

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
**ROY C. IHDE**  
Pilot, Air Force, Cold War.

2008

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**Ihde, Roy C.**, (1929- ). Oral History Interview, 2008.

User Copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 80 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 80 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

**Abstract:**

Roy C. Ihde, a Peshtigo, Wisconsin native, describes his career in the Air Force from 1946 to 1966. Ihde touches on family military history, enlisting in the Air Force after his house burned down, basic training at the San Antonio Aviation Cadet Center (Texas), radar school at Boca Raton (Florida), primary and basic pilot training at Randolph Field (Texas), and single-engine fighter pilot training at Williams Field (Arizona). He reflects on his love of training and recalls reasons other people washed out. He talks about his assignment to the 4th Fighter Group, 336th Rocket Squadron at Andrews Field (Maryland) and duty as a P-80 jet pilot and athletic officer. Ihde comments on flying the F-84 Thunderjet. He recalls a three-year tour based in Fürstentfeldbruck (Germany), speaks of defending U.S. air space, and states he often had to intercept civilian airliners. He shares his impressions of the destruction in Munich and talks about going to the opera. Sent to Belgium on TDY, Ihde describes duty as a T-33 and F-84 instructor in the Belgian Air Force, touring the battlegrounds at Bastogne, and visiting the Soviet war memorial in Berlin. While stationed at Ladd Field (Alaska) to cold-test the P-80, he details flying with Charles Lindbergh and meeting him again later in Paris. While in Alaska, Ihde recalls seeing wildlife, flying over the Arctic Circle, and seeing the Ester Gold Fields. Assigned to the 27<sup>th</sup> Fighter Escort Wing based at Bergstrom Air Force Base (Texas), Ihde talks duty as the range control officer, practice with the low-altitude bombing system, and side-duty as a T-6 Texan Trainer instructor. He recalls meeting Paul Tibbets, the *Enola Gay* pilot who dropped the atomic bomb, and expresses his admiration for him. Ihde speaks about Air Force life and side trips to visit Indian battlefields. Assigned to Dow Air Force Base (Maine), he speaks of flying the new F-84F Thunderstreak with the 506th Strategic Fighter Wing. In 1954, he discusses flying air defense over Hokkaido Island (Japan), protecting reconnaissance aircraft from Russian planes, testing Russian fighter launch response times, and being impressed with how polite the Japanese were. While based at Malmstrom Air Force Base (Montana), Ihde talks about his work with FICON (Fighter-Conveyance), duty in the 71st Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, and reassignment to Larson Air Force Base (Washington) where he saw a UFO. He touches on flying and talking with Senator Barry Goldwater, who was in the Reserves in 1964. Ihde mentions attending Special Weapons School at Luke Air Force Base (Arizona), the secrecy surrounding the A-bomb, and Escape and Evasion training in the hills of California. He portrays a friend who was shot down during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Ihde talks about working as a civilian pilot, keeping in touch with friends from the service, and attending reunions, and he highlights having a good experience overall.

**Biographical Sketch:**

Ihde (b.1929) was born on a dairy farm near Peshtigo, Wisconsin and graduated from high school in Marinette, Wisconsin. He enlisted in the Air Force at age seventeen and, after twenty-one years of service, retired at the rank of major. During his career as a fighter pilot, his service areas included occupied Germany, occupied Japan, Texas, Alaska, Maryland, Maine, Montana, Washington, and Arizona. As a civilian, Ihde flew for the Ansul Chemical Company and for Menominee Rubber. He had three children and eventually settled in Green Bay (Wisconsin).

Interviewed by Ellen B. Healy, 2008.

Transcribed by Telise Johnsen, 2010.

Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2010.

**Transcribed Interview:**

Ellen: I'm here with Roy C. Ihde (I-h-d-e) [*Transcriber's note: pronounced "ide"*], who served from March '46 until September 1966. This interview is being conducted at Moraine Ridge Community Retirement Home at the following address: 2929 Saint Anthony Drive, Green Bay, Wisconsin 5431[?], on the following date: June 6, 2008. The interviewer is Ellen B. Healy.

What year were you born in?

Roy: January 19-, January, uh, 8, 1929.

Ellen: Okay, and what, what was your home town?

Roy: I was born in the town of Grover, seven miles from Peshtigo, Wisconsin.

Ellen: Is the town of Grover actually a township, or is it—?

Roy: It's a township, yes.

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: Because I was born on a farm with a midwife delivering me, I can't really claim Peshtigo as my home town, except for postal reasons.

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: Yeah.

Ellen: Um, and tell me little bit about your family, uh, situation. You said you were born on a farm. What kind of a farm was it?

Roy: Uh huh. It was a dairy farm. My dad had between 20 and 30 cows, and our chief income was from milk.

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: And our milk check was about \$30 a month, and we had to live on that.

Ellen: Uh huh.

Roy: And it was not easy. Once in a while, my dad would butcher, calf or a pig, and, uh, let's say a half of a, uh, carcass would go to Lorman's[?] or Peshtigo to, uh, Stebbie's[?], uh, Meat Market, and, uh, we would have extra money from that—from, uh, the meat.

- Ellen: And--
- Roy: But primarily, dairy farm.
- Ellen: How many brothers and sisters did you have?
- Roy: My brother, uh, two years, three years older than I am; one sister, six years older than I am.
- Ellen: And where were your parents originally from?
- Roy: My, uh, dad was from, uh, Peshtigo, an adjoining farm to the one I was born on, and, uh, my mother was born in Edgeley, North Dakota. And, um, my dad met her while he was a roustabout going about, uh, on the railway looking for work, and he happened to drop off at Fargo, North Dakota. My grandfather Charles Schlichting[?] picked him up and, uh, took him to the farm for work. And he met my mother, and they were married.
- Ellen: Hmm. Where did you go to, uh, grade school and to high school?
- Roy: Payne, Payne School, Grade School.
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: Town of Grover—P-a-y-n-e. And, uh, high school, I started out in, uh, Peshtigo. I went there for a short time but didn't like it. And then later on my family split up. My mother and brother and I moved to Marinette, and I went to Marinette High.
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: And, uh, had two and a half years when I left high school because of a fire in our house, loss of everything we owned, and, uh, made the Service my home.
- Ellen: And how old were you when you joined the service?
- Roy: I was 17. Yes, I joined the Service in March 21st of, uh, 1946, and I was 17 at the time.
- Ellen: Had you already left high school by that time or not?
- Roy: Yes, I had already left high school.

- Ellen: Okay, and—
- Roy: And I took GED tests and equivalency tests and got my diploma through Basic Training and Military Competency.
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: So I got my diploma with my graduating class, which was high school class of '47, Marinette High.
- Ellen: Let me ask you more about your father and your history. Did you come from a family that had served in the military?
- Roy: Yes. My dad was a veteran of World War I, yes. And my brother was a veteran of World War II.
- Ellen: And what did your dad do in World War I?
- Roy: He was a private, machine-gunner, and, uh, he was in training to go overseas. The war ended the day before he was due to ship out for overseas.
- Ellen: And—
- Roy: And I really believe that saved his life. The life of a machine-gunner was considered to be very short in World War I.
- Ellen: And, how about your brother, what did he do in World War II?
- Roy: My brother was a tail-gunner on a B24 and flew 56 missions in combat before he was discharged from the Service.
- Ellen: What's your brother's name?
- Roy: Paul: p-a-u-l.
- Ellen: Okay. And he's still living?
- Roy: He's still living. He's in a retirement home now—or, not a retirement home, a, Menominee Care Center in Menominee, Michigan--and he's not too well off. He's 82, and he sure doesn't get around like I do. [Laughs]
- Ellen: [Laughs] Okay.
- Roy: He's in a wheelchair, in fact.

- Ellen: Uh huh. Uh, let's see—
- Roy: It doesn't have a motor on it. [Laughs]
- Ellen: You were 17 years old when you joined the Service?
- Roy: Yes, uh huh.
- Ellen: And your mom signed for you, is that right?
- Roy: Yep. I, I couldn't go in on my own, because I was not yet 18. So my mother said she would, uh, check around and see what advisors would recommend, such as a banker. She asked a banker what he thought, and he said, "By all means, let him go into the Service. It will be wonderful training, and it will be a good home for him away from home." Yes. So, my mother said, "Okay, Roy, uh, so-and-so thinks it's a good idea. I'll sign you in."
- Ellen: And what did *she* think about the idea?
- Roy: Well, she didn't like to, to see a, a son going off to the Service. But, uh, she would allow it because we had had a fire that, uh, burned up everything we had, and we were really hard-pressed to do something about the future.
- Ellen: Hmm. Were you working at the time?
- Roy: Uh, no, at the time I think I w--. Well, yes I was. I was working at the Polly and Pollack[?] Cheese, uh, Processing Plant a half a day and going to high school half a day when, uh, our home burned, yes. And it burned in February of, uh, '46.
- Ellen: Now, what service did you choose?
- Roy: Air Force, U.S. Air Force.
- Ellen: Why did you choose the Air Force?
- Roy: Airplanes. My brother had been a B24 gunner on a B24. I loved airplanes. I loved everything associated with them, and, uh, had also learned to fly out at the old Menominee Airport when I was 15 and soloed at 16 and entered the Air Force at 17. It seemed like a good, logical way to go.
- Ellen: Uh huh. When you joined the Air Force, uh, where did they send you? What was your first duty station for training?

Roy: First, uh, I first went to Milwaukee to be sworn in, to the courthouse in Milwaukee. From Milwaukee I went to Fort Sheridan, Illinois, where I received by immunizations[sic], which are shots in, uh, colloquialism, colloquial language. And, uh, from there, uh, Fort Sheridan, I went to, uh, San Antonio Aviation Cadet Center at San Antonio, Texas. That's where I had my Basic Training.

And by the way, I loved the Basic Training. Anything associated with the GI issue, I just loved: uh, the rations, the, the weaponry, uh, combat boots. I, I thought that that was just the greatest to, to have all those things from the Army. And all free! [Laughs]

Ellen: [Laughs] What did you like about the rations, other than they were free?

Roy: I, I loved them! I, I loved the K-rations, the C-rations. I could just have, have eaten those like they were a delicacy.

Ellen: Huh.

