: It was fairly easy because once you got over, you could look at your instruments and line yourself up.
- McIntosh: You came in at what? What angle did you usually recommend? Not straight down. Forty-five?
- Fredrich: Not straight down, but more than forty-five. Between forty-five and ninety. Sixty, maybe.
- McIntosh: But it wasn't hard to learn about when to pull the switch?

Fredrich: No, no. Fact is, I was lucky one time. We caught twelve German tiger tanks coming down the highway and I was the lead one going down. And I focused on the two main tanks. They were coming like in twos. And coming around the bend. And I watched my bombs go. And both of them hit on the conning tower of the lead tank. And I was happy. I was patting myself on the back, you know, well, wow, what a job. And, geez, I got to pull this thing out of the dive. So when I pulled--

McIntosh: You were admiring it too long.

Fredrich: Yea. Which I did. I admired when it hit the conning tanks and went off, you know.

McIntosh: [Unintelligible.] [Laughter]

Fredrich: When I pulled out, I hit something. I don't know what. I hit something. I rolled over three-quarters of an inch of the propeller. And they must have seen it upstairs.

McIntosh: A tree?

Fredrich: I don't know. It had to be something.

McIntosh: To break a propeller.

Fredrich: To bend the propeller. It didn't break it but it bent it. They must have seen it upstairs because they said, "Are you okay?" I said, "Yea, except I'm running kind of rough." I said, "Something's wrong." So, we got back to the base. The second engine change that plane had in the war, in two hundred and fifty missions. So, I got ribbed for that for the end of the war. Fact is, they still call me "the kid" at reunions.

McIntosh: Oh, really

Fredrich: Because I was the youngest one. But I still don't know what happened on that mission.

McIntosh: By this time, were you a captain?

Fredrich: Oh, I never got promoted. I was too--

McIntosh: I think you were in trouble a lot of the time.

Fredrich: I was too brash. That's what it was. I even before--

McIntosh: It's a wonder that you survived.

Fredrich: Well, it was just the grace of God.

McIntosh: You bet your life.

Fredrich: Because when the people came back, they said, you must have had your guardian angel on your shoulder. That's when I realized that there is such a thing as a guardian angel.

McIntosh: I believe it. You tempted death many, many ways and many times.
[Unintelligible.]

Fredrich: Right. One time we were strafing down near Leipzig and I was going on my strafing run and this guy was shooting 20 millimeters at me. I could see them, tell the kind they were when they went by.

McIntosh: From the ground.

Fredrich: From the ground. and I'd fire a burst, and he'd fire. And I could see them go past, and I could look in my mirror and see them exploding behind me. This maybe took a half a minute. But it seems like it took days when I describe it. I'd shoot another blast and they'd say, "Come on, pull up! Pull up!" The guys were up above me, and I said, "I'm going to get this sucker if it's the last thing I do!" Well, I got him. He finally exploded.

McIntosh: What was he in? Was he in a truck or--?

Fredrich: No. It must have been some kind of a fortification on the ground. And it probably wasn't a pill box because out five hundred pound bombs bounced off of those things.

McIntosh: Well, you got him with the .50s.

Fredrich: Got him with the .50s. And, I could see, like I said, I could see these going like shoop! by me. Shoop! I couldn't hear that noise but I could see them going by. And they were all exploding behind me. So he never did get a bomb, because I didn't really give him a target to shoot at. But I kept my plane so those .50s--

McIntosh: In a run like that, you wouldn't bore straight in, you would fly sideways to make his aim off.

- Fredrich: To throw his aim off. Because they were good, those gunners. They were good. They could put it right to the altitude. Because when you went in, we went in changing speeds, changing altitudes.
- McIntosh: This was a group of four? You fought in a group of four? Was that the standard group?
- Fredrich: That was the standard group. But maybe we took off in three groups of four. And we attacked from different sides. Maybe two ships at a time, maybe four ships at a time. Depending on the target.
- McIntosh: When you went on this mission, did you have a specific target?
- Fredrich: Yea.
- McIntosh: You knew that before you left, often?
- Fredrich: No, we had a certain area, called an armed reconnaissance area. And anything in that area that moved.
- McIntosh: That's what I was going to say. Then you were free for anything that came by in your area?
- Fredrich: Right.
- McIntosh: Okay.
- Fredrich: And most of the time we ended up dive-bombing or strafing something that you thought contained ammunition.
- McIntosh: If you found obvious targets that you didn't know about.
- Fredrich: Fact is, I wore orange glasses one day, sunglasses. And I said, "Hey, there is an ammunition dump down there. Let's go down and get it.: The other guys had their green glasses on. They said, "Where?" I said, "Well, I can see it. I'm going to go down and get it." That's when I had the rockets and I fired those two rockets, and that sucker went up in the air like you wouldn't believe. And they said, "How did you see that?" I said, "I don't know." Well, then I realized when I got back that I had different colored glasses on. And they negated the camouflage. I could see right through the camouflage with those orange glasses.
- McIntosh: Well, now, everybody wanted glasses like that.

Fredrich: Well, we all had, they were interchangeable. We had red ones, we had orange ones, we had green ones.

McIntosh: What was the instruction about those?

Fredrich: Nothing. Except when you would do a night fly, then you had to wear red goggles all day. to get night vision. Of course, we didn't do very much night flying.

McIntosh: Night flying was difficult.

Fredrich: Yea. Very difficult. We did it in the States, of course. But not overseas. Of course, they had special planes for those.

McIntosh: They had the P-51.

Fredrich: Right. That was a beauty. That was like--

McIntosh: Did you fly one of those?

Fredrich: No, but I heard them. They'd fly over the base and it was just like a bird. Shhhh. There was no engine noise because they had all the mufflers particularly fixed. And you couldn't even see the glow. But, boy, they were sure a beautiful nice fighter.

McIntosh: I wish I could find a guy who flew those. I'd love to do an interview. There weren't many pilots that flew those airplanes.

Fredrich: No. But they were really, and we were always--

McIntosh: Do you know of any around here

Fredrich: No. And we were always the closest base to the bomb line. Because we could see the bombs going off at night, maybe fifteen miles away.

