

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
**WILLIAM L. PAUL**  
Pilot, Air Force, World War II.

2002

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**Paul, William L.,** (1924- ). Oral History Interview, 2002.

User Copy: 2 sound cassette (ca. 63 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 63 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

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

### **Abstract:**

William “Bill” L. Paul, a Kiel, Wisconsin native, discusses his Air Force service as a B-24 copilot in the European theater of World War II. After graduating high school, Paul talks about enlisting with a friend as aviation cadets, testing and preflight school at San Antonio (Texas), preflight pilot training in a Fairchild PT-19, and overcoming airsickness. He touches on passing periodic proficiency tests, flying BT-14s in Independence (Kansas), and advanced training on twin-engine aircraft at Lubbock (Texas). Paul comments on the difference between flying single- and twin-engine airplanes. He explains everyone wanted to fly a P-38 or B-25, but he was assigned to a B-24 crew as a copilot. He discusses flying to Northern Ireland, and assignment to the 67<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 44<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group based in Shipdham (England). Paul addresses not being assigned a specific plane, getting put on alert the night before potential missions, and in the case of hangovers using the airplane’s oxygen mask to clear his head. He recounts a close call when a shell came through the floor by his feet and tells of seeing the destruction of two planes over Saint-Lô. Paul states he was attacked seven times by fighter planes but flak was his main concern. He details the difficulties of flying in formation, having to keep a close eye on the lead plane under radio silence, and dodging flak. Paul speaks of the types of bombs they dropped and typical mission length. He tells of dumping bombs on the submarine pens in Kiel (Germany) after springing an oil leak, flying troop support missions in France and Holland, and practicing low-altitude flights in England. He mentions one of his crewmen got frozen feet and, due to having a cold, Paul once busted an eardrum upon descent. Paul addresses going into town on leave, buying fresh eggs from the locals, and having whiskey at mission debriefs. Behind his crew on number of missions after being grounded with strep throat, he talks about slow-timing engines and flying combat missions as an instructor pilot with newly-arrived crews. Paul mentions getting married a few weeks after returning to the States, censoring V-mail, and being a pilot instructor in AT-6s until V-E Day. After his discharge, he talks about working in banking, insurance, and real estate in New Holstein (Wisconsin) and doing land acquisition work for the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. Paul touches on attending reunions and being active in the New Holstein American Legion.

### **Biographical Sketch:**

Paul (b.1924) was born on a farm in Manitowoc County, Wisconsin and flew thirty-five combat missions in Europe during his service in the Air Force from 1943 to 1945. He married in 1944 and raised a family of five children. Following the war, he worked at

Peoples State Bank and had an insurance and real estate business in New Holstein (Wisconsin) until 1962, when he moved to Madison and became chief of land acquisition for the Wisconsin Bureau of Aeronautics. Paul retired in 1991 and currently resides in Madison.

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2002  
Transcribed by Cassandra Kitto, 2011  
Reviewed and corrected by Channing Welch, 2011  
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Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2012

**Transcribed Interview:**

- Jim: Now here we're going. Talking to Bill Paul, and it's 26<sup>th</sup> of June, 2002. Where were you born, Bill?
- Bill: I was born in Manitowoc County on a farm, in, ah—
- Jim: And when was that?
- Bill: That was August 18, 1924.
- Jim: Okay. And then, ah, so you were in high school, and the war began?
- Bill: Right. I was in high school of my senior year. On December 7<sup>th</sup> I happened to be at home at the time, and I heard the news, and I knew immediately that I would wind up in it somewhere, somewhere along the line.
- Jim: Sure. So did you have thoughts of rushing down and volunteer so you'd get in the service you wanted?
- Bill: Not—
- Jim: Or how'd you figure that out?
- Bill: Not really. I, ah, I was only seventeen at the time, and, I figured they'd get me after the high school graduation. So I stayed in high school, as did most of my friends.
- Jim: Sure.
- Bill: I don't know of any that dropped out to—
- Jim: Some got out early.
- Bill: Oh, yeah. There were some, but, ah, I don't remember anybody in particular in my class. But then, after graduation I went to some kind of training on aircraft frame and aircraft skin mechanics and so on, and that was only for a short time, and then the school folded so [laughs] it didn't help me much.
- Jim: Sure.
- Bill: But then I went back home and I had different odd jobs— on the farm, at a cheese factory, and so on.

- Jim: Were you deferred?
- Bill: No, I was not. I could have been. My dad wanted to have me, ah—
- Jim: 'Cause you were in the food business—
- Bill: Yeah my dad wanted me to, ah, join my brother in the farming operation and take over as part owner, but I didn't really enjoy farming that much. So, ah— of course, being a kid I got a lot of the dirty jobs [laughs]. I guess every kid feels that way.
- Jim: I believe it. I believe it.
- Bill: So, I knew that I was gonna have to do something because I was getting to be eighteen, and I think I had to register at eighteen.
- Jim: Sure.
- Bill: And, ah, a friend of mine -- two of my friends, classmates, had asked me to join the Navy with them. And the other fellow had gotten ahead of me. He had asked me to join him in getting into the Air Force, into the cadets. And I had promised him before these other two asked me; otherwise I might have been in the Navy. But anyway, I had to wait till I was eighteen, and then he and I went and enlisted in Milwaukee. We went through the physical and all this kind of thing and made it. And then they sent me home for six months. They didn't say six months, but, ah, they sent me home to wait until there was an opening in pilot training, which is what everybody wanted.
- Jim: Right.
- Bill: And, then in February I was called. February 28<sup>th</sup> I went into the service, and this friend of mine and I went to Milwaukee for the exams and so on. And then we passed. They recommended that we go to San Antonio, Texas. That's where they had the, ah, preliminary tests and preflight school and so on. And we got down there, and then we had three days of medicals and tests, and so on, psychological tests and whatnot. And then they recommended me to go to pilot training, and the other fellow went to navigation school. And that's the last I saw him until after the service. [laughs]
- Jim: Oh, my.
- Bill: [laughs] So. But we had joined up, we had wanted to be together.
- Jim: Sure.

Bill: That just didn't happen.

Jim: So, your first pilot school was where?

Bill: Well, we had preflight in San Antonio, Texas. Then I went to primary school where we had an open cockpit two seater.

Jim: Stearman?

Bill: No, this was a PT-19. It's a Fairchild PT-19 and an open cockpit, a single wing. The Steerman had a double wing.

Jim: That's right.

Bill: So, ah—

Jim: How'd you enjoy that, your first flying a plane?