Roy: Where some of the, uh, friends of mine, uh, complained, I certainly would say, "Give me what you don't want. I'll take it and eat it." Oh, I *loved* the GI rations.

Ellen: How long were you in San Antonio?

Roy: For about six weeks, Basic Training, and then on to, uh, uh, my next assignment, which was Boca Raton, Florida, radar school. I had an aptitude for radar, which came as a surprise to me. I thought I might have an aptitude for mechanical things, but here it was, now, electronics!

Ellen: Hmm.

Roy: That was a surprise. And I went to Boca Raton, Florida, and went through, uh, basic, uh, radio, uh, training first and then radar training. I was able to, uh, actually adjust radar sets, and had an AFSC [Air Force Specialty Code] of, uh, 853, which was a radar mechanic. And, uh, from there, I went into Cadets. That program opened up, and in I went.

Ellen: How did you get into, uh, Cadets? Did you apply, or--?

Roy: I, I saw a notice on the bulletin board one day that, uh, the military was accepting Aviation Cadet applicants. And, uh, you had to be 18, high school diploma. Well, I had just received my high school diploma through equivalency tests, so I went ahead and applied. I met the Cadet Board, I passed it. And next thing I know I'm at Randolph Field, the "West Point of the Air," in training to be a pilot.



Ellen: And where's Randolph Field?

Roy: Uh, Texas.

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: Right near San Antonio.

Ellen: So did you ever use your radar training?

Roy: No.

Ellen: No?

Roy: Never used it, except in civilian life. I could tune up, uh, radios. I could build, uh, radio kits. I could fix televisions. I could actually repair TVs from the training I received.

Ellen: Huh.

Roy: Uh huh.

Ellen: Okay, you're back in Texas. How long did you stay there for training?

Roy: One year. Pilot training was, uh, one year. I had eight, uh, months of training at Randolph Field, the "West Point of the Air." And then after I finished the, uh, primary and basic, which was four months each, I went to Williams Field, Arizona, for single-engine fighter pilot training. And that was another four months, graduating in June of '48.

Ellen: Did you—?

Roy: That was one fine year. Actually, the day I left pilot training, it was a sad day in a way and a happy day in a way. I actually was leaving one year of military training that I loved; I actually *adored* it. And the joy, of course, was to go into a military agency now and become a part of the U.S. Air Force, you know, yes.

Ellen: Did you find training challenging?

Roy: Yes, it was. Yes. It was easy to wash out. You do the wrong thing and out you go.

Ellen: Uh huh.

- Roy: Yeah. There was one friend of mine washed out from, uh, dishonesty.
- Ellen: Hmm.
- Roy: And he was sent back to, uh, his home base. He didn't make it because he was not as honest as the, is required of you. And others would wash out from a basis of, uh, not being able to master the flying part.
- Yes, there were various reasons why you could wash out. Let's say you had filled out falsified forms. You're required to be single. If you were married in actuality, and they found out about it, they could wash you out.
- Ellen: Hmm.
- Roy: Falsification of, uh, documents.
- Ellen: Where'd you go from training?
- Roy: From, uh, pilot training I went to Andrews Field, Camp Springs, Maryland, which is a suburb of, uh, Washington, DC.
- Ellen: And how old were you at the time?
- Roy: I was, uh, now 19—19-year-old second lieutenant and a single-engine fighter pilot, having flown in World War II fighters at, uh, Williams Field, Arizona, that's at Chandler, Arizona. And, uh, now I'm in a, uh, organization that was World War II, and it was, uh, called the 4th Fighter Group, 336th Rocket Squadron. And we had P-80 Shooting Star jets. Yes. Here's the insignia I used to have.
- Ellen: Can you describe that insignia?
- Roy: Rocket.
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: It would be the Rocket Squadron.
- Ellen: It's red, white, and blue with [stars on it?]
- Roy: A pilot on the rocket and, uh, heading up into the sky. [Laughs] Just like the Fourth of July rocket.
- Ellen: Is that, uh—you're holding in your hand, uh, the, uh, insign--, the, uh, patch. Uh, where'd you get that patch from? Is that an old one, or is that a new one?

- Roy: I, I think that was issued by the, uh, squadron I was in, if I can remember right. This has not been used, but I do have one upstairs that I cut off my flying suit, because it is valuable. It's one of the few keepsakes I still have of my original assignment to a fighter unit in 1948.
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: Yes. I really love that patch.
- Ellen: It's a colorful patch.
- Roy: Yep. I even got a copy of it made here [laughs]--
- Ellen: Wow! Okay.
- Roy: --that I can send to friends. When I tell them I was in the Rocket Squadron, I'll tell 'em, I'll send them this to show him what I was in. That's the Rocket Squadron, and it's because, it's because it's, it's a, uh, jet propulsion and, uh, it's our insignia for the squadron, 336th Fighter Squadron. Yep.
- Ellen: What are some of your memories from, uh, being at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland?
- Roy: Flying the P-80 was a real thrill. When I, uh, left final training I was a P-51, uh, fighter pilot using, uh, uh, World War II equipment. Now, I was in a, uh, outfit that flew jets, and they had never really been, uh, proven in combat yet.
- The jet was so new that one time I taxied in to Lockbourne Air Force Base, and I had a control tower operator call me and said, "Sir, do you know your propeller's missing?" I said, "Yes, but there's a heck of a fire in the tailpipe."
- Ellen: [Laughs]
- Roy: He said, "Is that a jet?" And I said, "It sure is." He said, "Would you make a pass when you leave here? We'd like to see you fly down the runway. And give her the gun." So I did, 550 miles and hour right down the runway at 50 feet. That was fun. That's the sort of thing I was running into now in the 336th Squadron. It was fun.
- Ellen: You'll have to tell me, uh, how many, uh, people can fly in a P-80?
- Roy: One. It's a single-seater.

- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: And then later on they did come out with a, uh, um, stretched version of the P-80. They, uh, lengthened the, uh, cockpit, uh, 19 inches and made it a two-seater, and then they could give dual training in the two-seater T-33 T-Bird. I did get to fly the T-Bird. I, I got to fly it.
- Ellen: For what period of time did you fly the, uh, P-80s?
- Roy: I flew the P-80 from, uh--uh, let's see, uh--July of 1948 to about, uh, the middle of 1950. And then I went into a different jet, into the F-84 Thunderjet. And I, I did fly the P-80 not only stateside in Langley Field, Virginia--well, Andrews Field, uh, Maryland, uh, later on Langley Field, Virginia. And then I went over to Germany with the occupation of Germany and flew the P-80.
- But shortly after I flew the P-80 and got maybe 2-300 hours in it, we got the F-84 Thunderjet. It was a faster airplane and, uh, more modern. So now the, uh, F-84 was a 610-mile-per-hour aircraft, where the P80s was redlined at 580. The F-84 was really a wonderful-flying airplane, just *beautiful*, very stable, good for acrobatics, and even, uh, one model of it—the F-84G—was trained, uh, was equipped to drop an atomic bomb. So I was actually trained to deliver an atomic weapon should the need arise.
- Ellen: In addition to flying, did you have any other collateral duties when you were at Andrews?
- Roy: Yes, uh huh. I was Athletic Officer. Yes, I had to arrange for volleyball, uh, courts and nets and stuff like that to be set up, and make sure that the, uh, enlisted men had, uh, entertainment in the way of athletics.
- Ellen: Hmm.
- Roy: Baseball, softball, that sort of thing. Yeah.
- Ellen: All the time, uh, your first years in the service, uh, how'd you keep in contact with your family?
- Roy: I'd, uh, write to 'em. I would write my mother about once a week. She was living in Marinette, and she always looked forward to receiving a airmail letter from me [laughs]. Yep. I, I felt guilty. If I would put off writing, let's say for two weeks because of activities I was in, I would really feel bad that she was maybe starting to become tearful about it.
- Ellen: Uh huh.

- Roy: So I'd make sure to either call her then long-distance or drop her a quick line.
- Ellen: Did you get back to, uh, Marinette or Peshtigo in between trainings?
- Roy: Sure, uh huh—not while I was in Germany, though. While I was in Europe, I was there three years, never got home one time.
- Ellen: Oh! When'd you go to Europe?
- Roy: Uh, 1949, October of '49. It was for a three-year tour of duty, Occupation of Germany.
- Ellen: And where were you stationed in Germany?
- Roy: At, uh, Furstenfeldbruck, Germany, right near, uh, Munich. We were 12 miles from Munich.
- Ellen: And, as part of the Occupation Army, what was your occupation, uh, [unintelligible]?
- Roy: Oh, flying the P-80, air defense of the, uh, U.S. air space of Germany.
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: Uh, we had a certain sector of Germany assigned to, uh, U.S.A.F., and, uh, we had to defend that against all intruders. And, uh, mainly, we were being, uh, violated by airliners. They weren't supposed to come into our air space, but they did. We'd go up and identify them. As soon as we'd call them in as a Swiss airliner, the radar controller would say, "Break off the attack," or "Break off the intercept. We have, uh, clearance for him to proceed." Yeah.
- Ellen: Huh.
- Roy: That was the end of that particular intercept. And, by the way, when we'd pull up beside the, uh, DC3, which is the C-47 Gooney Bird, the passengers on board the, uh, DC3 would be looking out of the windows, and their eyeballs were big as saucers looking at a P-80 sitting there beside them. And when we'd break off the intercept, we'd do something in the way of a showoff, like do a, a slow roll right off the wing. [Laughs] We'd really have fun. It was great.
- Ellen: What air slice, uh, air space were you flying in at that time? Was it all over Germany, or was it--?