McIntosh: How much checking did you do to the airplane before you got in?

Fredrich: Well, the crew chief did most of it.

McIntosh: But you put your life in his hands.

Fredrich: Right.

- McIntosh: You were comfortable with that?
- Fredrich: Right. And my crew chief was a six-footer. And I called him Pops, because he was about thirty-four years old, and I was nineteen. And I called him Pops. Fact is, afterwards, I called him Grandpa. And back when we were in college, we had a guy pitching on our baseball team who was twenty-six, and we called him Gramps.
- McIntosh: Now, it's laughable, right?
- Fredrich: Yea, right.
- McIntosh: Now I have grandchildren.
- Fredrich: Yea, right. I have grandchildren who are that old. But, no, it was, thank goodness, it was a young person's war. When you think about it now, I wouldn't want to do it over again.
- McIntosh: There were a lot of people who were thinking [unintelligible] in battle. They'd start thinking about home, and their wife or their child. You can't work that way.
- Fredrich: And I don't think we ever gave it a thought.
- McIntosh: You were invincible.
- Fredrich: Yea.
- McIntosh: Why would you think of something as stupid as dying?
- Fredrich: Yea. And that is one thing I will give credit to my first wife for. She went through the nightmares.
- McIntosh: Waiting for the telegram?
- Fredrich: Yea. And when I came home, too. I got married after I got home, and I was still, in fact, we went to see that movie, what was it, with John Belushi?
- McIntosh: Airplane?
- Fredrich: Airport, or something, where he strafes New York, or something.
- McIntosh: Oh, yea.

Fredrich: And I had nightmares after that.

McIntosh: And that was just a silly movie.

Fredrich: Yea. It was. But you meant those things.

McIntosh: The noises.

Fredrich: And the movie, Air Force, I can remember being in a theater where they showed aircraft landing, and YAG flashed across the screen just like that, coming in for a landing. "Hey! There is my airplane!" It was gone.

McIntosh: Oh, my.

Fredrich: And that was years after, that was. Years after. Because we helped make that film. We had colored film, one of the last parts of the war, and it happened again on a bomber escort with some British, what was the big British plane? I can't think of it.

McIntosh: The Short Lancaster.

Fredrich: That's it, the Lancaster. They had what they called Two Ton Tesses. They were bombing Berchtesgarden, down in Switzerland.

McIntosh: Austria.

Fredrich: Austria. And it was right near the Switzerland border. And there was no anti-aircraft. It was a beautiful day. And we had colored film. And I thought, why should I waste this colored film? I turned my camera on and as we were passing over the bombing, I was taking pictures. And I said, when they got back to headquarters, they were probably saying "Where the hell is that enemy aircraft?" You know.

McIntosh: Did you definitely use a camera in your--?

Fredrich: All the time. It turned on automatically when you turned your gun switch on. Yea.

McIntosh: So they could record your activities.

Fredrich: Yea. Fact is, I brought my combat film back, and decided to open it one day, and talk about a horrible odor. So I decided to junk it. And about five days later I went to a meeting and the guy says, "You did what? Why didn't you let me know? I'd

have restored that for you.”

McIntosh: You never shot down an airplane, though, did you?

Fredrich: No.

McIntosh: Just bombing and escorting was your main specialty.

Fredrich: Right.

McIntosh: And you only got hit that once?

Fredrich: That’s it. Came close.

McIntosh: And your squadron then didn’t lose too many. Probably more from accidents than combat?

Fredrich: Ah, we didn’t lose, well, I lost two close friends.

McIntosh: Right, you mentioned that.

Fredrich: One for the first mission and then one later on. Fact is, he was John Godfrey, was my bridge partner. And when we’d play bridge, we’d turn our hands over and wait till we came back, and then we’d pick them up. Well, he was leading this flight and I was flying his element, and we caught one of those German ones that come out of the mountains and fire a huge missile, on a railroad track. They they’d pull them back in and put the curtain down. Well, we caught one of those and I don’t know if he got hit or if he just flew into the side of the mountain and exploded. Right in front of me. And I just found out the other day that he is buried over there, in France. In one of the cemeteries.

McIntosh: Well, at the end of the war, then what?

Fredrich: Well, at the end of the war, I came back and was discharged. That was [Ten seconds of silence on the tape.] I was still dragging my leg. When we were at Camp McCoy getting discharged, and a major came out with the orders, “The following named officers have been assigned to Drew Florida, Tampa, Florida, for jet transition training.” There were four of us from Wisconsin there that had known each other on the way back. And he came out with orders saying “These following officers are transferred to Drew Field, Tampa, Florida, for jet transition training.” And we all four of us got up at the same time. “Obviously, you have made a mistake. We’re here to be discharged.” And I was supposed to be married

then. I had my blood test and that. Except that I didn't know that the girl I was going to marry was married eleven months earlier. I never heard from her. So, that kind of broke that up. But, anyway, they weren't going to discharge me. They said "You won't get out of here without having that knee taken care of." And I said, "You just watch me. Tomorrow, I'm driving out of this camp." And the guy laughed. And he had signed it, something or other, 2nd lieutenant, finance officer. And I said, "What do you know going to tell me I can't be discharged?" Well, I didn't see when I walked out. But I laughed at him. I said, "I'll be out of here tomorrow." And I did. It was snowing then. It was maybe December of '45. And we had gone to Camp McCoy with just our low-cut shoes on. And just about four inches of snow. Of course, we hadn't seen any snow since way back. But, I was discharged and walked out of there.

McIntosh: Never gone back?

Fredrich: No. Not really.

McIntosh: Have you kept in contact with any friends?

Fredrich: Oh, yea. We have, we are going to a reunion in September. Myrtle Beach.

McIntosh: That's a reunion of the 507th or the 404th?

Fredrich: That's part of the 404th.

McIntosh: Yea, that's a smaller group.

Fredrich: No, the 404th is the larger group.

McIntosh: Oh.

Fredrich: See the 507th was a squadron. There were three squadrons plus the headquarters.

McIntosh: So the 404th has a yearly meeting?

Fredrich: No, every other year. But one squadron is having a reunion and they invited everybody else from the other squadrons. So we are going down.

