

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
FRANK C. STOLL
B-24 Pilot, Pacific Theater, World War II
1994

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Stoll, Frank C., (1922-). Oral History Interview, 1994.

User Copy: 3 sound cassettes (ca. 130 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 130 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Abstract

Frank C. Stoll, an Oshkosh (Wisconsin) native, discusses his service as a B-24 pilot in the Pacific theater during World War II. After Pearl Harbor was bombed, Stoll wanted to enlist in the field artillery, but after pressure from his father decided to be a flier. He went to Rice Lake (Wisconsin) where he was approved by an Air Corps board and eventually began training at Shepard Field (Texas). He discusses getting his uniforms and doing close-order drill at Shepard Field. Stoll attended primary flying school where he flew single-engine planes before he touches upon his experiences with acrobatics, night flying, formation flying, and instrument flying. Stoll then relates about advanced flying school in Frederick (Oklahoma) where he earned his commission and wings after nine weeks of training in a twin-engine plane. He mentions the B-24 training he had at Fort Worth (Texas), including an incident in which the plane caught on fire. He speaks about friendly regional tensions between the men and what he did in his free time. Stoll elaborates on the reasons he fought the war and characterizes the motivations of the other men around him. He reports about the times he spent in Australia, New Guinea, the East Indies, Oahu Island, and the Philippines. He reads a few letters that he wrote to a friend when he was serving in Southeast Asia, describing his perspective on the war and his surroundings at the time. Stoll makes mention of the Filipino people, what he targeted during his flying missions, and talks about his crew. Stoll returned to Oshkosh (Wisconsin) after the war, earned his bachelor's degree from Oshkosh State University, his master's degree from the University of Chicago, and eventually went to work for the Chicago Northwestern Railroad as a locomotive fireman. Stoll then became a teacher at West High School in Madison (Wisconsin). He chats about his feelings about the war after he returned home, his use of the G.I. Bill and the VA, feelings about McCarthyism, and his involvement in Veterans for Peace. He describes what Madison was like during the protests, the differences between the Veterans for Peace in Vietnam and the veterans from his generation, and his opposition to the Gulf War.

Biographical Sketch

Frank C. Stoll flew B-24s during WWII in the Pacific Theater. Following the war he attended college and became a high school teacher. He was a member of Veterans for Peace in Vietnam.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, 1994.

Transcribed by WDVA staff, 1994.

Transcription edited by Damon R. Bach & John J. McNally, 2007.

Frank: Originally, it was Air Corps. They changed it to Air Force. I might tell you that my dad was a student at the University of Illinois at the time that the First World War broke out and he dropped out of school to enlist in the Army and he asked to be a flier. Well, there wasn't any Air Force then. The flying service was part of the Signal Corps and so he went into the Signal Corps and got his flying training at the University of Texas in Austin. I forget what they called it. It has something to do with the Signal Corps. I guess the theory was that all fliers did was to go up and spot targets for the artillery and stuff but then he finally completed his training and became an instructor at Langley Field in Virginia. He encouraged my older sister and me to go into flying because he was always interested in it. As a matter of fact, after the war, you know there was a \$25,000 prize offered to the first person who would fly from New York to Paris, non-stop. And, so different cities started to organize to collect the money and to get the airplane and stuff and at that time the Stoll family lived in Chicago Heights, Illinois, a little town south of Chicago. And the Aviation Club of Chicago asked my dad to be the flier. And they're busy collecting the money to buy, build an airplane and finally he got a letter from them saying it looks like another city's going to beat us. Well, that was St. Louis and they got a single engine mono-plane into the air. They named it the Spirit of St. Louis, they hired a young flier named Charles Lindberg, who learned to fly on the very same kind of Curtis Jennys as my dad flew. And, of course, the rest is history. However, because of my dad's interest in flying and stuff and because he got my older sister to take lessons, our home town, my home town is Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and the big name up there is Steve Wittman. And in the years before the war he used to make his own airplanes. The Bonzo, the Chief Oshkosh. Little, tiny things. One seaters, and he'd enter the national air races and, they don't have them anymore but in those days the planes would fly just like a few feet off the ground and they'd go around pylons, 90 degrees up, and he'd win. Win, win, win; and that's how he supported himself, was the winnings. And finally he opened a little flying school and my older sister learned to fly and got her pilots license from him and then later I did too. And now you know, they've named the big field up there Wittman Field, there's a huge museum for the EAA, that stands for Experimental Aircraft Association.