- Roy: It was all over Germany.
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: Yeah, uh huh. German Sector—the American Sector of the German air space, yes. It was air defense of Germany.
- Ellen: While you were at that air base, did, uh, what did you do for liberty time?
- Roy: For what?
- Ellen: Liberty. Free time.
- Roy: Oh! Why I'd go into, uh, Munich and, uh, take in maybe an opera. Uh, it wasn't unusual to see *Swan Lake* sitting in the very booth that Adolf Hitler used to sit in. Yes, or *Die Fledermaus*, I went to see that. And *Swan Lake*, and, uh, I did have the fortune of sitting in the same, uh, booth, or whatever you'd call that [coughs], that Hitler sat in during his reign of, uh, power there.
- Ellen: Let me ask you. How did you know Hitler had sat there?
- Roy: I was told.
- Ellen: Your were told, okay.
- Roy: I was told, yeah. That's where Hitler used to sit, right there. Scheiss [transcriber: *this can't be right(!)?*] position, right, uh, middle of the, uh, theatre and, uh, right where you could see the entire stage. Yeah, so it, it was a nice place to sit.
- Ellen: Huh. Uh, what were your impressions of Germany and Munich at the time and—?
- Roy: Well, pretty well destroyed. Uh, Munich itself had piles of rubble, uh, all over the place, and, uh, a sign sometimes would be placed on that rubble, “Ami[?] did this to us.” In other words, “Americans did this to us.” That's what they were saying. “Ami[?]” was a, uh, short form of America.
- Ellen: Uh huh.
- Roy: And I didn't like to see that. I wished I could've taken those signs down and buried them somewhere. [Laughs]
- Ellen: Where else did you go in Germany?

- Roy: Oh, I was in Germany two years, and then one day my, uh, squadron, uh, operations officer told me I was, uh, nominated to go to Belgium and instruct in the Belgium Air Force, and did I want to go? And he didn't have to speak that same thing twice, and I was as good as on the way. I said, "Yes, I would love to go to Belgium and instruct in the Belgium Air Force." He said, "You're it. Leave so-and-so and go to Florenville [pronounced "florenvelly]. That's your new assignment." And he said, "You're going on six months TDY [military slang-"temporary duty yonder"], and, uh, have a good time." And I sure did.
- Ellen: And you sure did. What did you do there?
- Roy: Yeah. I instructed in the, uh, T-33 and the F-84.
- Ellen: What language did you instruct in?
- Roy: Some Belgium, some French, and some English. [Laughs]
- Ellen: [Laughs]
- Roy: Mainly English. [Laughs]
- Ellen: Do you speak a foreign language?
- Roy: A little bit, sure. Parley vous francais [pronounced with an American accent]?
- Ellen: Okay. [Laughs]
- Roy: Yeah. And, uh, "Guten tag, mein Herr." [Laughs] "Bon jour, uh, madame." Yes, I can talk a little foreign language.
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: But very little.
- Ellen: Where'd you go from Belgium?
- Roy: Back to, uh, Furstenfeldbruck. When I, uh, finished a year of duty there--the initial, uh, time period was for six months--and they liked me so much in the Belgium Air Force, they asked our, uh, military government to extend me a year, uh, to a year! I'd already been there six months. Now I was extending to a year, and, uh, that met, uh, my fancy nicely too. I loved being there. It was just like Stateside. And, uh, that ended up one year of, uh, training the Belgians to fly the F-84 and the T-33. And when I

finished that, then, I went back to Furstenfeldbruck for reassignment to America.

Ellen: What were some of your impressions of Belgium?

Roy: Aw, they were nice people. But one of them did ask me, uh, "Are you regarding Belgium pilots as cannon fodder?" Would you understand what I'm saying?

Ellen: Why would they say that?

Roy: Because they're right close to the enemy.

Ellen: Oh.

Roy: See, America has an ocean between the Russians—

Ellen: Uh huh.

Roy: --and, uh, the, uh, and America, whereas, they don't have that. They have no, nothing but a landmass connecting them. And they feel that we were equipping them to take the initial stage of any war that would break out—

Ellen: Huh.

Roy: --and then *we* would come to *their* rescue. They actually asked me if they were cannon fodder, and I said, "Absolutely not! We look at you as an ally, and a very good ally." He said, "Well, I'm glad to hear you say that." He said, "I've had second thoughts about why America is equipping our Air Force with the T-Bird and the F-84." I said, "Rest assured, it's an honorable cause." Yes. [unintelligible]

Ellen: When, when you were in Belgium, what were your quarters like? What--?

Roy: Nothing, uh, fancy. Just, uh, uh, bare walls, boards on the wall, and, uh, just a cot to sleep on. It was pretty, pretty simple.

Ellen: Was it barracks, or was it--?

Roy: It was a barracks.

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: Yeah, uh huh.

Ellen: Uh huh.



- Roy: And it was designed for bachelor officers like myself. I was not married while I was there, so I lived in their bachelor officers' quarters. And right across the street was the Officers' Club, so I only had about, uh, 150 feet to walk and I was in the Officers' Mess or, uh, Officers' Bar. Yes, it was, uh, right close by.
- Ellen: What was your rank at the time?
- Roy: Captain, yeah.
- Ellen: Uh, what did you do for free time in Belgium?
- Roy: Traveled. I did a lot of touring. I, uh, visited Bastogne where the Battle of the Bulge, uh, had the, uh, 101st Airborne, I think it was, uh, surrounded. And I went there several times, and, uh, toured the battlegrounds. All around that area, you could see tank turrets, and even occasional tank hulks, burned out. Maybe look inside of one, you'd see a shoe laying in the bottom of the, uh, the cockpit where the driver would sit. It was really bad.
- Ellen: Huh.
- Roy: It was war materiel all over the place [coughs]. And, even, uh, GI telephone lines strung up in the trees *all over the place*, uh, telephone lines hanging down, some of them were cut, some of them were shredded when the installation was [off from them?]. And treetops were blown off.
- And I went out north of Bastogne one time, and I saw a tree trunk in, cut off in the shape of a "V" and a live American hand grenade was sitting there still good to use! It wasn't even rusty. And, uh, I lifted up a piece of leather strap one time, and it was an 8mm German ammunition belt. Uh, ammunition actually was tumbling out of the belt, and the powder was going, uh, sprinkling to the ground out of the cartridge because it had been [metallic sound] eaten through by corrosion. And, let's see what else. Oh, bones also. Neck bones came out of that, uh, harness.
- Ellen: Huh.
- Roy: Apparently, the German soldier had been hit by a mortar round that blew him apart. And it, it was really bad.
- Oh, then I went back to the museum in Bastogne and started talking to the proprietor, and he said, "You didn't go out into the woods, did you, Monsieur?" I said, "Yes." "Oh! Tres dangereux, tres dangereux! *Mines*, all over the place!" I found out that I shouldn't have done that.

- Ellen: I was going to ask you, were there any restrictions on travel?
- Roy: Yes, I shouldn't have done it. I could've gotten killed.
- Ellen: And you knew—
- Roy: He said the farmers, even out in the fields would run across an artillery shell. Boom! Up in the air goes their plow and their team and them. That's what was happening even in the fields, and here I was in the woods where they were setting up defensive positions, and fighting out of it.
- Ellen: Hmm. Did you go out there by yourself?
- Roy: I didn't--. Yes, I went by myself. But after that I didn't do it anymore. After the museum proprietor told me, "Stay clear of the woods. Very dangerous, Monsieur." Whew! Whoo!
- Ellen: Hmm.
- Roy: I got away with it, thank God. "But for the grace of God, there go I."
- Ellen: I think you told me, uh, earlier, that you'd gone to, uh, Berlin?
- Roy: Yes, I went to Berlin.
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: I wanted to see, uh, what there was to see in Berlin. Berlin is the, was the capitol of Germany. So I signed up for the tour through the USO, United Service Organization, and, uh, went to Berlin on a train trip. And it was really something. We saw the German, uh, ruins of Berlin, of course, the Reichstag.
- Uh, mainly though, we saw Russian soldiers, and we saw the sector that was restricted against entry unless you had authorized permission. That was the Russian Zone, uh, of Berlin. And we saw the, uh, Russian War Memorial, and uh, the uh, Russian soldiers that were guarding it had Tommy guns [Thompson submachine guns], and they didn't mind using them.
- For example, if you take a picture of them, you're apt to have a few slugs fired at you. Buses *were being* shot up! The, the guards would, brrrrrup [Ihde makes a sound like gunfire], put a burst of machine gun fire into a bus. It had happened before. So we were warned, "Don't bring a camera

up in sight while we're going through the Russian, uh, War Memorial area." Whew! Boy, those Russians were frisky. [Laughs]

- Ellen: What was the Russian War Memorial like? What does it look like?
- Roy: Beautiful!
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: It was very, very patriotic, showing the Russian soldier struggling with his Tommy gun against the aggressor, the Nazi German, the SS. Oho, it was quite a monument!
- Ellen: Hmm.
- Roy: Beautiful! It was a real tribute to the Russian soldier. I'll say that. Yep, it was beautiful—
- Ellen: Uh—
- Roy: --very heroic. But we took no pictures. We made sure we, we didn't, uh, aggravate the Russian guards that were there--
- Ellen: Uh huh.
- Roy: --at the, uh, Monument. Yeah, we were told what, what to do and what not to do.
- Ellen: What did Berlin look like at that time?
- Roy: Oh! It was—
- Ellen: Just—
- Roy: --it was really ragged. Oh, it was just devastated. The Reichstag was just a big pile of rubble.
- Ellen: Oh. And this was—
- Roy: That was terrible.
- Ellen: What, what year was that?
- Roy: That was, uh, '51.
- Ellen: What did you do after your, uh, tour of duty in Germany ended?

Roy: Back to, uh, the States on the *USS Heinzelman*, that was a troop ship. And I went to Bergstrom Air Force Base, Austin, Texas, and joined the 27th Fighter Escort Wing.

And, by the way, I, uh, ran into Lindbergh over in Germany, or, uh, over at the American Embassy in Paris. I was there with my sister, who had come over on an airliner. And I went to the American Embassy, and I looked at somebody that looked familiar. It was Charles Lindbergh, and he was there with his wife Anne.

And I told Ila[?], my sister, “There is Colonel Charles Lindbergh and his wife Anne.” Ila said, “I’ve got her books! *North to the Orient* and, uh, books like that.” She said, “I’d love to meet her.” So I, we introduced my, uh, my sister was introduced to Anne Morrow Lindbergh, and she was just thrilled to death.

And of course, uh, I walked up to Colonel Lindbergh, and I said, uh, “You won’t remember me, sir. I’m, uh--.”

“Lieutenant Ihde, how are you?” [Laughs] was the reply.

Ellen: Oh, you’d met him before that?

Roy: Yes, I had met him before.

Ellen: Okay. Where had you met him?

Roy: Alaska. I met him in Alaska in 1948 in the fall.