McIntosh: Oh.

Fredrich: Because we knew them after the war, at reunions.

McIntosh: But none of these guys were on your base or right in your squadrons?

Fredrich: Yea.

McIntosh: You knew them, then?

Fredrich: Quite a few. In fact, the first reunion we went to in New York, about twelve years ago, when they were coming down the escalator when I walked in, they said, "Oh, here's the kid, now." And we've been pretty close. Most of us. Of course, they are all over the United States. And we send each other Christmas cards.

McIntosh: Oh, that's nice.

Fredrich: Keep in touch.

McIntosh: Join any veterans organizations?

Fredrich: Oh, I'm a fifty year member of the VFW. And about a ten year member of the American Legion.

McIntosh: [Unintelligible.]

Fredrich: So that's it. I'm a Mason.

McIntosh: So, after the war, what did you do? Use your GI Bill?

Fredrich: Yea. I finished my college and got a--

McIntosh: Where was that?

Fredrich: All over. Anytime I could take a class, at Marquette University, or the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee. I got enough credits.

McIntosh: Picked it up here and there.

Fredrich: And then I got an apprenticeship in printing. And I went on and went into lithography. I was a master lithographer. I eventually ended up teaching at Marquette University in that area.

McIntosh: Lithography?

Fredrich: Yea. And I went to MATC and that's where I got my career in graphic arts.

McIntosh: Okay, now tell me about your knee. How did that come out? What did they have to do for you?

Fredrich: I didn't have to do anything, believe it or not. It seemed to resolve itself.

McIntosh: All it was stiff other than being sore.

Fredrich: Right. Right.

McIntosh: It was not swollen or anything?

Fredrich: Yea, it was swollen for a while. And then it had healed.

McIntosh: But you got no medical opinion about it?

Fredrich: I was getting a 10% disability.

McIntosh: All right, but what did the doc say when he looked at your knee?

Fredrich: Well, when he replaced it, he said, "I don't know how you walked all these years with that.

McIntosh: But, I mean, at the time when you were in the service.

Fredrich: Oh, no. I wouldn't let him look at it.

McIntosh: So you never reported a thing?

Fredrich: No.

McIntosh: Well, then, you never got a Purple Heart?

Fredrich: Yea, I got a Purple Heart.

McIntosh: Oh, from the--

Fredrich: But I refused to go to the hospital.

McIntosh: Oh, you did receive it?

Fredrich: Yea. But my knee kind of healed up and then I went into the reserves as a battalion sergeant major in an ordnance battalion. And how this happened, I was working at the Journal and the colonel of this ordnance battalion looked up my

record, and he said. "Your MOS shows you were a first sergeant." I don't know where he got that from.

McIntosh: Not if you were flying a P-47.

Fredrich: Nothing. Nothing whatever. And I stayed in that and finished up with only sixteen years. I could kick myself for not staying in the rest of the four.

McIntosh: Four. I should say, you could have retired on that.

Fredrich: Yea, for I was stubborn. And things didn't work out the way I liked it. And I said, "spllllt" to you. Well, first, what happened, we had, of course, you have summer training. And I had gone to three different summer trainings, and every summer training we had the same guy in the barracks next to us. He was a major in the AUS, or whatever it was. It was different. And I outranked him in the regular army. And I never let him down. He harassed us something terrible through all of our summer training. Fact is, the last time, I think it was, he used to work out a night problem like a Boy Scout, you know. Capture the Flag. And we were down in the ordnance depot in Savannah, and we were going through the field. Grass was knee high, it was wet. And just like Capture the Flag. Except I held my guys back. And there was a big celebration. They had captured this and that. We had rifles but they weren't loaded. And I said to my guys, "Okay, let's surround this place, and be as quiet as possible." So they were celebrating and we moved in, and I said, "Okay."

McIntosh: They had the flag, right?

Fredrich: And then when I got back to the barracks, they had coffee and donuts and stuff like that. I was belaboring this guy, calling it what it was. And calling him names that were--anyway and he came out and said, "You know, I could discharge you." He said, "I could get rid of you right now." I said, "Go ahead and start. I've got four months to go." Then the colonel walked in, and he said, "Are you talking to my sergeant that way?" He said, "Get out of here." But, when I went down to re-enlist, I had the whole battalion all signed up for another four years. That would have ended my career for twenty years. And I went in his office and he was going through sheets. And he said, "Ah, see here, blah, blah, blah." He found something wrong with it. So, "What's wrong with it?" And he wouldn't tell me. So I took it and I tore it up into little pieces. I took his hat off the rack, and I said, "We can do this one at a time, or all at once." And he said, "Now, I'm really going to court-martial you." I said, "Okay, start." Now, I got three months to go. And that ended my career. And, unfortunately, the whole battalion took my [unintelligible] to heart and they all went out and tore up their re-enlistment papers. I don't know how many careers I destroyed, but I didn't intend to do it that way. But that is the

way it went down. And I am still that way. I wasn't opinionated but I just didn't like the way certain things were done. And I told people about it. But, the only place I made any advancement was in the reserves.

McIntosh: That had nothing to do with flying?

Fredrich: Nothing to do with flying whatsoever.

McIntosh: Didn't you do any flying after?

Fredrich: I flew a little bit but I found, when I first came out, the only thing I could afford to buy was a L-5, for Piper Cub. And I said, I can drive my car faster than that. And then I decided, Oh, I'll try an AT-6. Well, that was \$50 for a half hour. Back in 1946. And I was an apprentice, and I was still going to school at that time. I had a couple of children. And I said, no, I couldn't afford it.

McIntosh: I see a lot of that today. C-40s at the air show in Oshkosh. That and the AT-6 are the two most common planes I see.

Fredrich: Well, they say the P-40s are hard to come by now.

McIntosh: They ate a lot of gas.

Fredrich: They certainly did, with that big engine.

McIntosh: That big, big engine.

Fredrich: The last time I saw one, well, I saw them in Oshkosh, but the last time I saw them flying in formation was the Minneapolis reunion, and that had to be ten years ago. Or they flew, they only had three that were flight worthy, and they flew it with a B-25. Well, the B-25 only went around the field once, because they had two engines.