Mark: I was just there about two months ago.

Frank: And the aviation foundation maintains a memorial wall where people who have contributed in any way to aviation and whose family wants to remember them, gets their name casted in bronze. And so my dad's name is going on this summer. There will be a ceremony in August during the EAA Fly-In and, of course, the Stoll family will be there.

Mark: Sure. That's quite an honor.

Frank: Yeah. We're looking forward to it. Of course, my dad's been dead now for, oh, he did in 1956, so it's been a long time. And you have to be dead, actually, to get onto the memorial wall. But, that's pretty much how I got into flying. Actually, when [did] Pearl Harbor happen, December 4?

Mark: December 7.

Frank: December 7. My memory is it was a Sunday. I'd come home from church and it was on the news on the radio. And I planned, at that time, I was a student at the Oshkosh State Teacher's College, and I thought I'd enlist in the Field Artillery. And my dad, who had been a flier, he just raised the roof. No, you should go into the Air Force and so on, Air Corps. So, at that time, I started taking lessons at Steve Wittman's school because, to get into the Air Corps, it wasn't easy. The board that approved you, it was a traveling board, and it didn't come to Oshkosh for a long time, months were involved and what not and when I finally tracked them down they were in Rice Lake, Wisconsin.

Mark: That's kind of out of the way.

Frank: But you know, in those days, I could take the train from Oshkosh to Rice Lake. You could go almost anywhere on the train. That's over with. Well, anyway, I got to Rice Lake and was enlisted and then I had to wait to be called up and those papers that you're making copies of will give you dates and stuff. And I finally was called up. And in talking with Cliff Bowers, we thought, see we both reported to Shepard Field, Texas. And, although we didn't know each other then, we think we might have been on the same train.

Mark: I agree.

Frank: It could have been. Shepard Field, Texas was our very first place and I can't remember all the different steps that we went to. But eventually, I'm in flying training and you know how first there's primary, then basic. When you go as far as advanced, that's where they separate multi-engine pilots from the single. Cliff --

Mark: What was the criterion for selecting? I mean, was one supposed to be better than the other? Or was it a matter of different talents?

Frank: I honestly don't know. I thought it was on the basis of size because --

Mark: Physical size?

Frank: Physical size. Because I was big, fat guy. As a matter of fact, I was too fat to get in at first. I had to go on a terrific diet and I remember I had a big sign in front of my place at home and it said, "Frank, you want to be a flier not a blimp." So I thought that maybe part of it was the size. Fighter planes, you know, you had to be littler to get in the cockpit and so on. Then also I think it's partly a preference that you might have indicated. I was very transfixed with these huge multi-engine planes when they'd come in, four engine bombers and stuff. I'd stand around and goggle at them and so forth. I knew that the B-17 was considered a pilot's dream. They had been working on it and improving it since the early '30s so that by the time World War II came along, the B-17 was a marvelous ship. But, because of all the comforts that were built into it and all the safety features, they couldn't carry as many bombs and they couldn't carry as much gas and they couldn't fly it as far. It took them longer to build them. So, you know, they started mass-producing the B-24. Even Henry Ford got in the act at the Willow Run plant. And all different kinds of companies participated in the manufacture of component parts. I remember, on one of the planes I

flew, the propellers were made by Hamilton Beach which used to make the thing for making malted milks. Also, because they were hastily made, we were warned never get into a tailspin. Your wings will come off. They always leaked if you were in the rain. You were always cold, the heaters never worked. But we could fly much farther than the B-17 and we could carry big loads. I had been missions where I'd be out for 20 hours.

Mark: Wow.

Frank: Of course, on a mission like that, maybe half our bomb bays would have auxiliary gas tanks.

Mark: Let's go back and clarify a few things first.

Frank: Okay.