Ellen: And what were you doing in Alaska at that time?

Roy: I was flying, uh, cold-weather testing the P-80 fuel system out of, uh, Ladd Field at Fairbanks. Yes, I was there for just a short tour of duty.

Ellen: And what was Colonel Lindbergh doing there?

Roy: He was on the Air Force Advisory—

[TAPE SKIPS]—“—remember me, Sir. I’m, uh—.”

“Lieutenant Ihde, how are you?” [Laughs] was the reply.

**[End of tape 1, Side A; approx. 30 minutes]**

Ellen: And what were you doing in Alaska at that time? [Repeat; see above.]

- Roy: I was flying, uh, cold-weather testing the P-80 fuel system out of, uh, Ladd Field at Fairbanks. Yes, I was there for just a short tour of duty.
- Ellen: And what was Colonel Lindbergh doing there?
- Roy: He was on the Air Force Advisory Committee, and he was looking into the facilities that, in Alaska, just in case a war would break out and we'd be fighting the Russians through that area. He was checking to see what, uh, facilities we had. They were meager.
- Ellen: And what was your contact with him at that time in Alaska?
- Roy: Uh, he joined our squadron for, uh, two weeks and flew with us. And the Ops Officer had me sit down and go through the flight manual with him—
- [TAPE GOES SILENT]
- Ellen: When we left off we were talking about, uh, Charles Lindbergh and your meeting with him in, uh, Alaska.
- Roy: Uh huh.
- Ellen: You actually flew with him?
- Roy: Yes. That's, uh, correct. Yes.
- Ellen: Okay. Why don't you go ahead and describe that.
- Roy: He, uh, joined our squadron, and, uh, our Operations Officer was Captain Mullahnson [?]. He said, "You sit down with Colonel Lindbergh. Go through the flight manual with him. Explain all the different, uh, uh, features of the airplane: how to start it, how to shut it down, how to use the, uh, purging [?] system."
- We had to purge[?] it with gasoline in the cold weather. You actually, uh, run the jet engine on gasoline just before you shut the engine off so that it would have gasoline in the system and would be easier to start.
- In cold weather like we were flying in, forty-three below zero one day, the, uh, kerosene would be so stiff it would be like syrup, and you may not get a successful start if it's saturated with cold. That fuel system would get so cold the, uh, kerosene would be like syrup. So, using gasoline in the system for shut-down would assure you getting a decent start in the cold weather.

Ellen: Huh.

Roy: It was so cold, by the way, that, uh, when we flew in forty-three-degree-below-zero weather one day, hoar frost would form on the wing before we could even take off. We'd, uh, start up--the airplane would be brought out of the hangar, we would start up, taxi out--by the time we got to the end of the runway for takeoff, hoar frost, big, long strands of it, was forming on the wing. And we'd have to have a crew chief take the timothy [?] cover, run it up and down the wing until that frost is gone, then quick take off before it formed again. That's how cold it was.

It was cold! And, actually, it was so cold that you could take a rubber hose that's in your fuel system and, if you would pound a nail into the ground, or into a board, it wouldn't even break the hose. Yes, that's how cold it was.

Ellen: And where were you in Alaska?

Roy: Fairbanks, Ladd Field: L-a-d-d. And we were cold-weather testing the P-80.

Ellen: Was Colonel Lindbergh with you when, during that cold weather, or was it, uh, warmer?

Roy: Uh, he came up there for two weeks, to spend two weeks with us.

Ellen: In the wintertime.

Roy: In the wintertime, yeah.

Ellen: Hmm. Okay.

Roy: Yeah. And that was not a permanent assignment. That was only temporary duty up there. And as soon as we cold-weather tested the, uh, P-80 fuel system, back we went to Andrews Air Force Base again, where we were based. Yeah.

Ellen: Huh. Now, you ran across, uh, Colonel Lindbergh in, in Paris, France.

Roy: Uh huh.

Ellen: Did you [he?] say how it was that he remembered you?

Roy: Uh, he had an amazing recall of my name. I don't know how. I, uh, certainly was thrilled to death that he could walk right up to me and say, "Lieutenant Ihde, how are you?" [Laughs] But he did it. Yep.

- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: And Anne was, uh, very nice too. She was very reticent, shy, you might say, unassuming. And my sister got to talk to her. And, uh, she remembers that to this day. Although my sister is about eighty-five, she still thinks of the wonderful occasion she had to meet Anne Morrow Lindbergh, a *very* famous author.
- Ellen: Uh huh.
- Roy: Yes.
- Ellen: Well I think I had asked you, uh, after you were in Germany, where did you go then?
- Roy: Uh, Fursten--, let's see, from, uh, Furstenfeldbruck, I went to, uh, the port of Bremerhaven, got on board the S.—*USS. Heinzelman*, and, uh—
- Ellen: Uh huh.
- Roy: --shipped back to, uh, McGuire Air Force Base at Fort Dix, New Jersey. And from there I went to Bergstrom Air Force Base, Austin, Texas, 27th Fighter Escort Wing.
- Ellen: And what were your duties there?
- Roy: Uh, to fly the F-84 again, just like I was flying in Belgium, but not instructing in it now, just an operational pilot. One of the things I used to do: early in the morning I would take off in an F-84 and fly to Alamogordo, I think it was, the outer, the outer bank of, uh, Texas there, and go to a gunnery range and become Range Control Officer while aircraft would come in from Bergstrom and do the low-altitude bombing system.
- That's where you come in real low, pull up vertically, climb like the dickens, release your bomb, and go the opposite way away from the bomb, target, or pass, and, uh, get away from the explosion. It was called "low-altitude bombing system" or LABS. It was LABS delivery system. And, uh, that was to make sure you'd be far enough away from the explosion so your aircraft would not be damaged--
- Ellen: Uh huh.
- Roy: --by the nuclear blast. That's if we ever had to deliver an A-bomb with the, uh, F-84 Thunderjet.

- Ellen: And you were Range Control Officer?
- Roy: Yes. I was Range Control Officer for the, the bombing practicing.
- Ellen: So you conducted that from the ground. You were on the ground.
- Roy: Yes, that was from the ground with the radio.
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: You had a radio there and you could tell the people when to come in and when to break off.
- Ellen: Did you just fly in for the day to do that?
- Roy: Yes, just for the day.
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: Yes. Soon as the day was over, uh, one of the pilots might call me from the aircraft and say, "Okay, Ihde, we're all done. You can come back home." I jumped in my F-84 and go back home like a bat out of China, doing about, uh, 575 miles and hour as low as I could fly, *safely*. [Laughs] It was fun. Yep.
- Ellen: You were talking about, uh, uh, learning how to drop bombs, perhaps A-bombs. You also mentioned to me that you met Mr. Tall [sic] Paul Tibbets.
- Roy: Yes.
- Ellen: When did, where or when did you meet him?
- Roy: Yes. When I was at Offutt Air Force Base in, uh, 1965, I was Base Operations Officer. And one day I was told that, uh, uh, Brigadier General Tibbets was coming in to Offutt with a B-47, uh, Stratobomber and maybe I'd like to meet him. I said, "I certainly would." As quick as he landed and parked his aircraft, I was there to meet him with a staff car and give him a ride into Base Operations. And while we're driving into Base Ops, I, uh, talked to him and asked if he minded dropping the bomb. "No," he said, "I would do it again if I had to. It was my job." And that's when I gave him my punch line, "And *so would I*." [Laughs]
- Ellen: And for those who don't know, who's Brigadier General Tibbets?



Roy: Oh, uh, Brigadier General Paul Tibbets was the pilot of the *Enola Gay* that dropped the first bomb on Hiroshima on 5 August 1945.

Ellen: Was he still on active duty when you met him?

Roy: Yes, uh huh.

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: Yes. Yeah, he was, uh, on active duty, and he was the Wing Commander at, uh, let's see, uh, Little Rock, Arkansas. And he was flying a B-47 Stratojet, which was one of the fastest, uh, bombers that we ever had up to that time—that was '65. And he was very nice to talk to. He was a gentleman, and, uh, he was all goodness.

He was there to report an accident his Wing had had to Curtis LeMay, the, uh, head of the Strategic Air Command. Whenever you had an accident anywhere in the, uh, Strategic Air Command realm, you may have to go and report the accident to General Curtis LeMay and tell him why it happened and what you've done to prevent it from happening again. And sometimes it really put the commanders on the spot. Whew! [Roy whistles.] Yeah, that was not an easy position to fill. But he did it. I'm sure he, uh, did a fine job of telling how he would prevent the accident from happening again. You know--

Ellen: I'm going to take you back to Bergstrom Air Base, uh, we kind of skipped ahead here. You said one of the things you did was, uh, you were the Range Officer. Any other collateral duties you had while you were there?

Roy: No, no. That's the only one I ha-, well I instructed in the T-6 Texan Trainer. That was a, a side duty. Uh, I flew the F-84 primarily as a Strategic Air Command, uh, Fighter Escort Wing pilot, and, uh, I also flew the T-6 Texan Trainer as an instructor to check pilots out in it that needed a checkup.