Bill: Well, the first two times up I threw my cookies. And of course, the instructor sat in the front seat, and I sat in the back so I just throw over the side, and that was it. But, ah, after that it settled down, and, ah—

Jim: Never troubled you again.

Bill: No, until I got back from overseas. Then I had the problem again. But, ah, anyway, there were guys that washed out at that point because they --

Jim: For that reason?

Bill: Yeah, for that reason. They never, never, ah—

Jim: Adjusted.

Bill: Settled down to it, and—

Jim: Was that airplane easy to fly?

Bill: Oh, they're all easy to fly when you get to it. Yeah, that was fairly easy. It had the wide landing gear and, ah—

Jim: Very forgiving?

Bill: Yeah, very forgiving. So, and the other thing is, they had us land on grass fields so that—on pavement you don't skid or anything if you're coming in sideways [both laugh], whereas on grass, you can—

- Jim: Dig a little ground with that?
- Bill: Yeah. Yeah, right.
- Jim: The grass will help you out—
- Bill: The grass will help you out whereas on pavement you might wipe out the landing gear.
- Jim: Did you have to achieve the third degree of proficiency before they advanced you further?
- Bill: Yes. What they did-- I don't know if they'd advance you if you didn't achieve a certain degree of proficiency but ah, every so often we'd have a check ride with a check pilot, and he'd see if we were making progress as desired. So—
- Jim: That involved, what, treating the airplane decently and making turns and—
- Bill: Yeah, doing the different maneuvers, ah, and ultimately doing aerobatics.
- Jim: In that Fairchild?
- Bill: Oh, yes. The first time [Jim laughs] I got into a slow roll the instructor rolled her over like that, and it stayed there like that, and my knees hit my eyeballs, [both laugh]. I was hanging on for dear life 'cause all I had was the safety belt across my lap. So, ah, of course we all wore parachutes, but nobody wanted to use it.
- Jim: No.
- Bill: But, ah, that was an experience because I had never flown before getting in. And after the first couple of rides I was okay.
- Jim: You still were gung-ho and still enjoyed it?
- Bill: Oh, yeah. And, of course, we had to learn all the different maneuvers, and learn how to adjust for cross-winds and so on. And on landings and also just flying along, if you're flying down a roadway heading in a certain direction you'd have to make sure that you were, ah, crabbed into the wind so that you'd stay on course.
- Jim: Stay on course.

- Bill: And that was, ah, interesting. But then, after Sikeston [Missouri] we graduated into a little larger aircraft. I went to Independence, Kansas where they had BT-14s, which were made by North America[n], they're pretty much like an AT-6. They look like an AT-6. Ah, they have fixed landing gear, very narrow landing gear. So that was an easy one to ground with. But other than that, it was a nice airplane to fly.
- Jim: They had more power.
- Bill: Yeah, they had-- I forget what the—
- Jim: Well, they're two engines in the first place.
- Bill: No, no. That one only had one, but it had 450 horsepower. And I don't remember what the Fairchild had. I think probably about 175 or something like that. But then after Sikeston-- or after Independence I went to Lubbock, Texas. And there we had twin engine aircraft.
- Jim: Well, what was this called? Basic, or primary, or what?
- Bill: Independence was basic, and Lubbock was advanced.
- Jim: Advanced. They hadn't peeled you off into a category yet. Or was that the place?
- Bill: Ah, no, they didn't peel us off into anything other than the fact that we were flying twin engine. But there were also twin engine fighters and, ah, the medium bombers like B-25, and B-26, the A-20's, ah, P-38 fighter.
- Jim: You all had a chance to try all those?
- Bill: No, we didn't. We, ah, we flew the UC-78 which was a twin engine Cessna. That was the main one that we flew, and then we had a couple of AT-9s on the field. And, we got a few hours in that, but not very many.
- Jim: You went from a single to a double engine. Was that a problem for you?
- Bill: Ah, it's quite a bit different in that if you lose an engine then you've gotta—
- Jim: Get busy.
- Bill: Yeah. You've gotta know what you're doing. And, ah, for example, if you turn into the dead engine you're immediately— raise the—let's say the left engine is out, raise the right engine up this way to make a left turn, ah,



you could wind up in trouble if you aren't real careful because this engine will tend to keep on lifting—

Jim: Could turn you over.

Bill: And turn you right over. Overseas I saw a B-24 with two engines out, and he did that, and he went right into the ground.

Jim: Oops.

Bill: Yeah, "Oops" is right [laughs]. He had a load of hundred pound bombs, and they were exploding for the whole afternoon. But I watched him as he made his turn. I said to the fellow that was with me, I said, "just watch this."

Jim: You could see that he was in trouble.

Bill: You could see that because it was kind of a dumb thing to do in a B-24. It took two pilots to hold the airplane straight, you know, with two pilots standing on the right rudder.

Jim: If you lost an engine.

Bill: If you lost both engines on one side, yeah.

Jim: You had all you could do to keep her straight.

Bill: Right. So, the thing to do is, ah, not to use so much power, just make a controlled crash landing or something is the way to get it in if you couldn't maintain altitude. So that was kind of a shock to have to accept that idea. But the instructors always, -- they'd pull the throttle, and you'd practice this kind of thing so you'd learn how to handle it and they knew you could handle it.

Jim: I guess you're in the twin engine now.

Bill: Right. And then on -- see from February 28<sup>th</sup> to December 5<sup>th</sup> I was in the cadets. And then on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1943 I graduated from twin engine school and got my silver wings. And from there I was able to go home for leave for a short time. And then, ah—

Jim: But at that point did you know what kind of an aircraft you were going to fly?

Bill: No. We all wanted—

Jim: They didn't say anything?

Bill: No. We all wanted to fly B-25s with the cannon in the nose. We thought that was the hot stuff [laughs].

Jim: Oh, you knew that you'd be in multi-engine?

Bill: Oh, yeah.

Jim: The fighters had been peeled off then, by that time.

Bill: Right, right. They, ah, didn't even go to Lubbock.

Jim: They didn't?

Bill: No. They went to the schools where they had AT-6's—

Jim: Sure.

Bill: And advanced trainers. So, ah, we knew that we were in for twin engines, and everybody wanted either P-38 or B-25 with the cannon in the nose. [Both laugh] But then we were nineteen years old at the time, and we were the hottest thing around.

Jim: Of course, of course [laughs]. So, it must have been a thrill to go home with your wings.

Bill: Oh, it was.

Jim: Everybody back home was hootin' and hollerin'.

Bill: Oh, yeah. It was nice. And, ah, well, after that I believe we went right to Colorado for reassignment. No-- first we went to California, Santa Monica. There was a place where they'd shipped us out to wherever they needed somebody, and then from there— no, that isn't right either. We didn't go to California. Anyway, I went for reassignment, and, ah, then I wound up in Colorado, and there we got our whole crew.