McIntosh: Right. That's all the gas they had.

Fredrich: That's all the gas they had. They landed and the other three went around and came in the dead man's return, you know.

McIntosh: They called it the dead man's return?

Fredrich: That's when flew off.

- McIntosh: Oh, that. Yea, when the air show closed.
- Fredrich: And then, the funny part about that, the women were allowed to come up and look in the cockpit. You know, they had the full. And we probably had five hundred pilots there. And they were all bigger than I was. And my wife looked in the cockpit and she looked around at the crowd, and she says, "How did you guys ever get in and out of this thing?"
- McIntosh: You were a hundred pounds lighter, that's all.
- Fredrich: You're right. I weighed a hundred and forty-four pounds when I was discharged. And I weigh, I've been over two-thirty ever since. I had one other occasion there was a P-47 being re-done down at Eglin Field. A buddy of mine who used to live down there, and took us on the base. When they were just starting to fly the F-16s. They were super-secret yet. So, I'm standing there taking pictures with my camera of this thing taking off and taxiing out. And I'm leaning on the sign that says "No cameras in this area." But, they were putting together a P-47 down there for the Air Museum. And it wasn't finished yet. And we went in, but they said, "Sorry, you can't go in there. There was a flash fire from a lightning stroke the night before." So this friend of mine said, "Well, let's go around in the back and see what we can see." We went around in the back and the guys were just coming out for lunch. And he said, "Is there any chance we can get in to see that P-47?" He said, "This is one of the pilots." Oh, I thought that guy was going to carry me in! He said, "Do you want to get up there?" I said, "Sure." And they didn't have the cockpit finished. It was still all rusty. He said, "You want to sit in there?" I said, "No, thanks." And he said, when I was coming down, he said, "Let me give you a hand." I said, "This thing has got to be higher than it was back in World War II."
- McIntosh: You're taller now?
- Fredrich: Right. Cause he had to help me up in it.
- McIntosh: How fast would that go? When you had a level flight?
- Fredrich: Level flight, somewhere around two-twenty.
- McIntosh: That's all?
- Fredrich: That's all.
- McIntosh: What about the 51? That was speedier.
- Fredrich: No, the 51 was probably about two-seventy, two-eighty.

McIntosh: Level.

Fredrich: Yea, level. But we could go like hell going down.

McIntosh: Yea, you could fall with that. It must have out-weighed the 51 by two times, almost.

[End of Side B of Tape 1.]

Fredrich: Oh, at least. And it was a lot safer because we had that radial engine. You could knock out a couple of cylinders of that and still come back.

McIntosh: Oh, that wouldn't stop the engine?

Fredrich: Oh, no. I had a 20 millimeter shell stuck, it didn't go off, but it stuck between the two top cylinders. It didn't knock anything off except the wiring. And it ran a little rough, but I got back. But it was a dud. And we had one that had that same thing happen and it knocked off the oil, it knocked the oil, and the plane was completely covered with oil when he came back. But he opened his cockpit and landed.

McIntosh: Looked out the window like Lindbergh did?

Fredrich: Yea. But that plane came back. It was really amazing. Like I told you, one had just the leading edge of the aerolon. That's all that was left. Came back. We had a flight leader we didn't quite like and a German 88 hit him right behind the cockpit and almost disabled the aircraft, and he was leaking gas until the line was sealed off. And we called him "Stemmie." He didn't like that. "John Stemmie, you better jump! You are going to be on fire!" You know, he landed that aircraft and when he landed, it broke in half. It had knocked everything off, the supercharger, everything behind the cockpit, except the top.

McIntosh: I would think the controls to the tail--

Fredrich: Apparently not.

McIntosh: You need that to land.

Fredrich: Yea. But he landed that sucker. Broke in half when he landed. But the most traumatic experience I ever had was, I was number one in take off position, and I could see red flares coming in over the horizon.

McIntosh: What did that mean?

Fredrich: There was somebody coming in that was under duress.

McIntosh: Oh, disabled.

Fredrich: Disabled. And they said, “Crocus Leader, hold up. We have a B-17 coming in for an emergency landing.”

McIntosh: Yea, because this is not a bomber base.

Fredrich: No. No, this was an advanced fighter base.

McIntosh: Right, so this guy is in real trouble.

Fredrich: And, so I saw him when he went past me. It looked like he was spray painted right down the side. And I found out — there go those goose bumps again, after all these years. When they went past me, I could see this, they had two engines feathered on one side. One engine was kind of dangling and the one was pulling them in, when he landed in front of me, the prop of that engine dropped off. Right in front of me. But the nose gunner, the bombardier, two waist gunners had been killed by German fighters or flak, either one. And the co-pilot landed the airplane. Did a beautiful landing but when he landed, that engine fell off.

McIntosh: I can’t imagine that thing would stay up in the air.

Fredrich: I don’t know how it did it. But they sure came in and landed. But they were really shot up. And, I’ll tell you, when you are waiting in number one position to take off, and you are all loaded up, and that happens, I don’t know. I always thought the guys in World War I, how could they remember this? And here I am still doing it. Course, I don’t talk about it very often. I gave some talks to some high school kids and I take along that piece of flak and pass it around.

McIntosh: The one that took your toe nail off?

Fredrich: Yea. It’s rusty now.

McIntosh: This is the piece of flak that took your little toe?

Fredrich: No, my big toe. Just lifted the toe nail. Of course, it tore the shoe. But, no, it didn’t, any blood.

McIntosh: Well, you had a charmed life.

Fredrich: The good Lord must have had other things for me because I got through it fine.

McIntosh: Any of your kids in the service?

Fredrich: No, but my grandson graduates June 1, and is going into the Air Force two weeks later. They live in Michigan. We're going over for his graduation. But that is the only one. The other grandson here in the state is going into the Coast Guard, but we haven't heard when he is going to graduate from high school. We have another grandson graduating from Muskego High School and he is going to Plattville. And we were great-grandparents here two weeks ago.

McIntosh: Great! Well, that's it then.