The T-6 Texan Trainer is a conventional power airplane—not jet, now—and, uh, is powered by about 650 horsepower radial engine, easy to fly, and it's what I learned to fly in, in Cadets. It's called the T-6 Texan Trainer made by North American Aviation. I flew that, uh, on the side. And, in fact, it was not unusual for me to have to go to, uh, an air base, let's say, in California and pick up a T-6. Go out there on the airline, pick up a T-6, and fly it back to Bergstrom. Boy, did I love that! That was the greatest. I got to ride the airliner out, flirt with the, uh, hostesses, and fly a T-6 back to, uh, uh, Bergstrom Air Force Base. It just didn't get any better than that. [Laughs]

- Ellen: Huh. Um, I haven't asked you, uh, at this time you've been in for five or six years. Did you ever get any thought about getting out of the Air Force?
- Roy: Yes. I did, yes.
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: Uh, at one time I talked to Tony LeVier, chief test pilot for Lockheed. And I asked him if he had any openings for a test pilot like myself—high-jet time[?]. He said, "Yes." But he said, "Don't wait long." He said, uh, "If you want to come to work for us, come as soon as you can. If you wait too long, we, we may not be able to, to take you."
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: Yeah.
- Ellen: And so, what made your decision?
- Roy: I, I had to, uh, weigh the two. And I decided to stay in, because I already had, maybe twelve years of service, active duty—
- Ellen: Oh, okay.
- Roy: --and I didn't want to lose my longevity. Yeah.
- Ellen: Uh huh.
- Roy: But Tony LeVier told me, said they could use me as a test pilot because of my high jet experience, if I wanted to come to work for them. Yes. And Tony LeVier was their chief test pilot. Later on he became the Director of Flight Operations when he became a little bit too old for testing. [Clapping sound] But he, uh, he was a high official for, uh, Lockheed in Burbank, California, and a really fine gentleman.
- Ellen: How did you enjoy the Air Force life?
- Roy: I loved the Air Force life. It was great. I even liked to go TDY, or temporary duty, to different places and permanent change of station, which was called PCS. I loved it, because I got to see the country.
- Everywhere I'd go, I'd make the most of it. If I was going out West, I'd wiggle, visit every Indian battlefield I could visit that was even close to my path. Yes! Like, uh, Wounded Knee, the battlefield at Wounded Knee. Uh, there were others, like Beecher's Island. Those things are, are all a

part of my experience now, because I stopped in to visit battlefields where the, uh, calvary[sic] would, uh, fight with the Indians. Yes!

I saw also Buffalo Bill's Scout Rest Ranch [Scout's Rest Ranch]. And a lot of people didn't think the story about killing Yellow Knife, an Indian chief, was true. Believe me, it is true. He fought an Indian chief and killed him. Yes! Yellow Knife. Whew! [Roy whistles]

That's the West, and, uh, to see buffalo out there was, uh, uh, quite a sight for me. Uh, at one time the buffalo was almost extinct. By now, there's herds of them out there again. I love that. Uh, buffalo is, is a part of, uh, American, uh, western civilization, and I'm so glad to see the buffalo is back in thousands and thousands of numbers again.

Ellen: And, you were stationed in Oklahoma?

Roy: No—

Ellen: No.

Roy: --never in Oklahoma. No. I used to pass through there.

Ellen: Oh, I see. Okay.

Roy: Yeah, I passed through Oklahoma to visit my, uh, uh, Uncle Hermann Schlichting[?] living at Lamar: l-a-m-a-r.

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: And Lamar was also the home of President Truman, birthplace of Truman.

Ellen: After you left, uh, Bergstrom Air Force Base, where did you go?

Roy: Yeah. Berg-, Bergstrom Air Force Base was at, uh, Austin, Texas.

Ellen: Uh huh.

Roy: Uh, from, uh—

Ellen: What was your next duty assignment?

Roy: --from Bergstrom, let's see, I went to Dow Air Force Base, Bangor, Maine, 506th Strategic Fighter Wing. Yes.

Ellen: Had you ever been to Maine before?

Roy: No. It was my first assignment there. And I loved it, 'cause my brother, when he was, uh, in the bomber, uh, B-24s, they stopped at Dow Air Force Base en route to Europe! They landed at Dow. Now, here I was at Dow, later on, after the war, and, uh, you might say, it brought back old memories of my brother having passed through there. And now I'm assigned there. Yes, I thought that was really great.

My brother ended up a tech sergeant, uh, after he got out of the service. He was a tech sergeant, as, uh, as a gunner on board a B-24. And, uh, they did land at Dow Air Force Base to refuel, take on, uh, food and stuff like that, and then head overseas. Yes, that was an overseas processing base.

Ellen: Oh. What were you flying when you were [unintelligible]?

Roy: I was flying the F-84 there.

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: Uh huh.

Ellen: And—

Roy: And I wasn't there very long flying the F-84, and we got the F-84F Thunderstreak. This was now an F-84 with swept-back wings and capable of doing about 685 miles an hour. That was speed! Yes. And we were the first, uh, Air Force unit to receive the Thunderstreak. And that's the 506th Strategic Fighter Wing, or Escort Wing, whatever it was called at the time. I forget some of the titles and terms now, but we were the first one to get them.

Ellen: And where did you fly while you were there?

Roy: Over Maine, normally.

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: We practiced midair refueling. We practiced gunnery, uh, formation flying, that sort of thing. Yeah.

Ellen: How long would you--? Oh, go ahead.

Roy: [unintelligible] You had to get four hours a month to get flying pay, by the way. And, uh, we also had to have an instrument check every year, and, uh, we, we were kept busy. And when a weekend would come up, I might go to Lucerne Lake and, uh, go motorboating. I had a motorboat while I

was there, so I'd take the motorboat to Lake Lucerne and buzz around the lake. It was beautiful.

Ellen: Hmm.

Roy: Uh, Maine is the lovely country, very, very nice. I also went deer hunting in Maine, and I got a nice, big buck, a 230-pounder. And that qualifies me for shoulder pads "Biggest Bucks in Maine" Club.

Ellen: [Laughs]

Roy: Two hundred and thirty-pound buck. Eight points. Huh. Talk about fun. I had it. I was doing the things I loved to do.

Ellen: Had you hunted back in Wisconsin, or not?

Roy: Yes, oh sure.

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: I used to hunt with my brother up at Daggett, Michigan. I'd hunt with him there, and, uh, we usually would get a deer or two, sure.

Ellen: Uh huh.

Roy: Uh huh, yep. I, I didn't need the meat myself. I'd give it to my brother, and he'd use it for his family.

Ellen: Where'd you go after Maine?

Roy: Let's see, what did I do? Oh! Uh, Malmstrom Air Force Base, Montana. I went out to Malmstrom Air Force Base and, uh, I was in the, uh, 71st Strat[?] Recon Wing there. And we had FICON aircraft that were designed to hook onto a B-36 trapeze in flight and be retrieved into the bomb bay, partially. And that was called FICON, Fighter-Conveyance.

You would actually, uh, uh, put out a hook that was on your aircraft and pegs on the side of the fuselage and go up into the trapeze and, uh, once engaged and locked in, they would raise you hydraulically into the bomb bay, so that only your wings and part of the fuselage were visible from outside.

Ellen: Huh.

Roy: Then now they would conduct you to the target area, release you, and you would act as either a bomber, uh, delivering a weapon, or guarding the, uh,

B-36 Peacemaker. That was quite a mission. It was called FICON. Lot of people don't even know about it, Fighter-Conveyance.

Ellen: Is that something that's still done?

Roy: No. They—

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: They had to give it up. Uh, too many accidents were occurring during the hook-ups. [Laughs] One, one got a hole punched into his canopy. Another one got a hole punched in the nose of the airplane trying to hook up. Another one, uh, broke this [laughs] trapeze off.

And General Cannon [*Transcriber's note: possible ID: John K. Cannon, commanding general of Tactical Air Command, Langley Air Force Base, Virginia*], the commanding officer of Strategic Air Command at that time, said, "That's enough. No more. [Laughs] Stop, while we still have airplanes left."

Ellen: Did you--? But you did that?

Roy: Uh, uh, I didn't quite make it.

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: My turn would have been coming up. First they take the squadron commander—that was Colonel Curry [?]. Then they take the ops officer—A flight, B flight, C flight. And I was in D flight, so theoretically I'd have been among the last to hook up. I didn't get there. The trapeze [laughs] was gone, taken off the airplane by a collision. [Claps]

Ellen: Huh.

Roy: And, uh, that ended the project.

Ellen: How long was that project or program in existence?

Roy: Oh, probably about six months.

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: Yeah. And then General Cannon said, "That's it. No more. We can't afford to [laughs] use FICON any more." There were airplanes all over the maintenance hangar getting repaired. [Laughs]

- Ellen: That Air Force base in Montana, is it close to any, uh, sizeable city?
- Roy: Yes, Great Falls.
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: Yeah, I was at Great Falls for a while. And then our facilities were being prepared at Moses Lake, Washington. And, soon as they were ready, we, uh, moved everything over to Moses Lake, and that was called Larson Air Force Base. And, uh, that's where we did most of our flying out of then. Yeah, Larson Air Force Base.
- Ellen: And what were you flying then at Larson Air Force Base?
- Roy: I was flying F-84F, uh, Thunderstreak, uh—
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: --P-33. And one, uh, night I was flying and something strange happened. I still can't figure out what it was. I was flying over Washington State on a dark night, about 8:30 p.m., and I saw something green rotating and coming toward me from quite a ways off. And I looked at that as if to say, "What in the world is *that*?" And all of a sudden, it went right over my wing and lifted up with the curvature of the wing and is *gone*. And it reminded me of a green tumbleweed that was throwing off sparks. I don't know what it was.
- But I did get a book from the library one day on UFOs, and I wasn't the only one that had seen green fireballs. Other people had seen them, and there was no answer to it. No one knew what they were. But I saw one. And if that's not enough to scare you--you think you're all alone up there and have something like that happens, happen to you--you are wondering, "What in the world? Is that an alien, or a UFO, or what?" Wow!
- Ellen: What were your impressions of Washington State?
- Roy: I loved it. It was, uh—
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: --lovely. Yeah, Moses Lake was a nice area. The people liked us. We got along good with them. In fact, I even went hunting with, uh, uh, a resident of Moses Lake. He was a good friend of mine. His name was Walter, uh, Purrier[?]; I can still remember him yet. He, he didn't last long, though. He had a sickness of some kind, and he died from it. But he was a good

friend. They were nice people. And they liked us. They respected us, we respected them. We got along lovely, just lovely with them. Yeah.

Ellen: Hmm. You mentioned flying over the Arctic Circle.

Roy: Uh huh.

Ellen: Uh, when did you do that?

Roy: Yeah. When I was in Alaska in the fall of '48, we, uh, took off one, uh, one day about one o'clock, a squadron flew up over the Arctic Circle. And they were just starting to turn the lights on, because by about two o'clock it would be dark up there already. That's called "The Land of the Midnight Sun" and also "The Land of Perpetual Darkness" at certain times of the year.

So, uh, uh, it was only about four hours of daylight now, and, uh, we took off at one. So, theoretically, if we didn't get back to Ladd Field by two it would be dark. And, uh, the lights were starting to come on. We flew over the Arctic Circle, which was, uh, Fort Yukon, and when I got down one of the pilots said, "Roy, as far as we know, this is the first massed jet formation to ever fly over the Arctic Circle." Wow! [Claps] Another unusual thing happening to me.