Jim: Now you knew what kind of an aircraft you'd fly.

Bill: Right.

Jim: So your 24--

Bill: B-24.

Jim: What did you think of that? You hadn't planned on that.

Bill: I hadn't planned on it. I hadn't planned on being a copilot. But, ah, after I got into it I was pretty happy about it because it's still— you still had to fly the darn things.

Jim: Of course.

Bill: You still had to fly it. You had to be qualified. Ah, so-- and the personnel and the crew were largely my responsibility. So, I had a lot of responsibility.

Jim: Was the first crew of ten men?

Bill: Right.

Jim: The pilot was how much older than you, about a month?

Bill: Oh, no. He was-- in my case there as an exception. My first pilot was, ah, I believe he was about nine years older than I was.

Jim: Oh, my goodness.

Bill: So, there weren't many that old.

Jim: He must have been a regular.

Bill: No.

Jim: That's long before the war when he became a pilot.

Bill: Well, he probably started—

Jim: Probably [??] he was a civilian--

Bill: Yeah but he, ah, he probably started two or three classes ahead of me and graduated. But I don't remember how old you could be before they'd not accept you.

Jim: Did you get along with him okay?

Bill: Oh yeah, fine.

Jim: Nice guy?

Bill: Fine, he was a nice guy.

Jim: Where was he from?

Bill: He was from Texas. He's long dead and gone now.

Jim: Oh, really?

Bill: Yeah.

Jim: Oh, my.

Bill: So--

Jim: All right. So your first crew was assembled. Now what? Now you had to practice being a crew.

Bill: Now we practiced being a crew. And we, ah, flew the B-24 all over, and wound up in Westover Field in Maine, I believe it was. Anyway ah, no. That wasn't Maine. But anyway, in Westover Field [Massachusetts], wherever that is. And, ah, we practiced there and flew around—flew all around New York. And then from--

Jim: Did you—Excuse me. Did you fly in groups? I mean, were you learning to fly as a unit? Or just—

Bill: No.

Jim: Individually.

Bill: Individually mostly—practicing with the aircraft. And we did some formation flying—

Jim: [unintelligible]

Bill: Yeah. Formation flying to, ah, get the feel of it because you wound up with four throttles in your hand, and you had to make adjustments to, to stay—

Jim: Now, you have to tell me about that now. Now, you've really got your hands full.

Bill: Oh, yeah. Ah—

Jim: Did that surprise you how difficult or easy it was? Or just—

- Bill: Well, no. We learned to fly formation in, ah, even in advanced training we learned to fly formation.
- Jim: Now, I was thinking about having four engines now.
- Bill: Oh, yeah—
- Jim: Dealing with four engines adds some other problems.
- Bill: Well, yeah. You had a constant speed propeller. So, it was a matter of—you could push the throttles, and if one didn't quite pull its own weight it didn't make all that much difference. You still adjusted them, according to the manifold pressure on your instrument panel.
- Jim: Is this a constant problem found in the B-24, that you're always making these adjustments?
- Bill: Ah—
- Jim: Or not?
- Bill: No, not really. Except when you're in formation, of course. If you've ever tried to stay in formation with a car on the inter state highway it's pretty hard. You know, if they slow down a bit, and you have to be right there to slow down. You have to know what you're doing. And in advanced training they got pretty tricky. The instructor was flying in the lead aircraft, and you'd have one on each side, and all of a sudden he'd pull his throttles, dumb his flaps, and everybody would shoot right by him. [both laugh] It was good training because you had to be alert, and—
- Jim: If something was gonna happen in a hurry.
- Bill: Yeah. So you had to be alert and be ready to do the same thing.
- Jim: Sure.
- Bill: But that, ah, you know, it sounds like a lot of fun, and it was. It was fun.
- Jim: Now, you've mentioned that you came in as a copilot. That was the designation?
- Bill: Yes.
- Jim: That meant that you would always be a copilot?
- Bill: Not necessarily.

- Jim: You could change and be a pilot and—
- Bill: I could change and be a pilot. However, what we did— I flew all of my combat missions as a copilot. I flew several as an instructor pilot when new crews came overseas because I was experienced in combat flying and so when the new crew would come over I'd sit in the right seat and was the instructor pilot for the new crew until they got a couple— three missions. So, ah, I did some of that after the rest of my crew finished.
- Jim: So, when did you go to Germany, or gonna go to England?
- Bill: Well, this was in April of, ah, 1944.
- Jim: I guess I got that.
- Bill: And then we flew across. We flew from Westover Field to Bangor, Maine to Reykjavik, Iceland and then to Northern Ireland. We landed in Northern Ireland. I forget the name of the city or the airport. But, ah, at that point we were shipped by rail to the various bases. They took our new airplane and prepared it for delivery to some other airport— wherever they had the need for more airplanes.
- Jim: That wasn't yours anymore.
- Bill: It wasn't mine. It wasn't ours.
- Jim: Oh, my goodness.
- Bill: No. So, anyway, when we were finally assigned I was assigned to Shipdham [England], which is a small crossroads town near Norwich [England]. Norwich is in the northeast part of that bulge on—
- Jim: That was 2<sup>nd</sup> Division?
- Bill: Yes, [pause] 44<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group. I was in the 67<sup>th</sup> Squadron of that bomb group.
- Jim: 44<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group.
- Bill: Yeah. I've got that up--
- Jim: You have? I guess I just didn't see it.
- Bill: Yeah.

Jim: Okay. So, then you got another airplane.

Bill: Well, ah, we were assigned whatever airplane happened to be available. That's the way they did it.

Jim: With each mission you didn't know—

Bill: We didn't know

Jim: What airplane and—

Bill: No. We got settled in on one airplane. The name on the side was "Fifinella".

Jim: Oh, my. Unusual.

Bill: Yeah. But, ah, we settled in on that one most of the time. But then some days it wasn't ready, that it needed—

Jim: Then you'd fly something else.

Bill: Then we'd fly whatever they'd assign us.

Jim: How often did you fly?

Bill: Well, we flew sometimes several days in a row. And, then— I've got the dates. Now, I've got it screwed up here. I had the month in the middle here.

Jim: Oh, this-- you're looking at this date?

Bill: Yeah, on this one.

Jim: Oh.

Bill: So, here, the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, and then 3<sup>rd</sup> of the following month; 3<sup>rd</sup> of June. But the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May I flew my first combat mission to, ah, Saint-Paul, France? Yeah, that's what it is. That's what it says. But, ah, some days you'd fly one right after the other, and then you'd sit for a while because maybe the weather was bad or whatever.