Fredrich: And I have retired from teaching. I've been retired for sixteen years. And my wife retired a year later. We toured the country for the first three months, and we went back to all the air bases where I served. And the one I remember especially was down in Mariana, Florida, where I got my wings. I couldn't find it the first day. So we went back in town where we stayed, and we went into a restaurant. It was called Captain D's. My wife happens to be called D. And there was a group of elderly people sitting around the table, and I went to them and asked, "Would you happen to tell me where the Mariana Air Force Base is?" And the lady said, "Oh, I used to work in the cafeteria up there." And she told me how to get there. And part of it was a federal prison. I thought it was a school. It looked like a college. And about five or six miles after that was the air base. Well, I pulled in. My wife didn't get out of the car because I wasn't sure where I was. And I walked in, and there was a bunch of Civil Air Patrol cadets. And I said, "Is this the former Mariana Army Air Base?" "Yea." "Where's the runway?" Well, they showed me, there is two runways down there. Just an emergency, like an emergency field. And I said, "Yea, this is where I got my wings." And they asked me what I flew. And I thought they were going to carry me out on their shoulders, honest to God. You know, you feel like, wow, I didn't do that. I'm not a hero. And here, these cads were.

McIntosh: Well, you were someone to talk to that knew what he was talking about.

Fredrich: Yea. It's been a great life. The good Lord's been on my side pretty much.

McIntosh: That's right.

Fredrich: And I've learned how to control my temper a little bit, in the last fifty years.

McIntosh: That's great. Well, I think we've run out of soap here. Unless you can think of some stories--

Fredrich: Thank you.

McIntosh: [Unintelligible.]

Fredrich: Oh, I can tell you one. We were sitting in a briefing session, I don't remember where it was. It was before we got to St. Tron, Belgium. And all of a sudden we heard this sound like a German cannon.

McIntosh: Like from an Me-109.

Fredrich: No, Tat-tat-tat-tat. And everybody was ducking. The captain was up there explaining what our mission was going to be, and I could see, I could feel the tension in the room. What are we going to do? What are we going to do? They are strafing us. And we started out the door. And here is a dog back there, scratching itself.

McIntosh: You were sensitized to the noise, right?

Fredrich: Right. You know, it's funny, those stories come back.

McIntosh: It was just too close.

Fredrich: It was too close, yea. Of course, then one night, we were in St. Tron. It was a heck of a stormy night, foggy, rainy, windy. We were playing cards. And all of a sudden we heard a grrrr! We were thinking, what can make a sound like this? Well, that engine cut out.

McIntosh: Buzz bomb.

Fredrich: Buzz bomb. And you could hear it go, shhh, shhh. And a huge explosion. And the windows came out of the barracks. And, of course, it was too late to try to do anything. And we went out, and I said, "Oh, there is German paratroopers at the four corners of the field." Well, afterwards, we found out the buzz bomb went off four kilometers from the field. But it blew a lot of the windows out of the barracks. We suffered one casualty, one guy diving in a foxhole, he dove in and they had thrown a used sink in there. Broke his arm. That was the only casualty. Of course, you know, we were big drinkers in those days. We used to have a lot of parties. Every mission, you know, you got so many ounces of liquor.

McIntosh: Oh, I didn't know that. Tell me about that.

Fredrich: Then, we used to save it up until we had like four or five quarts.

- McIntosh: Yea, two ounces. Small bottles, two ounces.
- Fredrich: Oh, no, these were regular, they put them down on the chart, and then when you had, what was it, a quart, then you would get the quart. The whole quart of liquor, or whatever. Well, we decided when we had four or five quarts, then we'd put them under our bunk, you know. When we had four or five quarts, we'd have a party. So we'd get all the, we'd get the cooks and everybody in the party, all the enlisted men. And this is scotch, and this is rye, and we had one called Buzz Bomb Juice, orange gin. And we told the guys who didn't drink, that is orange juice. Well, you know, we drank out of mess cups. And the guys, they were drinking it like orange juice. Well, a couple of them--
- McIntosh: All kids. Right.
- Fredrich: We regretted it afterwards. Well, the same way, when we first got into France, we had all the champagne we wanted to drink. And it was labeled "Wermacht Only."
- McIntosh: Oh, really?
- Fredrich: We had a table about half this long, four of us sitting there. And we finally had to move way down to the end because we had them all filled with empty bottles. And I thought, boy, can I take, so I carried three guys back and put them in the barracks. And the next morning, it was Sunday or something, we weren't flying. Fortunately for me, the sink and the john were close together. And I thought, well, if these two ever meet in the center, I'm dead. I never was so sick in my life. But, we--
- McIntosh: Were you careful the night before a mission?
- Fredrich: Oh, very careful. Very careful.
- McIntosh: Ate very lightly, or what?
- Fredrich: Oh, not so much the food didn't bother us, but we didn't drink very much.
- McIntosh: Did you know that you were going to fly every day?
- Fredrich: Oh, yea. You knew what mission you were going to fly whether it was first mission or--
- McIntosh: How much advanced notice did you generally have?

Fredrich: Couple of days.

McIntosh: Couple of days.

Fredrich: It was on the board, you know.

McIntosh: So then you knew when you could party, that you didn't have to fly the next day?

Fredrich: Yea, that's right. That's right. Well, this one guy partied anyway. And he later became sheriff in Wyoming. The state of Wyoming. But we never knew that he was an alcoholic. What the heck.

McIntosh: But he still managed to fly?

Fredrich: Fortunately, I never flew in a shift with the guy.

McIntosh: Yea. Nobody would want to fly with him if they knew that.

Fredrich: But, he was the one guy, you knew, when we got new engines, we had what we called slow time for I don't know how many hours, to break them in. Which means you couldn't use maximum power.

McIntosh: That the afterburner?

Fredrich: And then afterwards, when they were broken in, then we had what we called power check. You would go up and see what you could do with them. See that they were all ready to fly. Well, this guy thought that he was up in a power check instead of like the first hour of slow time. Well, those engines, when they came off were not absolutely perfect, you know. Just like car engines. You have a certain amount that was metal that would settle in the bottom. And they would drain those and put new oil in and do slow time again. And he thought, he was on slow time and he thought he was on power check, and he came over the base smoking like a bastard, with all the auxiliaries on, and froze the engine, and it stopped.