Ellen: Huh. And how many jets?

Roy: Uh, that would be sixteen—

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: --that's in a squadron, yes. Uh, you have A, B, C, and D flights, and each flight is composed of four aircraft flying this fingertip formation like this. Uh huh.

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: Yep. Things were happening to me that I could hardly believe. It was just, uh, one thing after the next, and sometimes I had to pinch myself to see if I was dreaming. "Could this really be happening to me? Yes!" Yes, it was.

One time I went out to the gunnery range while I was in Alaska and fired fifty-caliber machine guns. And right beside the gunnery range, a bull moose and a bull, and a, and a, uh, moose cow, right beside the range! I could've kicked right rudder just a tiny bit and machine-gunned them. But I didn't. I had a respect for wildlife up there, and, uh, I shot the barrels instead of the moose. [Laughs]



And another time I took off. The caribou were migrating. I flew over a sea of caribou--I'll bet you there were 1,500 of them in one great big mass formation--caribou heading for their grazing grounds. And were they going! They all seemed to be stampeding, and, uh, I went over their [heads?] quite low, but not, uh, not--

Ellen: Was that because you were flying over? Were they impacted by the fact that you were flying over?

Roy: It wasn't, no, it was their natural way of doing it.

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: They were running before I got there. But, uh, I flew over them, and, uh, they, you could see that they were looking up at me as I went over. And then I got out of the area. But, uh, they were doing their thing. They were migrating. They do it every year.

Ellen: Huh.

Roy: Certain time of the year, away they go. But thousands of them [periodically?theoretically?]. The 1,500 in that bunch was just part of it. Boy! That, that is some beautiful country up there with, uh, beautiful wildlife!

Ellen: What was Fairbanks like when you were there?

Roy: It was almost like a, uh, boom town. But, uh, board type of buildings, nothing fancy.

Ellen: Uh huh.

Roy: Uh, they did have, uh, paved streets and whatnot, but, uh, I, I'll tell you, it reminded me of a early frontier town. That's what it reminded me of.

Ellen: And what year was that, roughly?

Roy: That was '48.

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: Yeah, the fall of '48. I also visited the Ester Gold Fields, where they had a floating, uh, a, uh, floating dredge picking up moss, running it through a process, and extracting *gold* from it! The moss, which had earth attached to it, would have gold in it. And they'd run this through a, uh, melting

process, and another process which would separate, uh, any gold that might be in the, uh, moss, and then expel it.

Ellen: You're saying "moss," m-o-s-s?

Roy: M-o-s-s, uh huh.

Ellen: Okay. Hmm!

Roy: Peat bog, uh, it was, uh--. Well that's what they called it: moss; moss, m-o-s-s. They take that on board that dredge, and, uh, process it, and get gold out of it. And I mean lots of it! Wow! I forget how many thousands of dollars a day they were extracting from that moss.

Ellen: Did you pick up any souvenirs?

Roy: No.

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: But I did see the dredge. I, I watched it work. And it was floating in its own water. It would move slowly back and forth and go to different positions and pick up the, uh, earth or moss and, uh, process it, and take the gold out of it.

Ellen: Have you—

Roy: We bought that I think, uh—they call it "Seward's Folly"—I think we bought that for \$12 million. I would say [laughs] that was quite a buy. Yeah, Seward's Folly.

Ellen: In addition to being in occupied Germany, you also indicated you were in occupied Japan?

Roy: Yes, I, I was in, uh--

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: --uh, Hokkaido Island flying air defense for Hokkaido. That's the northernmost island of Japan. And I was there on, uh, rotational duty. Say, for six months you'd, uh, pull this, uh, air defense for, for the island of Hokkaido. Then you'd ship back to your last base. And mine, of course, was Dow Air Force Base, Bangor, Maine. That's where I went back to.

And, uh, I did have, uh, a little bit of a, uh, excitement come up one day when we were flying around the, uh, part of the island that is adjacent to

the Kuril Island Chain. The radar called and said, uh, “Go gate,” which means, “Go to a hundred percent thrust; expect combat.” And, uh, they said, uh, “Bogies, nine o’clock, twenty miles, closing.”

I called the flight. I said, “Red flight, this is it. Pull your trigger pins, turn on your gun heat, and be ready for combat.” And radar called, and said, “Stand by. They just turned around, went back.”

They had, uh, MiGs had come out of the Kuril Island Chain, and they were going to, uh, shoot down the RB-50 we were escorting. Without a doubt, if we hadn’t been there, that RB-50 would have been shot down. *[Transcriber’s note: throughout, it’s hard to hear whether this is an “RB-50” or an “RP-50.”]*

Ellen: What’s an RP-50? *[Interviewer definitely says, “RP-50.”]*

Roy: That’s a reconnaissance aircraft, the RB-50, reconnaissance bomber. Yes. They had done it before.

Ellen: Hmm.

Roy: The Russians had shot down our unarmed reconnaissance aircraft before. They didn’t hesitate to do it again. But the four F-84 Thunderjets stopped them. You betcha. There’s no doubt in my mind they were after the RB-50.

They knew that the RB-50 was taking oblique [pronounced oh-BLIKE] pictures of the Kuril Island Chain. We were testing their radar defenses. We were looking into what facilities they had for basing fighters, and so forth. We were, we were getting into something the Russians didn’t like, and they showed us. But we also showed them.

There was a lot of, uh, funny things going on at that time. I know sometimes we’d take off at night, in the dark, and fly up over the Sea of Japan toward Vladivostok. Now this was out of Chitose Air Base, taking off, heading for Russian territory. As soon as the Russian aircraft would be launched by radar, we would be told to turn around and go back and land at Chitose. Mission complete: testing to see how quick the Russian fighters would be airborne. Uh huh. Testing, testing, testing.

Ellen: After the, uh, day that you got the, “Go gate,” uh, warning, what was the conversation like back, uh, on ground?

Roy: We didn’t think anything of it.

Ellen: [Laughs]

- Roy: We [laughs], we had to put our minds to work to figure out what in the world we had been doing, but—
- Ellen: Uh huh.
- Roy: --then we could see that, if we had gone to Vladivostok, we were making a thrust as if we were going to [laughs] attack the town, city. And when we turned around, radar launched their aircraft. We went back. It was just a game. Yes, that's what we finally came up with. It's a game.
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: They test us. We test them. Now, oh, I should mention this too. While I was at Chitose one morning--it must have been about four o'clock, just starting to get light in the eastern sky—we hear the sound of jets going over the air base I'm at, Chitose. Two Russian [veg?/vetch?] jets went over at low level, fifty feet, right across our airfield.
- Ellen: This is in Hokkaido, Japan?
- Roy: Yes [laughs].
- Ellen: Yes?
- Roy: [Laughs] I'm on the island of Hokkaido at Chitose Air Base, and now two Russian Badgers[?] go over Chitose Air Base at about fifty feet.
- Ellen: Hmm.
- Roy: And goin' like a bat out of China. Our aircraft tried to scramble, intercept them. They didn't have a chance. By the time our two F-84s were airborne, they were probably [laughs] nearing their own territory already.
- Ellen: And when was this, what year?
- Roy: The fall, uh, this was, uh, '54.
- Ellen: Hmm.
- Roy: Yep, '54. And we did have two aircraft on strip alert. But they couldn't get off in time to intercept the, the Badgers[?]. And they were too low for radar to pick up. They were right on the deck. Uh huh.
- Ellen: Hmm.

Roy: They were reciprocating from us—

Ellen: And you actually saw that.

Roy: Yes. Yeah. They were reciprocating for what we did to them.

Ellen: Uh huh.

**[End of tape 1, Side B; approx. 30 minutes]**

Roy: [Laughs]

Ellen: And when was this, what year?

Roy: The fall, uh, this was, uh, '54.

Ellen: Hmm.

Roy: Yep, '54. And we did have two aircraft on strip alert. But they couldn't get off in time to intercept the, the Badgers[?]. And they were too low for radar to pick up. They were right on the deck. Uh huh.

Ellen: Hmm.

Roy: They were reciprocating from us—

Ellen: And you actually saw that.

Roy: Yes. Yeah. They were reciprocating for what we did to them.

Ellen: Uh huh.

Roy: Yeah. We'd make a thrust on Vladivostok, they'd put two Badgers over Chitose. Uh huh. See what I mean? Two, two bad boys teasing each other.

Ellen: What was Hokkaido like in, uh, 1954? What were your impressions?

Roy: Oh, it, it had some beautiful areas. Uh, it had, uh, active volcanoes and, uh, beautiful lakes for fishing. And the volcanoes were smoking at the time, most of them.

Ellen: Hmm.

Roy: And, uh, we had the, uh, hot baths. You could go into, uh, Chitose, and, uh, go, or into the nearest town—I, I forget the name of it now—but anyway, you could go into these different stages of hot baths. And some of

them were so hot, if you'd go in there first you'd probably, you couldn't stand it. So you'd warm up. First you'd go into one of lower temperature, then the next one would—

[TAPE GOES SILENT]

- Ellen: Where we left off on the other tape, uh, we were talking about your, uh, tour of duty in Japan--
- Roy: Uh huh.
- Ellen: --in the northern island.
- Roy: Yeah.
- Ellen: And you were describing the island, uh--
- Roy: Yeah, they were very scenic. Uh huh.
- Ellen: Did you have much contact with the, uh, people there?
- Roy: Well, we did have a Japanese, uh, national, uh, working in our snack bar. And his name was, his name was Ebi-san[?], and he was friendly as could be! He was a young man, and he worked our snack bar for us, and, uh, he was as friendly as you could expect a friend to be. He didn't have any resentment toward us. He never mentioned the A-bomb or war or anything like that. He was just a heck of a nice guy.
- Ellen: Uh huh.
- Roy: And we all liked him. Ebi-san[?], I still remember him to this day. He even taught me how to count in Japanese--ichi, ni, san, hachi, lochi, shichi [1, 2, 3, 8, ?, 7]--I lost the, the, uh, way to count, but I, I could do it right after I left Japan and him. Yes. I could speak a little Japanese, but very little.
- Ellen: Overall, uh, how did your tour of duty there, uh, with your flights over northern Japan, uh, compare to other duties you had?
- Roy: Uh, I, I found it unusual, because the Japanese are so polite. They, they don't really have a, a word for "no." They can't come right out and say, "No." They might say, "So sorry," but they won't say, "No."
- Ellen: Hmm.