Jim: When did you know you're gonna fly? That night, or not till the morning?

Bill: They'd put us on alert and say—

Jim: You may or may not fly tomorrow.

- Bill: Right.
- Jim: Like that?
- Bill: Ah, they'd put us on alert and tell us that we would probably fly in the morning. There would be an early time to get up. So we didn't go to the bar and hang one on.
- Jim: I was gonna say. You're not allowed to go— or advised not to go.
- Bill: Advised not to go. They didn't check up on you, and, ah, there were times when you got out a little bit too late, with a little too much to drink. And then you'd get in the airplane and you'd suck oxygen right from the ground on up, [Jim laughs] and you'd be okay.
- Jim: [unintelligible] on your way to the--
- Bill: That's right, and that'll wake you up, and you could manage. So—
- Jim: Oh, that's good.
- Bill: Yeah. But that, that happened.
- Jim: The general oxygen mask, could you control that?
- Bill: Oh, yeah. Yeah.
- Jim: By turning it up higher than usual it seemed to clear your head?
- Bill: Oh, yes. Yeah. That was good. [laughs]
- Jim: I suppose it was. How long did that take, a half hour?
- Bill: Oh, yeah. I don't remember just how long we'd keep the oxygen on because it took us an hour or so to get up to altitude. But, ah, cause we'd be climbing at about 300 feet a minute at best. Often it wasn't that good.
- Jim: Yeah the plane didn't go very fast as I understand it from the other guys that flew 24s.
- Bill: Yeah. It, ah, it was a little faster than a B-17. So don't let 'em kid you. [laughs]
- Jim: Oh, okay. Well, all right then. The main objection I heard was from Bill Carow, a fireman here in Madison for many years. He said, "The thing I



didn't like about it was trying to deal with them on the ground." He said, "They were terrible trying to steer around the ground." He said, "It was just like a—

Bill: Yeah. You had—

Jim: Once you get up in the air they're okay, but, god, he said they were terrible trying to maneuver around.

Bill: You had no controls other than throttles. You'd taxi and steer. You had a full swivel nose wheel, and you'd use your throttle. If you wanted to turn left you'd goose the ones on your right [Jim laughs]. And, ah, that was tricky. There is not question about that.

Jim: Well, they took a lot of punishment up there every [unintelligible].

Bill: They did. They did. They were a tough airplane. We had, ah, well, I don't remember specific missions, but I know one time we riding along, and I happened to be relaxing. I was just sitting there while the pilot was flying, and I had my feet stretched out between the rudders, and all of a sudden I had an itch so I picked my feet up, and I looked down, and there was a hole about five-six inches in diameter where a shell had gone through. Then it went up into my radio equipment up under the dash. Ah—

Jim: You didn't hear it come through?

Bill: Ah, I didn't hear it, but, -- and it didn't explode, but it sure tore a hole in there.

Jim: Wow.

Bill: See, you don't hear it because, ah—

Jim: Your engine—

Bill: And you got your headsets on—

Jim: Yeah.

Bill: And so you don't hear all the noise, but—

Jim: If that had exploded you wouldn't be here talkin' about that.

Bill: Probably not, probably not. And if I hadn't had the itch right at the precise moment that I did, I—

- Jim: That would take your foot off.
- Bill: I'd have no foot. [laughs]
- Jim: Right.
- Bill: So, ah, thank God for that. I remember during one of the missions— and I think this might have been at the Saint-Lô [France] — we were at a fairly low altitude, and assisting troops, bombing ahead of the troops so—
- Jim: This was the Falaise Pocket?
- Bill: Ah, I don't know what—
- Jim: Probably.
- Bill: What they called it, but it was in Saint-Lô, I believe. And up ahead the formation I saw where one of the airplanes got hit, in the two right engines, and of course they lost control. And they went right over— see we flew in formations of— there's three aircraft. There's one, two, three— four was underneath and just behind the leader, and then he had guys on the wings. So, the guy— number three lost two right engines, and he lost control, and she went over and hit this guy, and they just blew up.
- Jim: The two of them?
- Bill: The two of them. Just blew up. One big ball of fire hanging in the air, and I—
- Jim: You knew they were gone.
- Bill: They were gone. I saw pieces falling out from underneath, and probably burning parachutes. I couldn't tell what it was really.
- Jim: No. Well, that was a shock.
- Bill: It wasn't fun to watch that, but, ah, thank God it wasn't me, you see. [laughs]
- Jim: That's the best part.
- Bill: Right, right.
- Jim: So most of the missions were over in France and Germany?
- Bill: France and Germany, yeah. And, ah—

- Jim: Tell me about attacks by the other airplanes.
- Bill: Well, we had, as I recall, we had fighter aircraft attack us about seven times during all my thirty-five missions. So, I recently read a book, *Half a Wing, Three Engines, and Prayer*. That's a B-17 story and very interesting, but they finished up their mission, this crew that it was following mostly, finished up in late '43. So, ah, they were talking about having fighters almost all the time where we didn't have that.
- Jim: By '44 I think that they ran out of pilots.
- Bill: Yeah. Yeah, by '44 they were out of pilots, and we had been bombing, ah, ball bearing plants, aircraft plants, and so—
- Jim: So flak was your number one concern.
- Bill: Right. And that was interesting in that, ah, you learned to dodge that to some extent.
- Jim: How can you dodge that?
- Bill: Well, what happens, ah, you'd have your gunners, your tail gunner, and your nose gunner, watch where the flak was going. If it's in line with you, you could tell. If it's out a hundred yards, then the next one might be closer to the airplane about fifty yards and, you'd move it over about fifty feet. And, ah—
- Jim: You had the space to do that without interfering with the other planes in formation?
- Bill: Not always, not always. But if you could, you'd dodge it that way.
- Jim: Could you communicate with the other planes at that moment?
- Bill: No. No.
- Jim: There was no communication between planes—
- Bill: No communication. That was all strictly silence.
- Jim: Right.
- Bill: Because you didn't want to give anybody a chance to hear— the enemy a chance to hear what your conversations might be and so on.