McIntosh: What happened to him?

Fredrich: He landed all right.

McIntosh: He did? Dead stick?

Fredrich: Dead stick. But he had enough speed to come around.

McIntosh: Oh, I was going to say.

Fredrich: Because he was probably going five hundred miles an hour when he went over the field.

McIntosh: Well, the CO must have been thrilled with that.

Fredrich: Oh, yea. He was.

McIntosh: He destroyed an engine.

Fredrich: Destroyed an engine and an aircraft.

McIntosh: So what happened to him?

Fredrich: Not much. He was still flying status. As I recall. I don't know what happened to him because I never flew with him. But, well, the tradition was, when you power check, to come over the base as low as you could. And that was, you know, there was no thrill to flying 15,000-20,000 feet. There is no thrill up there.

McIntosh: There is nobody to scare up there.

Fredrich: Nobody to scare. When you got to come down there and you floom! make them duck. I can remember one guy, guy was making an emergency landing. Couldn't get his landing gear down. So naturally he was going to land in the grass. And the lavatory shack was right there where he was going to land.

McIntosh: Oh, boy.

Fredrich: They was trying to get this guy out. This guy come out in like a comedy, you know, with the roll five feet behind him. And when the guy landed, he took the shanty with him. Lucky the guy got out.

McIntosh: Right. He'd take him out.

Fredrich: But there was some, most of the things that we remember are funny things. You don't like to remember the bad.

McIntosh: [Unintelligible.]

Fredrich: Like, we had a guy in the squadron, his name was Double O Scroggins. God bless him, there is a double oh in the forth, now. And we hadn't seen him for ages, and

he finally showed up, and we started talking. He said, I had kind of impressed my wife that I was quiet. And he was the one who said, "Quiet! You quiet? I want to see the day!" So my wife says, "Oh, it wasn't true either, was it?" I was always some dude, you know, I was a quiet guy.

McIntosh: Flying under the bridges?

Fredrich: Chattahoochee. And, you know, to this day, there are people that are older remember that bridge, but none of the younger folks remember it. But I had gone and looked at it and it was like a new one in my imagination. The same way, if I figured in my P-47 training, there was a base somewhere in middle Indiana, don't know exactly where. P-47 training. And I got home one day when I was transitioning from AT-6s to New York, they gave me one day lay over. That one day I went down to Wisconsin Avenue, I paced off what it was between the buildings, how high the wires were, and I figured, boy, if they get me up there again, some night on night flying, I'm coming right down Wisconsin Avenue. But I never got home. The good Lord said I'm not sending you that close, I guess. So. But those are some of the things.

McIntosh: You were young.

Fredrich: But, I am afraid that if I had used mine, I probably wouldn't be here today.

McIntosh: For sure. You took too many chances.

Fredrich: I knew what I was doing but I really didn't care. And I just wanted to show off a little bit.

McIntosh: A lot.

Fredrich: Of course, being the youngest one in the squadron, you gotta show the older guys what you know and what you can do. Fact is, I can remember Johnny Rogers, God bless him, he just died a year ago, was one of my closest friends. He was my first flight leader in combat. and I can remember one mission I thought he was motioning me to come in closer, you know. And I kept closer, I could see his instruments. You get in that close, you don't really have to fly your airplane, the air flow coming off one wing controls your own aircraft, because when he went up, mine went up, and when he went down, mine went down. And I figured if I got any closer, I'd take his wing tip off with my propeller. When I got down, he said, "What the hell were you doing? I was telling you to move away." I said, "Well, I thought you were moving me closer. And I thought, why do you want me closer?" But I did everything. I really did everything according to the books. I didn't break the rules. I was a brash young man but I never broke the rules. Pretty

much the way thing were done. Except when I got to lead the flight in combat, my first flight, I said, we were dive-bombing an air force base, or something, in Germany, and I said "When we pull out from the target, we will pull out to the left, because your torque helps you pull off at that speed." I said, "I'm going off to the right because I'm tired of them German flak gunners tracking us." Because they knew we were going to go that way.

McIntosh: Oh, so they would set their guns that way?

Fredrich: Yea. So I said, I told my flight, I said, "Now, when you go down, I'm going off to the right. You guys can go where you want to. I'll see you upstairs. "And we pulled off to the right and when we got back, I said, "How was the flak?" "Oh." the other guys said, that was terrible." And one guy said, we didn't have any in our flight." They told me, after we had gone off the target to the right. That is the kind of stuff that I studied and I thought, well, heck, I don't want to get shot down. Routine things. Other than that.

McIntosh: That plane would hit what speeds in a dive like that?

Fredrich: Oh, probably over 500.

McIntosh: 500? The ground came up pretty fast.

Fredrich: Yea. Because we'd also give it a little extra gas, too.

McIntosh: The importance of the speed was to stay away from the enemy's fire?

Fredrich: Yea, to get into split wing as quickly as possible. And on the way out, it just did a little more effective. One guy, we called him the Water Jug, because we had water injection. We could push a button, push your stick, your throttle.

McIntosh: For more speed?

Fredrich: Yea, it would cool the engine down. Temporarily, it would make it cough and then when the gas came in again, you would loose speed. It was like an afterburner almost. And I only used it once and that was when I was trying to get rid of a napalm bomb stuck on my left wing. We were dive-bombing an oil storage area and those napalm bombs, you had to skip-bomb because they didn't have any guidance. They were old gas tanks that had napalm in them.

McIntosh: You carried two?

Fredrich: We carried one on each wing. And they had white phosphorus fuses so that when

they hit at velocity, you would just see a flash of fire going. Well, I was down and released the bombs, and only one came off.

McIntosh: You could tell that?

Fredrich: Oh, yea, clean swerve, right away, because that made extra drag on that wing. And I was down there, and I could still see the smoke and fog, and everything, and I am firing my .50s, and all of a sudden it dawned on me, "Hey, you dummy, what if one of those things blows up? What's going to happen to you?" So I pulled up, and I couldn't get rid of it. Our bomb release was down here. We had gloves on, and when we came back my hand was all bloody. My glove was all torn off. I couldn't get that off. I had snap-rolled it, I pulled up, I did everything. So I had to land with it. And when I came in to land, my crew chief said "That was the best landing I ever say you make." He said, "I think you rolled the wheels on the grass first before you hit the runway," so he said, "There was no smoke." And I said--

McIntosh: Right. It could have been set off just from the jar.