Mark: The first time you actually got behind the controls of an airplane, that was just after Pearl Harbor, or was that before Pearl Harbor?

Frank: It was after Pearl Harbor. And it was the little plane that Steve Wittman's flying school had. I think we called them Piper Cubs. I can't quite remember.

Mark: And where did you actually take the oath? Officially enter the Army? Was that at Trevor Field or was that at Rice Lake?

Frank: It was at Rice Lake, yeah.

Mark: I didn't know there was an induction center there.

Frank: It was a traveling, he was only going to be at Rice Lake a certain number of days and then they'd go someplace else. Yeah, if you wanted to get in, you had to find out where they were and trace them down.

Mark: And you went to Sheppard Field --

Frank: That was the first place. And all you did there was get your uniform and do some close order drill and that kind of stuff. No airplanes were involved.

Mark: So then you got assigned to the bombers?

Frank: Well, not at first. You see, at first you go to cadet school and ground, I don't know if they call it ground school, but it was preliminary training where you learned the rules of the military and so on. When you're finally ready for flying, your very first flying school is called primary and you fly, well, there were different kinds of planes for primary school. Cliff and I happened to fly the same kind. They were single engine, open cockpits. The way I learned, the instructor sat behind and I sat in front and, it seems to me, this was just the reverse, and it was, oh boy, I think it would last for three months. It was less than one year, maybe three months. I just can't remember. But all along the way, you'd have all

kinds of testing, not only for flying ability but also we had to learn the Morse Code and airplane identification and rules of flying and learn things about weather. Then, if you passed all those tests, you went to the next step, which was basic. And here you have a bigger airplane. A canopy that would slide over the cockpit, much more powerful engine. Now you would learn things like acrobatics, night flying, formation flying, instrument flying. You'd learn, your first attempt on instruments, you know, was the Link Trainer, which was a little gadget that you'd sit in and you'd try to -- And the thing about instrument flying is that, suddenly all of your normal bodily reactions to whether you're right side up or up side down, you can't believe them. You absolutely can't believe them 'cause they're lying to you. You have to depend on instruments. And you have to fight to believe them. It's really something. Well, if you succeeded at basic school and are going on to advanced, this is where the division was made to single engine or multi-engine and I went into multi-engine. And here now, advance school was a plane, twin engine and I brought along some pictures. Here's what that advance school airplane looked like.

Mark: And what kind of plane is this?

Frank: You see, when you get to be my age, you're memory becomes sieve-like and I can't remember what we called it. But that was the one. Well then --

Mark: Was that at Sheppard Field?

Frank: No. This was at Frederick Field in Oklahoma, this particular one. No, Shepard Field, there was no training there. No airplane flying at Shepard Field. And those papers, I think will tell you --

Mark: These are your originals, or your original copies.

Frank: Okay. Here is the --

Mark: I see.

Frank: Frederick, Oklahoma was where advance training, nine weeks. Everything was nine weeks. And then when I graduated from Frederick, that's when I got my commission, wings, and that's the first time that I got a ten day leave to go home, back to Oshkosh. And, of course, it's a great homecoming and the old man was proud as punch and so on.

Mark: And so, what was Oshkosh like? When you left, the war had just broken out. Now you're coming back, geeze, six months maybe a year later. Had it changed to you at all? Did you--

Frank: Well, of course, like anyplace showed the results of the war. I remember my dad saying, 'You know now, because of the war, we can't get steaks. The Army is getting all the steaks.' Well I found out that the Army, when I was an enlisted man, wasn't getting the steaks. But now I'm a commissioned officer and I figured the officers were getting the steaks. Well, I found out the officers weren't getting the steaks. And it wasn't until the war is over and I'm