- Jim: So actually, Bill, a whole fleet of planes in your particular mission then were following one plane, and, when he dropped, you dropped. Is that right?
- Bill: Right. That was usually a twelve plane squadron.
- Jim: Twelve? Is that the usual deal?
- Bill: Yeah. That was the way we flew. Like I said, there were six planes in the first flight, and then there were three planes in the flight up and to the right and another three in the lower echelon. And, ah, they had to fly at different levels that way because when they made a turn this one would have to slow down, and it'd stall out. This one couldn't keep up. So, what they do, when the lead aircraft made a turn, you'd scoot over it and then catch up and—
- Jim: Oh. You didn't fly in formation, the same formation. You adjusted then.
- Bill: Well, you had to adjust in order to keep up because—
- Jim: The inside plane had to slow down; the outside plane had to catch up.
- Bill: Right, right. Now, the inside plane, the lower echelon would be on the inside on the left turn, and they would scoot underneath. And it was just a matter of flowing— **[End of Tape 1, Side A]**
- Jim: That's good. That takes practice.
- Bill: It takes practice and—
- Jim: Especially when you're not communicating.
- Bill: Right. It's, ah, a matter of watching to make sure that you know what that lead plane is doing. And then when going over the target -- first of all you had your initial point, I.P. they called it, where that'd be about thirty miles or ten minutes from the target. And from that point on everybody pulled in real tight and close, and, ah, you'd stay in formation just as best you could all the way. And that's when flak was dangerous because you couldn't move around. And of course at that point there wasn't any enemy fighter ever because they knew the flak was coming. [laughs] So—
- Jim: Right.
- Bill: So, ah—

- Jim: And then you all dropped at the same moment after the lead plane dropped?
- Bill: The lead plane dropped. He'd aim about 200 feet ahead of the target. And that took care of the lag time when the others were watching him and the bombs came out. They'd toddle, and everything formed a pattern as you saw in those pictures—
- Jim: So, but everyone dropped at the same moment then. You'd get a pattern on the ground.
- Bill: Right. It usually was like an oval shape pattern; had right angles to the line of flight—
- Jim: Usually you carried 500 pounders?
- Bill: We had all different kinds. We had 500 pounders. We had 1000 pounders.
- Jim: Oh, really?
- Bill: Oh, yeah. We had hundred pounders. And—
- Jim: Anti-personnel type things?
- Bill: Well, not necessarily. The hundred pounders, I think were regular explosives, but, ah, we had anti-personnel. We had incendiary bombs at times—
- Jim: Did you know what you were carrying?
- Bill: Oh, yeah. You couldn't miss it because [laughs] you'd get in through the bomb bay.
- Jim: So you could see what they'd left you.
- Bill: Oh, sure. Sure.
- Jim: These guys had your ship full, ready to go.
- Bill: Right.
- Jim: When you got up in the morning, what time?
- Bill: Oh, sometimes you'd have to be up at 3:00 o'clock.
- Jim: Jesus.

Bill: And, ah—

Jim: Did they feed you then?

Bill: Yeah.

Jim: How about—

Bill: They'd feed you, and then you'd go to the briefing. And you'd probably take off around 5:00. It was a time lag in there.

Jim: So, and how long before nearing the target? That took what, a couple hours?

Bill: Yeah. We had, ah, well I've got it here. Of my missions the average time per missions was six point--ah, six hours and thirty-five minutes average. But we had, ah, some nine hour flights. Berlin was a long haul. And we had one that I—

Jim: Berlin's a long haul. About eight hours?

Bill: Eight to nine hours.

Jim: Took you four hours to get there and four hours to get home.

Bill: Right. Right. Right.

Jim: You never worried about running out of gas? That was not a problem?

Bill: Well, that was a problem, and it could be a problem if you sprung a leak or anything.

Jim: Oh, yeah. Well, that changes it.

Bill: Yeah. We—

Jim: Did you have to -- did you ever miss a target or not drop because of clouds and then turn around and try to hit coming back home or anything?

Bill: That happened a number of times. Usually we had pretty good weather information, but there were times when we had to turn around and we dumped the bombs in the North Sea or wherever in order to get rid of them.

Jim: But you did not want to come home with those?

- Bill: We never landed with a load of bombs, no. Ah, one time, we had an oil leak on one of our engines so we were coming in, I forget where we were headed, but, anyway, we were coming in over the narrow neck of Denmark, right north of Germany, and then heading down into the target area. Well, just as we were coming over Germany we decided to turn back with our airplane because we were losing oil, and we were not gonna spend that much time over enemy territory. 'Cause when you feather an engine that's pretty attractive to the enemy fighters because you're slowed up, and you're not with the rest of the formation probably. And, ah, being alone, you didn't have all the other guns that were in the formation. So, they'd come and pick on you. So, we decided we'd turn back, and, ah—
- Jim: Before the drop?
- Bill: Before we dropped. And on the way we were coming back over that narrow neck of Denmark, and we realized that we were pretty close to Kiel [Germany], and they had submarine pens there. They were building submarines. So, we took a run on that. And, ah, we didn't wanna get too close, but anyway, we headed in toward it, and as we got close enough, why, all of a sudden here the flak started coming up.
- Jim: Naturally, yeah.
- Bill: So a bombardier says, "Well, ah, let's just—
- Jim: Close enough? [laughs]
- Bill: Yeah, it's close enough. So he said, "I'll flip it," because you could flip the airplane and get a little extra momentum.
- Jim: You could juice it a little further ahead?
- Bill: Yeah. And so he said, "I can do that." So he tried to do that, and we had hundred pounders on that day, and they marched right up. We could see them in the water. They marched right to within about a hundred feet of the submarine pen. [laughs] But, so it was then, anyway. Ah, we had—most of our missions were at about, between twenty and thirty thousand feet. We had a few at thirty, at thirty-one thousand, as I recall, but most of them were in the low twenties. And then we had a couple in troop support that were at ten and twelve thousand feet. That was in France. Saint-Lô I recall is one place. And then of course the low flight over Holland was to Arnheim— it's not listed at Arnheim here. It's Breda, which is close to Arnheim. And that's where we went in at tree top level, pulled up to 1,000 feet. That's where we could drop our supplies, and the chutes would open. And then after we unloaded, then we pulled up to 3,000. See we were

subject to small arms fire at 1,000 feet, yet. But then at 3,000 you could still get some of that, but anyway at that point we had to get up and out of the way of the incoming aircraft.

Jim: You don't recall what outfit you were dropping to? Wherever— was this part of the Market Garden [operation market garden, Sept. 17-25, 1944, in the Netherlands and Germany; largest airborne operation up to that time] deal?

Bill: No, I don't know what the name of the outfit was or the name of the, ah, what they called that event. But, ah, I would guess that somewhere—

Jim: When was that?

Bill: That was, ah, September 18, 1944.

Jim: That was Market Garden.

Bill: But I think that's what it was, yeah.

Jim: That's when they tried to take, you know, sneak an end run against Germany, and it didn't work.

Bill: Yeah, right.