Fredrich: Yea, because those white phosphorus fuses were charged. And the slightest jar could have set those things off. I don't know much it would take, but, anyhow, I was being extra careful. And I said, "If I'd have seen smoke coming from that left wing, I was still going 170 miles an hour, I'd have gone over the other side."

McIntosh: You'd have ejected, you mean?

Fredrich: Well, I was on the ground already. Yea, I would have ejected. But, I don't know what happened. It didn't go off. And, of course, I had to leave the plane away from the revetment area.

McIntosh: Yea, sure. They weren't thrilled having that back on the ground.

Fredrich: No, they weren't. Well, they were able to get the white phosphorus fuses off. And then, what they had done was, they had turned the screws too tight and dented the release mechanism so it was actually clamped in there. It wouldn't have come out of there. So, but nothing happened, so it was all right. And then, one time, I came in, I didn't have any guns. Went on a strafing mission and pulled the trigger, and nothing happened. What could I do? I checked the fuses. You know, we had a box of fuses. Everything was fine. Made another run, and still no guns. Something is wrong. Came back and my crew chief said, "What's the matter? You still got the--" You know, we had the protectant, dust protectors over the end of the barrels. Just paper or cardboard, or something. "What happened?" "I don't know. No guns." I said, "Look at this." I pulled the trigger. He said, "Don't do that!" I said, "Well, nothing happens." Opened the wings up and they forgot to put the

solenoids on the guns. The armorer. They were laying loose in there. So there was no way that those guns could have fired. If the crew chief would have found that armorer that day, I think he would have killed him.

McIntosh: Would have killed him. Yea, that could have cost you your life, too.

Fredrich: Yea, it could have. [Unintelligible.] But those were some of the things that you remember.

McIntosh: That's no good.

Fredrich: Yea. And, of course, one mission we took off and one of those fragmentation bombs broke apart on one of the planes in front of us. They weren't armed yet. But there was a crew chief, you know, our crew chiefs were on our winglets, because you couldn't see beyond the engine when you were taxiing out, so they would motion you with their hands, keep going, whichever. And one of the crew chiefs got off and was throwing them off into this field, and as they landed in the field, they went off. Of course, they were pretty much, oh, they would cover a fifty foot area, or something like that, And that guy got a Soldier's Medal, or something, for that. Because he probably saved twelve aircraft behind him that were taxiing toward those things.

McIntosh: Sure.

Fredrich: Because God knows what would have happened if somebody had taxied over them.

McIntosh: They would have taken out the airplane.

Fredrich: Yea.

McIntosh: What medals did they give you?

Fredrich: Oh, let's see. A DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross], Purple Heart, an Air Medal with five or six oak leaf clusters.

McIntosh: For five extras?

Fredrich: Five or six. That's it.

McIntosh: That's a lot.

Fredrich: Except the Good Conduct Medal.

McIntosh: Well, you'd never get that!

Fredrich: I did!

McIntosh: You did?

Fredrich: Yes, I did! I don't know how, but I got it.

McIntosh: Maybe they didn't look at your record, complete.

Fredrich: That was overseas, when I got that. But I never got promoted, or anything. Because when I left, when we were coming back, and I don't know who the officer was, said, "Well, we put you in for your promotion so when you get back to the States, you should get your promotion." Well, we got back to the States and nothing happened.

McIntosh: You wanted to be promoted out.

Fredrich: Yea. And that was it. But, other than that, that pretty well covers it.

McIntosh: That's to your credit.

Fredrich: I don't have any regrets. I wouldn't do it over.

McIntosh: Did you have any trouble readjusting back to civilian life?

Fredrich: Yea, and no. My first job, I made it through my first job for a year. But I didn't like the way things were run and I told them about it.

McIntosh: And they let you go?

Fredrich: Yea. No, I quit on my own. Then when I went to serve my apprenticeship, I had already been in the printing trade since I was eleven years old. But they insisted that I start an apprenticeship at the bottom level. Well, the first thing the boss told me, on Sunday night, you wash the gaboons.

McIntosh: I don't know what that is.

Fredrich: Spittoons. You know, the old printers used to have a big wad of, and spit in the spittoons. And they had four or five of those around the shop. And I said, "You show me in the training manual where it says that I was out gaboons." He said, "Oh, you're a smart aleck, are you?" "Well, we'll see about that. We'll get the

president of the union over here.” the president of the union happened to be a friend of mine. So he came over and he said, “You tell me where in the training manual it says this.” And the boss said, “I’ll back off.” So it was, “Hey, don’t talk to Fredrich over there. He’s a trouble-maker.” Didn’t stop me. I got to be what they call a chapel chairman, which is like a union steward. And I was called in when they hired me. And it was a fairly unremarkable career except I had one guy, I worked at the Journal, one guy who was, I want to say deaf and dumb. I don’t know what else to say. Fact was, he was deaf but he could read lips. You could sit there like this and he could read your lips. And he’d come over. He was learning how to speak, and he’d say, “Matt, I got something to tell you.” And then he’d tell me what the bosses had been talking about. There were three bosses, you know, and they’d stand and talk. While he was working on the Linotype machine. Well, then he’d tell me what they were talking about. And I’d go up and I’d say, “Hey, if you guys are planning this, you better forget it, because you are going to have trouble.” And the three of them would look around to see who was the stool pigeon. But those things are all--

McIntosh: Sure. Now, after drinking heavily all during wartime, was that a problem for you afterwards?

Fredrich: Not a bit.

McIntosh: Never went back to carousing like that?

Fredrich: No. I couldn’t afford it.

McIntosh: Yea.