going home on a Navy ship, I found out who had the steaks. It was the Navy. [laughs] But Oshkosh is a wonderful town. I loved it. I graduated from the Oshkosh High School and it used to be known as the Sawdust City, you know. It was a great logging center. It's an old town. Lots of interesting things about it. I was glad to get back. I had wonderful friends there. But then I report to Fort Worth, Texas and here I'm now being trained in the B-24 for the first time. And I remember that my instructor was a captain who had served his time in Europe. I don't know now many missions he had but he was so nervous and tense that he communicated fear. And, in the airplane, the B-24, there's four engines and occasionally an engine might catch on fire. So down between the pilot and the co-pilot there was a switch that you could switch from engine one, two, three, or four, a fire extinguisher to put stuff out. And, with so many of the different switches in an airplane, you'd have, you'd wire them shut, because otherwise the jiggling and whatnot the switch might go on. So the switch is wired off. Well, it wasn't long, maybe the second or third time I fly with this guy, we're starting down the runway and we just lifted off when the number three engine catches on fire. He took, 'I'll take over!' And then he did. He was just all nervous and tense and he makes a turn to land downwind which is absolutely, you never would do. Banking it up so high that the inside wing almost hit the ground. We get swung around and he slaps her back down on the runway. By this time the fire engines were all out, and as soon as we came to a stop, well, the fire was put out in nothing. Later that afternoon, I went down by myself to examine that plane and I see that the safety wire had never been broken on that extinguisher. Here, we've got this thing to put the fire out and in his terror and panic, never even thought of that. So that was the guy I'm learning from. And it was not the best kind of experience.

Mark: Now, I'm interested in some of the other people that you were training with. I assume they were all pretty much the same age. You were 22 years old and you're flying a bomber?

Frank: Well, no. I went in at the age of 20 and I remember I had my 21st birthday while I was in and I guess maybe, well, I was either 21 or 22 when I'm starting to fly the bomber. Most of the guys were all about the same. I had three years of college behind me. Most of the guys I'm with, as a matter of fact, you had to have college training to be a flier. So they all of them had come from different schools from all over the country. You make friends with fellas. Some you get along with well, some you don't.

Mark: Where there, like, regional tensions and that sort of thing? Because, you know, in the study of American history, the scholars would often say that World War II helped to bring the regional districts of the country together. I'm wondering about your personal -- on that. Like, did the Southern guys get along with the Northern guys, and all that?

Frank: Yes. But I don't ever remember any real regional problems with guys but we always thought Texas was bad. Whenever we, you know, during the training period, dare I get a little coarse on this thing?

Mark: Well, it's on tape.

Frank: We used to refer to Texas as the 'asshole of the universe.' And so, lately, when I see this bumper sticker that says 'Don't mess with Texas' I just laugh out loud, Who in their right mind would mess with Texas? You'd have to have your hands washed. We had one guy in the outfit from West Virginia. He was a hell of a good guy. But, if we, oh, you're from West Virginia? No, I'm from West By God Virginia. [laughs] So there was that kind of thing. No, we weren't fighting the Civil War over again or anything like that.

Mark: Well, that's good. There was another war -- At these various places, did you get out into the town at all. Did you have much time for recreation?

Frank: No, not too much. And also, I was, I have to tell you, different from everybody else in lots of ways in that I, at that time, was very religious. I was a daily bible reader. I did not smoke. I did not drink. I did not gamble. And didn't go out with girls and so on. Consequently, when the guys would go into town to let off steam, I wouldn't go out with them. I'd be in my tent reading a book or something. This condition carried on until finally I'm in my squadron overseas and it turns out that, just like a big university where there's, what do they call them, office politics or whatever, there would be in-groups and out-groups and in the Pacific where we were the second war -- I mean the main one was in Europe -- we always got used equipment. We didn't have enough of anything and so, it wasn't like in Europe where you would have your own plane and you could name it yourself. No, no. In our outfit, there were never enough planes to go around. No body had their own plane. But there were some that were new and good and some that were old and falling apart. And if you were in the in-group, if you played poker with the squadron commander and drank beer and everything with him, he'd see to it that you got a good plane. If you never even gave a damn about any of that, you would fly the junkers. And that's what fell to me. I had, many times, airplanes that wouldn't perform. I remember when MacArthur went into Leyte, the first landing in the Philippines, and we were sent up from the Dutch East Indies where we were based because we were told the Japanese fleet had left Singapore and was going to attack MacArthur and we had to go after them and I'm flying this old plane. I can't remember now what mechanical difficulty happened but I realized I couldn't get back to Owi Island where we were based. And we'd been told that in an emergency we could call, and we were given this special code, and get into the temporary landing field at, had just been put down, at Leyte, on this first island. So, I told the guys that's what we're going to have to do. And I'm calling for instructions, calling, calling, calling. Nothing would come through. And, when I finally got permission to land, everything was higgly-piggly. I found out later that even the code they gave me was wrong. I was talking to an aircraft carrier in the bay. He's giving me instructions to land. I got down on the ground and the strip was so short I could barely get the plane stopped in time and just at the end I finally got it stopped but I had to, and they're screaming at me 'Get off the strip; somebody's coming in behind.' so I swung the airplane off and my right wing, as I swung around, hit a little telephone pole. A little, tiny pole and I just kind of knocked it off and I put a dent in the leading edge of the wing about the size of a coffee cup. Well, after my plane was fixed and I finally did get back to Owi Island, I had to sign a statement of charges or some damn thing for spoiling government property. It reminded me, you've probably heard the story that when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and one of the gunners is out shooting at these Japanese fighters he ran out of ammunition and he went back to the munitions depot to get more and