- Roy: Yeah. They're, they're an, uh, amazingly, uh, friendly people, and very, very polite. They, they bow to you, even. Uh, Ebi-san[?], for an example, the snack bar, uh, attendant, when you see him in the morning, "Morning, Roy-san." He'd do half a bow to me. Very polite!
- Ellen: Uh huh.
- Roy: Nice people. You, you'd never guess that they were beheading our servicemen, never guess it. Certainly wasn't Ebi-san doing it.
- Ellen: You talked about your flying. Uh, what collateral duties did you have if, if you weren't flying? Anything?
- Roy: I don't know what I would have done if it hadn't been for flying.
- Ellen: [Soft laugh]
- Roy: Flying fit me just like hand in glove.
- Ellen: When you were over there, how many hours did you get in flying each month?
- Roy: We'd fly, uh, probably ten-twelve hours a month.
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: Yeah. Sometimes more, sometimes less. We had to get four hours for pay.
- Ellen: Uh huh. And what was flight pay at that time?
- Roy: Uh, \$220 a month.
- Ellen: [unintelligible]
- Roy: That was for risking your life in an airplane, \$220 a month.
- Ellen: Huh.
- Roy: Yeah. But it was fun. I loved it. It just seemed like when I fly into, or, or get into a jet cockpit, it was like home to me. I had everything in there I could want. I had, uh, heat. I had, uh, speed. I had power. I had, uh, fun. I loved it. I loved the *speed*. Uh, 550 miles and hour was real easy for a P-80. It was redlined at 580, but you could do 550 real easily, just by leaving the thrust set at a hundred percent. It was just like sitting in the nose of a bullet.

[In] fact, when I checked out in the P-80 at Andrews Field, the, uh, local control officer called me, and he said, “How’s it going, Ihde?” I was on my first flight, now. I’d just taken off and getting up speed to climb, and I said, “Just like sitting in the nose of a bullet.” And I still say that today.

Ellen: [Laughs]

Roy: [Laughs]

Ellen: Uh, you mentioned, uh, one of the great things about being in the Air Force was the interesting people that you met. Uh, tell me about meeting Barry Goldwater, Senator Goldwater.

Roy: Uh huh. He was very friendly. I, uh, I felt, uh, very fortunate that I was able to meet him. I, uh, went into, uh, O’Hare Airport at, uh, Chicago to pick him up one time in the middle of the, uh, night. Uh, 2:30 or so he came out there and was ready to fly back to Andrews Air Force Base. You, you would never guess he was, uh, such a, uh, significant diplomat and that he had the power he did. I think he was on the Armed Forces Committee at that time.

And, uh, I asked him about, uh, our Air Force, and he said in a sense, because we’re not ordering newer aircraft and more up-to-date aircraft, we are disarming, even at the present time. And that was 1964 when I was flying with him. But we had very interesting talks, flying back from, uh, O’Hare to Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland. I, I found it fascinating to be with a man of his caliber.

Ellen: And how often did you do that?

Roy: Oh—maybe once every month or so, yeah. It wasn’t, uh, every week; maybe once a month.

Ellen: And what was his position at the time. Why were you flying a senator?

Roy: He, he was an Air Force, uh, reservist.

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: He was a Brigadier General in the Air Force Reserves, but a very fine gentleman, easy to talk to, friendly. And he could fly well. He, uh, he flew the aircraft quite well.

Ellen: Did you fly with him?

Roy: Uh huh.



Ellen: Okay.

Roy: I was in the back seat. He flew from the front, and he did a good job of it. But, uh, I could tell, now, if he got away from flying two or three months, then you could tell he was rusty. That showed up very plainly. He'd forget little things, and, uh, a pilot has to be taught to, uh, uh, be way ahead of the situation. If you're just even with it, you're, you're a passenger. If you're ahead of the situation, you're a pilot.

I emphasize that strongly. You've *got* to be ahead of things, anticipate things. First, you're in a jet that's so fast. Speed can get you into a lot of trouble, and the high fuel consumption can get you into trouble too, if you don't respect it.

Ellen: After Andrews Air Force Base, where did you go? Was that your last duty assignment?

Roy: Uh, let's see—from there I went to, uh, Moffett Air Force Base. And from Moffett I retired.

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: Yeah. But I was Base Operations Officer at Moffett. That's where I met Paul Tibbets, a brigadier general that, uh, flew the, uh, *Enola Gay* and dropped the, uh, bomb on Hiroshima. And it's interesting to note that the, uh, initial purchase for the atomic bomb was only \$6,000 to buy the graphite rods to control the fission. Uh, ultimately, when the bomb was finished, it had cost \$2 billion. And, uh, meeting Paul Tibbets was a wonderful treat. I really enjoyed meeting him.

He passed away, uh, one [1] November of '07, and, uh, when I read about it in the paper, I immediately sent a bouquet of flowers to the funeral home. His widow, uh, wrote back, and said, "Your flowers were beautiful and your words touched us deeply." And I said, "Thank you, Brigadier General Paul W. Tibbets, for doing your duty to God and country. We all love you very much." I'm so proud of that speech that I gave, or the written word. Yeah.

Ellen: Hmm.

Roy: I've told other people about it, and they said, "That was a nice thing to do." Because he did have reservations at times about people being, uh, uh, against the, the use of atomic weaponry, and he had to face some of that. But he sure didn't have to face it from me.

- Ellen: Hmm.
- Roy: I would have done the same thing he did--and could've done it in the F-84. The F-84G was, uh, designed to carry an A-bomb, a small one, mark seven. And I think that would have had probably the yield of about 20,000 tons of, uh, TNT.
- Ellen: And you and your unit trained for that possibility?
- Roy: Yeah. I was trained for that. I went to Special Weapons School, and I was trained to deliver an atomic bomb—how to arm it, disarm it, and everything. Yeah.
- Ellen: Hmm.
- Roy: But they were still guarding the secret of it at that time very much. You couldn't even see the shape of the bomb. They'd cover, keep it covered up by canvas. You couldn't see it. They didn't want you to talk about it, either.
- Ellen: And what time frame was that, that you're talking about?
- Roy: That was, uh, '55.
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: 1955, yeah.
- Ellen: You mentioned—
- Roy: I thought it was interesting, though, going through that Special Weapons School, because I had learned what made the A-bomb tick. [Laughs]
- Ellen: Where was the Special Weapons School?
- Roy: At, uh, Luke Air Force Base in Arizona. Yeah, that was interesting stuff.
- Ellen: Throughout your career you were sent to quite a few schools, I take it?
- Roy: Yes. Oh, yes. Yeah. Flying Safety School; Special Weapons School; uh, Arctic Survival School at Nome, Alaska, while I was up there in the fall of '48. Uh, now, uh, uh, Escape and Evasion School--that was from Reno, Nevada, Stead Air Force Base—and we went into the hills of California and escaped and evaded [laughs].

We had for five days, and we were out in the woods nine days. Did I get hungry! I was skin and bones when I went in, and I was even skinnier when I came out. [Laughs] Oh! But, the guys that, uh, had any fat on them—let's say they had a ring right here under their belt—they could make it okay. I didn't have any ring. I was thin and, and, uh, and even skinny. And the guys that had the, uh, fat would say, "Here's my sugar. Take this." [Laughs] I'd consider even a little, uh, package of sugar a real treat.

Ellen: How much did you weigh when you were in the Air Force?

Roy: Hundred and sixty-eight.

Ellen: And what's your height?

Roy: Uh, I was five feet, eleven and a half (5' 11-1/2").

Ellen: Hmm.

Roy: Yep. Those were the good old days. That's when I was U.S. prime beef. [Laughs]

Ellen: You mentioned you knew someone by the name of Rudy Anderson.

Roy: Yes. Rudy was a friend of mine from, uh, uh, Moses Lake, Washington. He and I ran the instruments school out there, for, uh, teaching, or, or getting pilots their annual instrument check. And Rudy and I ran the school and gave the flight checks.

But when that wing broke up—that was the FICON Wing—uh, Rudy, uh, wanted to go to Laughlin Air Force Base [*near Del Rio, Texas*] and fly the U-2. I had been flying the T-33 and, uh, wanted a T-bird beside it [?], so I went to Offutt Air Force Base [*near Omaha, Nebraska*]. Now, Rudy was flying the U-2 over Cuba, and he was shot down by a Cuban missile, and he was killed. And I lost a good friend.

Ellen: And when was that?

Roy: That was, uh, during the Missile Crisis. That must have been, uh, '50--, '60--, about '64--yeah, about '64, uh huh.

Ellen: Well, you were out of the service already, or you, you were still in--?

Roy: No, no. I got out in '65.

Ellen: Okay.

- Roy: Uh huh. This was just before I got out.
- Ellen: During the course of your career, how many planes, different planes did you fly [unintelligible]--?
- Roy: I flew about twelve, twelve different planes.
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: Uh huh.
- Ellen: And trained for each of them?
- Roy: Yes. Some of them you didn't really have to train for because they were closely related. Like a T-33 and a P-80, they were so close together you didn't even have to train special.
- Ellen: Huh. What did you do after you got out of the service?
- Roy: Then I flew for the Ansul Chemical Company. They, uh, knew I was retiring. So they called me and asked me if I'd come to work, right away. They said, "We need you tomorrow!" I said, "Okay. I'll be there." Sure enough, I was there and started flying for them and, uh, flew for them for several years.
- Ellen: And what's the name of that chemical company?
- Roy: Ansul Chemical Company: a-n-s-u-l, "Ansul."
- Ellen: Okay. And where were they located?
- Roy: At, uh, Marinette [Wisconsin].
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: Uh huh. And we had the airplane parked at the Menominee Airport, Menominee, Michigan. And I flew for them for several years, and, uh, they had hard times, they lost their airplane, and they didn't need a crew any more.
- Ellen: Huh. What did you do after that?
- Roy: I flew for Menominee Rubber a little bit and, uh, they had a Navajo. But it seemed like each stage now [laughs] I was coming down a little bit lower on the, on the, uh, totem pole.