Fredrich: Fact is, when I came back from overseas, I had a full package of Camels in my pocket and my mother and I were the only ones in the kitchen. I couldn’t find anything. I mean, we were paying fifteen cents a package for cigarettes then, and we were getting them for eighty cents a carton. And I said, “I couldn’t afford that.” And I said, “I’m quitting,” and I threw that package of cigarettes on the table. And my mother said, “I’ll bet you \$10 you can’t.” Well, I teased her about that almost to the day she died. Because I said, “Ma, you’re not going to heaven.” And she said, “Why not?” And I said, “Because you never paid me that \$10.” And her stock reply was, “I never made that bet!” But, I never touched, I was smoking like three packs a day. And we were flying once in a while ten hours a day.

McIntosh: I always tell other people about that, I had a friend who flew a B-17, and he had flown missions. He and his co-pilot would down a carton of cigarettes.

Fredrich: I believe it.

- McIntosh: A carton of cigarettes on one of those twelve hour mission. Wow.
- Fredrich: Well, when we came back and got below 10,000 feet, the first thing was the oxygen mask would come off, a cigarette went in the mouth, and we had those big Zippo lighters. We usually carried them down in your boot, or in your pocket down here. Pull it out and you know, you'd light it up, and the flame was like that long. Of course, there was a big red sign, "If you smell gas, don't light your lighter." Well, you'd go, sniff-sniff, or you'd open up your canopy about an inch. And there was no smell of gas. Except one time we had a guy really burned because he had his glove off. Fortunately, he had his goggles on. But everything else that was bare was burned with third-degree burns. It was red. And he was in the hospital for about a week. But the only thing I lost was my dog-tags. I never wore them around my neck. I don't know why. I guess because--
- McIntosh: You were supposed to.
- Fredrich: I know.
- McIntosh: That's why. That's why you didn't wear them.
- Fredrich: I reached down for my cigarettes and my dog-tags went ping! Because, you know, you had suction when you opened up your canopy.
- McIntosh: Oh, it went out into the wild blue?
- Fredrich: So I said, "One of these years, some German farmer is going to be plowing his field and say, "Ach du Lieber! Matt. Fredrich must have died here," you know. And, of course, we always carried our other ID too, you know. Especially when we were, when the war was ending, when we were meeting with the Russians, we had a special ID. If case we had to force-land in the Russian zone.
- McIntosh: Did you ever get to talk to any of those guys?
- Fredrich: Yea. We got to talk to them.
- McIntosh: What did you have, an airfield, a common airfield?
- Fredrich: Yea.
- McIntosh: Didn't ask to fly one of their planes?
- Fredrich: Oh, God, no.

McIntosh: Why was that?

]End of Side A of Tape 2.]

Fredrich: I don't know. I just didn't like the looks of them, for one thing. Because we had a German Focke-Wolfe 190 that they shot down and landed on our field. And we painted it red, they painted it bright red. And when you flew those things, it sounded like a tin can. You know.

McIntosh: Did you?

Fredrich: No, I didn't get a chance to fly it. The colonel was the only one who flew it. And, when he turned it on, it sounded like it was going to fall apart on the runway. It was a mess.

McIntosh: It was a good airplane.

Fredrich: Yea. It was. And the 109 was a pretty good airplane, too. Along with that stick fighter which was awfully small but boy, could she move.

McIntosh: You ever have the chance to get in that?

[Note—the tape quality fades in and out during this section]

Fredrich: [Unintelligible] like a 38 and I was getting ready to check out in the 38 [unintelligible] Field and I never got back in the 38 again. That's why the Germans tried to knock out the [unintelligible] we shot both of them down. One of them landed. That's where I got a German Luger. The pilot of that one had one. [unintelligible.]

McIntosh: Well, I was thinking. You ought to report those guys [unintelligible.]

Fredrich: [Unintelligible] They called the T-6s the Flying Pig. Just in the confines of our own revetment area. Because I was always, when we'd take off on a mission, and probably move the base. One time they had the runway, they just had tarred it. And well, when we landed, all that tar came up all over the aircraft, the tail, the wings, some along the fuselage. And I said, I can't let these guys, there was about six guys in the crew. And I said, I'm not going to let these guys clean this up by themselves. Put my parachute down, and they came around to pick us up, I said, "Come around the second time." And I was helping them wash off that tar. And finally the telephone rang and the [unintelligible] came out and said, "Okay,

Flying Payday, they want you up at headquarters for debriefing.” And I was a T-6, a Flying Pig after that. But my crew chief would take me in the morning if I didn’t feel too well. He could pick me up by my parachute straps, set me in my cockpit, put my oxygen mask on me. He’d say, “Take four deep breaths.” Go out and take four deep breaths, and everything is cleared up. Where are we? It only happened a couple of times. I told you, we usually were careful--

McIntosh: Right. You were careful about drinking the night before.

Fredrich: But this was a time, when they came in and said, “You are on first mission.” Oh, no, I just took my shoes off. They aren’t even cold.

McIntosh: But, that is the way you got to fifty, though?

Fredrich: Yea. Yea. Then when I’d come back, he’d say, “I don’t know how you made it. I don’t even know how you took off. But you are back.” And, like I said, he was like a father to me. He was great. He died, and I sent him Christmas cards for the first couple years, and I never got a reply. And when we went to a reunion, and I inquired and found that he had died shortly after we got back to the States. His name was John Evans. He was from Nebraska. He was just under the limit for being drafted. Just under the limit for height, for age. And he was drafted, but he was a tech sergeant and he was my crew chief. And I really, I respected him. Because when I first got there, he would sir-me this and sir-me that, and sir-this, and I said, “Hey, Sergeant, how old are you?” He told me he was thirty-four, thirty-six. “You’re old enough to be my Pop. Forget about it.” That’s when they called me --[Unintelligible.]

McIntosh: The T-6 was a trainer?

Fredrich: Yea.

McIntosh: Okay, Matt. We did it.

Fredrich: Great. Thank you.

McIntosh: Thank you.

Fredrich: I never thought I’d get this open again. Honestly.

McIntosh: Well, you got going. You got carried away. I appreciate it. Good interview. I will take this home and make this a regular video tape for you. Send it to you.

Fredrich: I’ll have to look at it privately, because my wife, “I don’t want to hear any more of

this stuff.”

McIntosh: Well, she doesn't have to.

Fredrich: No.

McIntosh: Thank you so much.

{End of Interview.}