Jim: So they couldn't get that bridge.

Bill: 'Cause they were surrounded there, yeah.

Jim: They were dropping 'em on the 101<sup>st</sup> and the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne who was on the ground then.

Bill: Yeah, no, ah, I don't know, I think there might be a picture or two in this group that I had here showing some of the gliders that came in.

Jim: Yeah.

Bill: And a lot of the airplanes.

Jim: That's Airborne; Airborne, sure.

Bill: Yeah, right.

Jim: Did that make you nervous, getting down at 3,000 feet? You're a target now.



Bill: Well, coming out at 3,000 feet, yeah, you were a pretty good target. And the nice thing about going in at low altitude, by the time they saw you—

Jim: You were gone.

Bill: You were gone. But, ah, it was kinda fun. For three days prior to that mission we were practicing all over England, and—

Jim: [laughs] And scaring the natives?

Bill: Oh, and how!

Jim: And how. Gosh, almighty. A thousand feet? Oh, you must have terrified them.

Bill: We were below a thousand. When we practiced we went on the ground level, treetop level. We came over trees one time, and then there was an airport, and we went right down about a foot off the ground and just scooted right along about 180 miles and hour. [laughs]

Jim: Geez.

Bill: We had fun.

Jim: Yeah, I know, but I just think the natives were really rattled when you guys did that.

Bill: Oh, yeah, yeah. Well, ah, this didn't happen to me, but one of the guys came back to the base, and he had a big dent in between the two engines on the right side. And what had happened, he had buzzed some, ah, sailboats on one of the lakes there. [laughs]

Jim: The mast?

Bill: It hit a mast. [both laugh] So, it was—

Jim: Lucky it didn't pull him down.

Bill: Yeah. Well, it's amazing that the prop didn't hit it, or whatever, but, you know, it's kinda surprising that the distance a prop travels in one revolution.

Jim: I bet.

Bill: Yeah.

- Jim: Did any of your mates get wounded?
- Bill: No. None of my crew ever got hit. So, one of our fellows lost— the gunners in the back would have nothing to do for a couple of hours on the way going till we got over enemy territory, and then again on the way home. So, what they'd do— they'd take their normal street clothes along in a big duffle bag, and they'd set that in the back seat, in the back behind the bomb bay, in the back end of the tail, and on the way home they'd change into their street clothes so they'd be ready to hit town as soon as they got down. [both laughs] Well, one of our gunners, ah, had a shell get into his duffle bag full of street clothes and it tore it all to shreds. There was nothing left, so—
- Jim: Oh, my.
- Bill: Then this same guy froze his feet one time. I guess his, ah, electrical system didn't work. So, when his electric suit— he had foot troubles for years to come.
- Jim: Well, you're lucky to finish thirty-five missions, I must say.
- Bill: Yeah. One mission coming home I had a cold, and I shouldn't have flown, but anyway I did, and coming home, ah, on the descent I busted an eardrum. It just went [makes whistling noise]. Like a --
- Jim: Nature was giving you the disease.
- Bill: Right, right. So, ah, and the crazy thing is I never reported it. Now if I wanted to get a hearing aid-- I have to pay for it.
- Jim: [unintelligible]
- Bill: Yeah, if I have to have a hearing aid, I have to pay for it [laughs].
- Jim: Right. Did you have hearing problems in that ear?
- Bill: No. I still don't. It—
- Jim: There shouldn't be.
- Bill: No, it, ah, it healed over, but I had a doctor check my ears, you know, in routine checkup and he asked if I had ever broken my eardrum. And I said, "Well, let me think."
- Jim: Nature did it, yeah.

- Bill: Yeah, and I hadn't thought about until he mentioned it. But then there is no question that that's what it was.
- Jim: I'm sure it was.
- Bill: Yeah.
- Jim: So, ah, when you were off, you know, when you knew you had a day or two off, did they announce that, that you knew that you could go into town or could go to London and all that?
- Bill: Well, yeah. We had time off. I went to London once. I didn't really get much kick out of it, but -- and Norwich was closer, and we went to Norwich a number of times, and then, of course, Shipdham had, ah, I don't know, it was four bars and one church. [laughs]
- Jim: So, did you get along with the natives all right?
- Bill: Oh, yeah. We had no problem. In fact, I bought a bicycle and used to ride out in the country and buy fresh eggs and—
- Jim: Oh.
- Bill: In the mess hall the mess sergeant had a little grill where if you had your own fresh eggs--
- Jim: He'd let you cook them?
- Bill: He's fry 'em up--
- Jim: He'd fry 'em for you.
- Bill: He'd fry them for you. Otherwise you got powdered eggs. But, ah, yeah, it was quite an experience.
- Jim: You didn't have to go to dances with some British girls where you were at?
- Bill: We had--I think once or twice, they had a dance at the mess hall that brought the girls in by bus.
- Jim: Sure, yeah.
- Bill: And, ah, then I think about two or three times I went to Norwich. But I don't know, it wasn't the same as at home, you know.

Jim: No kiddin'

Bill: No.

Jim: And the Red Cross and the Salvation Army, did you see any of them?

Bill: Yeah, ah, Red Cross was always there. When we came back from mission they had sandwiches and cigarettes and ah—

Jim: Shot of whiskey?

Bill: A shot of whiskey. Course, the shot of whiskey, I think that was "government issue" because they would set our whole crew around the table, and then we'd all tell our version—

Jim: To debrief the mission?

Bill: Yeah, yeah. We'd all tell our story as we saw it, and then somebody would summarize it. I wish I had made an effort to get some part of that summary. I think that was kept pretty secret, though.

Jim: Probably.

Bill: Yeah, but I read this book, you know, that I mentioned before, about the B-17s and, ah, boy, those guys kept diaries, and—

Jim: A lot of them.

Bill: Yeah. And I believed them when they told me that we were not supposed to do that [laughs] or pictures, too.

Jim: Sure.

Bill: So, ah, let's see. I came home on Christmas day. I arrived home—

Jim: You knew about— by the way— you knew when thirty-five was it—you knew when you had your thirty-fifth mission that they'd promise you that you'd go home. Is that right, or?

Bill: Yeah, right. Now, what happened was when I first got over there twenty-five was the limit.

Jim: Yes, right.

Bill: And then while I was there they raised it to thirty. And then my crew— I was over the D-Day time, June 6<sup>th</sup>, I had strep throat. So they put me in

the hospital and I couldn't fly. And because there was maximum effort they had my crew fly and picked up another copilot somewhere, and I got behind several missions there. So, when they finished up I sat in England, and I was flying, just slow timing engines. When they'd put in the new engine you'd have to put a certain number of hours on it at reduced rpm.