they made him sign for it. [laughs] It's just that kind of crazy stuff that went on.

Mark: Which religious denomination are you.

Frank: Well, I was a Christian Scientist then. And today, I have to tell you that I've pretty much lost my faith. Incidentally, if you want to know a little bit more about me, Cliff said that one of your questions is 'Did I ever belong to a veterans organization'?

Mark: Yeah, sure, we can --

Frank: The answer is no. With two exceptions. I did belong to a veterans organization. Did you ever hear of this outfit? [*Indicates cap*]

Mark: Yeah, I sure did. We have one of those, we have a cap upstairs in the gallery.

Frank: Yup. And we used to pin all of our stuff on it.

Mark: Let the record show Vets for Peace in Vietnam.

Frank: Yeah, that's the one. And then I also belonged to this and this is an organization, this was my outfit, the 43rd Bombardment Group, 65th Squadron. I think this is the 65th insignia down here. And we hold annual reunions. I've been to several. This fall the reunion will be in San Antonio and we're not going but next year it will be in Cheyenne, Wyoming and the wife and I are pretty much planning to go. And this is the newsletter that comes out. Of course, as time goes on more and more it's telling about guys that have gone to their reward and so forth.

Mark: Let's get back to this. I'm particularly interested in this. You were in Madison during --

Frank: Yeah, right.

Mark: That would be quite interesting.

Frank: As a matter of fact, I'd be wearing my cap and there'd be marchers up State Street. Protestors of all kinds. And because people said, 'Oh, you look like somebody who might be snarling at a protestor, why don't you go back to Russia' and so forth, so they put me in the front row, see, for the marches. And that moving picture, The War At Home, maybe you've seen it?

Mark: I've seen it about a million times.

Frank: Well, I'm in it. They've got some pictures of me. Oh one of the marches or something. I forget just now what it was. But a roommate of my son who is now a practicing architect in San Francisco happened to see that picture out in San Francisco and he called me up, 'Mr. Stoll, I saw you in a movie.' [laughs]

Mark: I've seen the movie over and over and I used it in my masters thesis. I've watched it a thousand times.

Frank: Well, of course, if you weren't looking, and I'm just on their momentarily, and if you weren't looking for me, you wouldn't see me. But I was very much against that war as I was against the Korean War. I was against the Gulf War, you know, Persia. I'm almost like a Quaker except that in World War II, there I did feel that the Fascists had to be stopped. I was whole-hearted. And that's another thing to mention. When I went in, I went in with the purpose of fighting Hitler and Hirohito and all the rest of them in the hopes of making the world a better place to live. And it was a principled position. When I got overseas I, of course your commissioned to start out as a second lieutenant, and I didn't care if I ever got promoted or not. That wasn't the reason I'm there. I want to fight this war and drop bombs on the enemy. And I was horrified to find out that most of the guys, the main thing was jockeying for raises, for advancement, for higher rank. And no one ever talked about the kind of stuff that I believed in. And just once, I was in almost four years altogether, just once this happened. We were down being briefed for a mission and the intelligence officer is telling us all about the target and the weather and what we can expect from fighter resistance, etc. Finally, it's time to go and, 'Okay men. We'll go out to the strip.' and we're standing up and putting on our parachutes and heading out and I heard a voice say, 'Let's go strike a blow for democracy.' I couldn't believe my ears! I looked up, who said it? Yeah, that's what I thought I was doing. He said it in joke. And to that extent I was disappointed in people. Too many guys were there without any real principled opposition to the Fascists, you know.