Ellen: Uh huh.

Roy: I was flying a Navajo, and, uh, it was fun to fly, and the boss let me take it when I wanted to, to fly most anywhere I wanted to go! And he'd put the gas in! So I went out to, uh, Branson, Missouri, one time and saw my son play in a band out at Branson, Missouri. I, uh, took the airplane to North Carolina and visited my kinfolk there. I really had fun flying that Navajo, but it wasn't so much business as it was fun for me. Yeah, that was, it was a fun time.

Ellen: You got a lot of training while you were in the service. You got your G.E.D., or high school equivalency.

Roy: Yeah.

Ellen: After you got out of the service, did you go through any other schooling or not?

Roy: Uh, let's see. No, no.

Ellen: Okay. And you mentioned, you mentioned you have one son.

Roy: Oh, oh, I, I--

Ellen: Oh, okay.

Roy: I did go through some training. Yes, uh, Ansul required their pilots to go through refresher training at, uh, Greater Southwest Airport in Texas. I'd almost forgotten about that, yes. So, uh, I think it was '75; I had to go through the training at Greater Southwest Airport.

And, really, what it was, they'd teach you in emergency procedures—what to do if you lost an engine, that sort of thing. And, uh, they'd make you practice instrument approaches, and make sure your proficiency was up. It was good training. If you'd go through that training, you really were a safer pilot. And we had to go through it every so often. I don't remember what the time element was now. It might have been once every three years, but, uh, it was good training. If there were any, uh, weaknesses in your flying, they'd find them and correct them. Yeah.

And it was kind of fun driving to, uh, Greater Southwest Airport at, uh, Car--, that was at, uh—Greater Southwest. It was in Texas, I forget the name of the town nearby. Fort Worth! That's where it was, Fort Worth. It was kind of fun driving there, because on the way I'd stop at Lamar, Missouri, and visit my uncle Herman Schlichting[?]. He was always a, a

fun uncle to visit with. And I got to see the country driving across Oklahoma. Yeah. And I'd be there for a week going through the training and then drive back home. Uh huh, it was fun.

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: Yeah.

Ellen: You mentioned you got to see one of your, your, uh, sons playing in Branson. How many children do you have and where do they live?

Roy: Three, three children. I have Roger, the oldest, in De Pere, and he's fifty-one. I have a daughter Charmaine[?] in, uh, Marshall, North Carolina; she's forty-nine. And I have a son in Emerald Isle, North Carolina; he's forty-seven. That's it, three.

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: Yeah.

Ellen: After you retired from the service, did you keep in contact with, uh, any of your Air Force buddies?

Roy: Yeah. Yes, I did. Uh, Joe Heiss[?], he's a lieutenant colonel in the, uh, Air Force Reserves. He's living in, uh, Palmetto, Florida, which is a suburb of Miami, and he and I are in constant, uh, communication with each other, sure.

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: Uh huh. He calls me, we write to each other. We're in touch. And he's a good pal. I roomed with him at Williams Field, Arizona, when I was going through single-engine fighter pilot training.

Ellen: Huh.

Roy: And he is really a good friend; lot of fun. He, uh, taught me a poem I would like to recite to you.

Ellen: Sure.

Roy: And this fits me right to the "tee."

He, "When Roy Ihde is dead and in his crate / No more pretty girls will he date / And on his tombstone will be seen / 'Here lies the remains of a loving machine.'" [Laughs]

- Ellen: [Laughs] *How* old were you when he taught you that?
- Roy: [Laughs]
- Ellen: Okay. Uh, after your retirement did you, uh, join any military groups, or do you partake in any [unintelligible]?
- Roy: Yes, I was a member, I was a member of the American, uh, uh, Foreign War. Yeah. AFW, or whatever they call it? Uh, I forget the exact name now, because it's [laughs] so long since I was a member.
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: Uh, let's see. American--, oh, I can't remember the name of it. But it's, it's a, you had to be a member of the, uh, uh, Foreign War to, to, be a member of that. You had to be a member. Yes, I can't remember the name.
- Ellen: I don't know if you're talking about the VFW?
- Roy: Foreign, American Foreign Legion, that's what it was. Yeah.
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: American Foreign Legion. Uh huh. I was that in Menominee, but, uh, once I came here, I didn't renew it. I, I've dropped my membership, and no particular reason.
- Ellen: Uh huh.
- Roy: I was just in a new, strange environment, and I just wanted a little more freedom. That's all.
- Ellen: How about reunions with veterans, or any groups?
- Roy: Oh by, yes, I did go to a reunion in Dayton, uh, Ohio. And I motorcycled out there, by the way, all the way to Dayton, Ohio--620 miles--one day out, one day back.
- Ellen: When did you do that?
- Roy: In '78.
- Ellen: Okay.

- Roy: Yeah. And there's another one coming up now in September of this year, and that will be held at Portage, Wisconsin. I plan on going to that. And I'm hoping my friend from Palmetto, Florida, will be there—Joe Heiss[?]. He's from Sugarloaf, Georgia--Sugarlove, something like that—Sugar-, Sugarloaf, Georgia. And I hope he's coming, because he's a good pal and I'd like to see him one more time before we check into our eternal home. Yeah.
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: Cherry Love, Georgia, that's where he's from: Cherry Love, Georgia. Yeah. Uh huh.
- Ellen: You're a motorcycle driver?
- Roy: No, no, he's a[sic] airplane flyer, a boat owner, but, uh, I don't think you could get him on a motorcycle.
- Ellen: No, are, are *you* a motorcycle driver?
- Roy: Oh, am I.
- Ellen: Okay.
- Roy: Devoted, love it. That's, uh, like my life blood.
- Ellen: What kind of a motorcycle do you have?
- Roy: Honda, a 1993 Honda Interstate. And the 'Interstate' implies I'm neither on Earth, and neither in heaven, but in between. [Laughs] Whenever I ride I'm right in between heaven and Earth, yes—'inter-state.'
- Ellen: I don't know if anybody ever asks you, and young people ever ask you, whether it's, uh, whether you would recommend going into the Service.
- Roy: Yes.
- Ellen: What do you tell them?
- Roy: Yes, absolutely. Wonderful training.
- Ellen: Hmm.
- Roy: It's a home away from home. Yes. They'll train you to be, uh, uh, proficient in whatever your aptitude allows.



Uh, I never thought my aptitude in Basic Training, uh, testing, would be radar. But it was. I knew a lot about mechanical things. I thought maybe I'd be end up in the motor pool. No--radar school--and then, further yet, pilot training.

And, uh, incidentally, when you go before the board to be a pilot, they really ask you some difficult questions on judgment, use of your thinking power. For an example—

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: --they'll ask you, "If you were a, uh, convoy commander, and you're on a narrow trail in a jungle, and there's no way you can do anything left or right side but straight ahead or back up; you run across a log four foot in diameter across your path. What do you do?" You have axes on board. You have no, uh, uh, power saws, but you do have hand saws. What, what do you do? What's, what's the logic now? What's *your* logic?

Ellen: And what was your answer?

Roy: You're, you're a convoy commander. You've got a log across your path. You can't go any further. Do you build a road around? Do you back up? They're testing you, now.

Ellen: Uh huh.

Roy: They want to see what you're, uh, able to think about—get yourself out of a possible jam. Well, I would take it as a, uh, a ambush, and I'd back up. Get the heck out of there as quick as you can. Do-, don't stand stationary long. Artillery can soon come in, rocketry and what not. Yeah.

Ellen: Huh.

Roy: Get out of there quick. But you can't go on. You can't cut through a four-foot log. It's this big. But that's the sort of question they'll ask you.

Then, "What about rank, uh; do you think, uh, the higher the rank the more dignified your, uh, uh, paraphernalia should be?" [*Roy answered*], "Yes, definitely. A general officer should look like a general. A private should look like a private." They liked the answer I gave. But, I said, "An enlisted man should not have a rich-looking, uh, apparatus or insignia like an officer. The officer's insignia should be standing out separate and apart from the enlisted insignia."

Yes, they agreed with me, and that's the way it was. Officer's insignia would be rich-looking. Enlisted man's signature, uh, insignia would look just ordinary. Yes.

Ellen: Hmm.

Roy: Yep. They test your, your thinking ability. And an officer has to lead. They, they have a saying in the military: "Lead. Others will follow." That's true in civilian life. Lead! Other people will follow.

Ellen: Is there anything else you would like to add to this interview that we haven't covered?

Roy: Well, I would like to say it was a wonderful twenty-one years in the Air Force, and I owe it all to the taxpayers that made it possible.

Ellen: [Laughs]

Roy: Yes. It was wonderful. I got to see the world. I loved every minute of it. I got to make, uh, a lot of, or had a chance to make a lot of friends. It's been wonderful. I would say, if anyone had an ideal life—ideal in every respect—it's Roy Ihde. Yes. I have--

Ellen: Why'd you de-, why'd you decide to come back, uh, to Wisconsin after you retired?

Roy: Ansul Company.

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: I was at, uh, Offutt Air Force Base—

Ellen: Uh huh.

Roy: --as Base Operations Officer, and, uh, retired from there. And then Ansul called me and said, "We need you right away." They wanted me to be their, uh, pilot. So I, I left, uh, Offutt Air Force Base, went back to fly with Ansul *immediately*, and later on--two weeks later or so—I finally closed out my house in Belleview and moved totally to Marinette from Menominee. I first moved in with my mother, 1109 State Street in, uh, Marinette. But, uh, that was only temporary--

Ellen: Uh huh.

Roy: --until I could find a home. I found one in Menominee. It was on sale so cheap it was almost giveaway. I bought it, and I lived there about thirty years.

Ellen: Okay.

Roy: Yeah.

Ellen: But there probably would have been other offers. Uh, why back to your home town area?

Roy: Well, I, uh, uh, what's the saying? There's a saying that goes, "An acorn never falls far from the tree." That's the case with me. Yeah. I, I feel close to Wisconsin, my, being born near Peshtigo, having lived in Menominee for thirty years in my own home. Yeah. I consider Peshtigo, Marinette to be my home. Yeah.

Ellen: Okay. Thank you very much for sharing your experience with us.

Roy: You're certainly welcome.

**[End of Interview]**