Jim: Oh.

Bill: And I was doing that kind of thing, and when somebody needed a copilot I would fly. Or in a couple of instances, I forget how many, I flew as the instructor pilot because I had the combat experience.

Jim: Combat, right.

Bill: So, ah—

Jim: Very boring but safe.

Bill: Yeah, I sat there and smoked cigarettes and, ah, partied, played poker. [laughs] And then came home Christmas day, 1944. January 9<sup>th</sup> I got married. We had met before I went to the service, but—

Jim: And you had been corresponding?

Bill: We had been corresponding all—

Jim: The mail was pretty good, by the way, during—

Bill: Yeah. It was good. We used this, ah, I forget what they call—

Jim: V-mail.

Bill: V-mail, yeah. And, ah, that worked out pretty good. That's another thing I had to do. When I was sitting around over there I was checking mail, you know, or what do they call it?

Jim: Censoring it?

Bill: Censoring.

Jim: Of the crew?

Bill: Yeah.

Jim: Was that another one of your jobs?

Bill: Yeah. That was part of it when you had nothing else to do [laughs]—

Jim: Get a stack and go through it.

Bill: The officers would get a stack of mail. It wasn't necessarily my crew, but—

Jim: Sure.

Bill: Somebody else's crew I—

Jim: What were they looking for? They didn't want any mention of any numbers?

Bill: Ah, mention of numbers and the name of the outfit and so on. Everything was pretty well secret.

Jim: So if you found something in there that you didn't think should be there, what would you do?

Bill: You'd just black it out with, a--

Jim: With what?

Bill: A black pen.

Jim: Black pen.

Bill: Yeah.

Jim: Okay.

Bill: Marker pen or whatever they call it.

Jim: The guy who wrote the letter would never see that.

Bill: No, no.

Jim: But, even though they'd been instructed, I'm sure, many times—

Bill: Well, every once in a while, you know, somebody had worked out codes, you know, and they'd—

Jim: They'd get the message they wanted home.

- Bill: Yeah. Yeah, right. But, ah, that was pretty hard to detect. Especially us, we were not professionals at that.
- Jim: They didn't really care that much.
- Bill: No, no. But, ah, if you found something that was kind of glaring you'd wipe it out. Okay. I, ah, oh, I did check out as first pilot, by the way, while I was still overseas, and they wanted me to come back and sign up for another tour.
- Jim: After you got home?
- Bill: No, when I was over there, they were asked me—
- Jim: Oh, before they sent you home.
- Bill: Before they sent me home they asked me if I'd like to volunteer for another tour because, ah, I'd get an immediate promotion.
- Jim: Sure.
- Bill: To captain. And, ah, then they promised me a lead crew. I'd be flying a lead crew, and--
- Jim: What's the advantage of that, Bill?
- Bill: Well, there's a little more prestige as a lead crew pilot. You'd probably advance to major pretty quick. So—
- Jim: That's an increased responsibility?
- Bill: Yes. But I decided I did not want to do that, and so they sent me home, and then I went to California. Well, January 9<sup>th</sup> I got married, and then we went to California together. And from there I was reassigned as a pilot instructor. I went to another training school for pilot instructor. And, ah, I went to Independence, Kansas again. This time I was flying AT-6s there. And, ah—
- Jim: Excuse me. Get you back into fighters here.
- Bill: Yeah. So, ah—
- Jim: What did you think of that?
- Bill: Oh, it was fun because—

- Jim: I was gonna say that must have been a bunch of fun from flying—
- Bill: Oh, yeah. But I'll tell you, the first couple of slow rolls I got sicker than a dog again.
- Jim: Oh, my God.
- Bill: Well, in the B-24 you don't make anything steeper than a fifteen degree bank, and here when you did the snap roll especially it flipped the airplane over fast, and the old stomach would go back and forth, and pretty soon it was coming up. [both laugh]
- Jim: Right.
- Bill: But that again lasted only two days. And then I was all right again, and I could do the rolls and whatever—
- Jim: It's a great airplane, that AT-6.
- Bill: Oh, yeah.
- Jim: I see so many at the E.A.A. [Experimental Aircraft Association].
- Bill: Yeah, that's why it's preserved
- Jim: I really like that plane.
- Bill: That's why it's been preserved. And they had the retractable gear, 650 horsepower. And, so, you could roll that and put the nose right where you wanted it and keep it right on the—
- Jim: Right--
- Bill: Rotation.
- Jim: With the power
- Bill: Yeah, right.
- Jim: So, you're getting close to being out now.
- Bill: Well, this was-- then from there I went to Waco, Texas for some more training. I guess it was all about the AT-6 anyway, and then from there I went to McAllen, Texas where I was instructing for a short time until V-E [Victory in Europe] Day. And, ah, but a few days after the war ended in Europe they called me into the headquarters, and they asked if I wanted to



go home. And I said, “Are you nuts?” [laughs] “Sure, I wanna go home.” So, having been overseas I had more points than most of these instructors that had been there all the time, and they stayed, and of course I went home. So, by the end of May I was home. Early in May of '45 I was on my way home.

Jim: Then did you just proceed to get out?

Bill: Right. I did, and actually I guess I was out in May— I know I was out in May, but with earned leave I was officially separated as of June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1945. Then I went and worked at People’s State Bank in New Holstein [Wisconsin].

Jim: No G.I. Bill?

Bill: Ah, I did for a little while. I took up drafting, and I thought that would be interesting. And, ah, I got a job drafting at the local industry in New Holstein, and that got pretty boring. I didn’t really care for it. So—

Jim: You were used to wild stuff [laughs].

Bill: Well, I had an opportunity to get into the insurance business with our local bank. And I worked at the bank also as a teller.

Jim: In New Holstein?

Bill: In New Holstein. In 1950, I believe it was 1950, I bought the insurance business from the bank. And I went into -- I took care of that. That was general insurance, and then I went into life insurance along with it. Then I also went into real estate along with that. So I had a real estate license. And then in 1962 I had an opportunity to come to work for the state, the Department of Transportation. They were looking for a pilot and with some real estate experience—

Jim: You were perfect.

Bill: Perfect fit. And, ah, so, the state had airplanes so that when we had projects anywhere in the state we’d just fly one of the state airplanes. And that’s why it—

Jim: Which were?

Bill: Which were--, well first we had—

Jim: Cessnas?

- Bill: Cessna 172 and a Cessna 182. And then later they went to a Cessna 210 which was a nice airplane. It has retractable gear and a lot more speed. So, those were nice airplanes. Then we also had a Piper Dakota which—
- Jim: I'm not familiar with that.
- Bill: Well, it's a low wing aircraft, single engine, and it has about the same performance as a Cessna 182 or 210.
- Jim: So, you took pictures, aerials, and took them home and studied them. That's what you did? Or just--?
- Bill: Well, I took some pictures, and I studied them, and I tried to appraise and estimate what the cost might be for land acquisition.
- Jim: You didn't drive then into those areas also?
- Bill: Well, sometimes, sometimes. Depending on what had to be done. If I could accomplish my work, whatever I wanted to do, at that site, I'd fly up there and then fly it home at night. I was always home at night here in Madison so—
- Jim: You were your own boss? You could go and—
- Bill: Pretty much.
- Jim: Pretty much when you wanted to.
- Bill: Pretty much, yeah.
- Jim: Well, that's a nice job.
- Bill: Ah, it was. It was. Now I worked for the head of the Airport Development section which included engineers, and they had a planning engineer, a construction engineer, and a design engineer. So, I was the fourth guy in that team. And then of course the supervising engineer. But they all had their own responsibilities in their—
- Jim: Did you keep in contact with any of your mates from your airplane—
- Bill: I did, ah, with several of them. I've lost contact with some that I know are still— or last I heard they were alive. But there's been a number of them that have gone on now. But, ah --
- Jim: Is there a yearly reunion of the 44<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group?

Bill: Yes. There's a reunion coming up, I believe that's in October. There's a reunion of 43 K, the training class I was with, in September. So, we're going to both.

Jim: Great, terrific.

Bill: The one at 43 K is in Saint Louis [Missouri] this year, and the other one is in Omaha [Nebraska]. So they're all—

Jim: They're close enough

Bill: Yeah, they're all within driving distance, a one day drive.

Jim: Sure.

Bill: So I'll— my wife and I go to these.

Jim: Well you could go out and borrow that Cessna.

Bill: [laughs]

Jim: Fly it down there.

Bill: I didn't continue my physical. I just decided that—

Jim: You dropped your license?

Bill: I did.

Jim: Okay.

Bill: Because I figured if you don't fly enough it isn't as safe. And I figured—

Jim: Probably right.

Bill: I wanted to be an old pilot, not a bold pilot, so—

Jim: [laughs] Did you join any veterans groups at all?

Bill: I joined the American Legion for a number of years in New Holstein. In fact, I was local commander and initiated the fund drive and got the funding together for a nice club house up there.

Jim: Oh, terrific. That's good.

- Bill: Yeah. We had that. Now, I didn't build it because the next year we had a different commander. But I was in, I think, two years, and then somebody else took over the reins and built the thing. But we had everything funded and in order so that was important as far as I was concerned. Now, I haven't joined the American Legion here. I just heard from one of them—
- Jim: The Legion-- it doesn't have the power anymore that it used to have.
- Bill: No, no. I guess the Vietnam veterans didn't get all that excited about it.
- Jim: They never joined.
- Bill: Yeah.
- Jim: The V.F.W. [Veterans of Foreign Wars] is still hanging on. But I think they're havin' trouble. It's a different world now.
- Bill: Yeah, right.
- Jim: Well, I see you raised a large family, five children, nine grandchildren, and four great-grand children. Boy, that's a bunch.
- Bill: Yeah, right.
- Jim: Are they around here?
- Bill: They're all around Madison.
- Jim: Oh, my gosh, how lucky you are.
- Bill: Yeah. And, the fact is, our youngest son has little ones yet; one is gonna be five in July, and the other one is just three. My wife is sitting at home with both of them now. She--, "Don't take too long." [laughs]
- Jim: Oh, my. They're driving her crazy.
- Bill: Yeah, they can. They can. But, ah, it's nice that both of us can be there, you know, to—
- Jim: Did any of your sons go into the military?
- Bill: No, none of them. They—
- Jim: Especially [??] at the age they didn't have to.

- Bill: No, and, ah, it just didn't fit in their age. There was no real excitement, no real incentive.
- Jim: Yeah, my sons didn't too [??].
- Bill: And my wife wasn't all that interested in having them go.
- Jim: No kidding.
- Bill: She would ride with me, you know, the early years when I was working for the state—
- Jim: Oh, she'd take those trips with you?
- Bill: She'd go with me sometimes and so would the kids, but then eventually they cut that out. You didn't dare take anybody along in the state-owned aircraft because of liability.
- Jim: And insurance, rates would--
- Bill: Yeah, yeah, but there was no restriction in the early years because-- well, I guess, it never occurred to anybody.
- Jim: They didn't care about those things.
- Bill: Yeah, and people weren't suing everything, everybody.
- Jim: Exactly.
- Bill: So, ah, in my work as Chief of Land Acquisition I would work with lawyers and appraisers and get the land. And sometimes I would actually negotiate for it, and, if we couldn't negotiate **[End of Tape 1, Side B]** then we'd have to go to condemnation. And sometimes I'd sit through some of these trials where they'd try and prove their side, their values, and our appraiser would state his, and then the jury would come up with a figure, and that's how it wound up. Then in the last years— they've got a new law in relocation that's probably fifteen years old, or twenty years old by now, twenty years I'm sure, where if they relocated a business they had to take care of potential profits and so on.
- Jim: Sure.
- Bill: There was a lot of increased benefits that occurred. But the early years we had an appraisal, and we had to buy on that figure. And if they didn't we'd condemn at the figure, and then it would go to trial. So it was kind of tough. I --

Jim: Yeah, that's unpleasant work.

Bill: Yeah. It was. And although I met many, many nice people and many of them realized that we were not trying to cheat them, we tried to do whatever we could within the parameters set forth by the F.A.A. [Federal Aviation Administration].

Jim: I'm sure.

Bill: See, the F.A.A. participated in the cost of the airport development so they dictated what the rules were. You could just go so far.

Jim: Yeah. Well, I think that's about it.

Bill: Okay.

Jim: Thank you. I see you won the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Bill: Yes, I--

Jim: Did everyone in the plane get that?

Bill: Yes, yeah.

Jim: And the Air Medals too, I assume.

Bill: Air Medals were based on the number of missions.

Jim: Number of missions, right.

Bill: Right. The Distinguished Flying Cross, ah, I don't believe there was any particular thing that—

Jim: Well, finishing thirty-five missions is worth your while.

Bill: Yeah, and I don't remember at what point in this that the Distinguished Flying Cross came through, but probably at about twenty-five.

Jim: Mm hmm. Okay, sir.

Bill: Okay.

Jim: Thank you very much.

Bill: You're welcome.

Jim: I appreciate it.

**[End of interview]**