Mark: Do you think your feelings on subsequent wars then owed a lot, or a little, to your experiences in World War II? I mean, having been in a war then, do you think that helped you appreciate what a horrible thing it really is? Do you think that had anything to do with your --

Frank: No. You see, the thing about being in the Air Force is you, and my dad made this point, you go to war in the morning with a clean shirt on and a hot breakfast in your stomach. I never, I'm dropping bombs on cities in Formosa or the South China coast or finally, my last missions were up in Japan, and I never realized, until after the war, I began to see pictures of some of the, Formosa now they call it Taiwan, towns and I thought, 'My god. I was doing that.' In the air, when you're 20,000 feet, you're so removed from the horror of it, it doesn't touch you. Today, when I read and see pictures and stuff of what it was like on the ground, yes. And buddies of mine who were killed at the Anzio beachhead in Italy and the Battle of the Bulge and stuff like that and I've talked to their parents. You know, finally, it comes home to me, the real horror of war. But today, well, here. We've got friends in Finland, good friends. A recent letter from them said when they hear Zhirinovski on the radio, they shake. Now he's the guy, if you know anything about what's going on in Russia --

Mark: In Russia.

Frank: He represents a potential Adolf Hitler or Joseph Stalin. And I wrote to them and said if this Zhirinovski gets control of Russia and attacks Finland, I'm coming over and joining your

army. I want to fight him. I wouldn't stand by and hope that God could step forward and do it, no. So I can't say that I'm against all war.

Mark: Interesting. We'll come back to this. That's, 1960s is one of my areas of interest so I'll have some questions from that, too. But, alas, let's fight World War II first. So, you finished your training and then when did you end up going overseas? Would you explain to me how you got from training to overseas.

Frank: Yeah, maybe it will tell on one of these papers. Where was this one where we saw all the places I was at? Oh, up here. Okay. Nine weeks after, oh and then no dates given. I can't give you an exact date. When I went over --

Mark: It has to be 1943, at least.

Frank: Oh yeah, okay. I'm just surprised that such a date doesn't show up here someplace. Anyway, my outfit, in fact almost all of the American soldiers, whether they're fliers or ground soldiers or what not that go to the Pacific at the very beginning of the war against Japan, went to Australia. And so it was with my outfit. And they were based a little outside Sidney and at that time they were flying B-17s, and when I joined the outfit they had already moved up to New Guinea in, I think it was Madzip, I can't quite remember the name of the place where it was. And you know, there's a rotation of crews. After you fly so many missions, you go back to the states. So I heard the story about the guy who flew his B-17 under the Great Sidney Bridge. There's a huge bridge in Sidney. The Sidney Harbor is one of the best in the world and there's this fabulous bridge that was completed in about 1929. And he flew his B-17 under it. And, boy, when he landed the military police were there and the Sidney police and the first person out was a girl. He didn't even know that she was on board. One of his crewmen took his girlfriend on. And the story immediately circulated that she was the one that flew it under the -- and so forth. And incidentally, I finally met that pilot at one of our reunions.

Mark: So, it was a true story.

Frank: It was a true story. Yeah, it actually happened. Well, then you know, you move north. By the time I had joined him, I had long since been in Australia and after I joined them at Nadzed in New Guinea it wasn't long after that that we moved to the Dutch East Indies. Oui Island it was called, off Beack.

Mark: I know where Java is.

Frank: Yeah, it would be further east of Java, I'm pretty sure. I'd have to bring a map along to point this stuff out. From there we went to Leyte and from Leyte to Clark Field in Luzon and from Luzon up to Ito Shima, which was a little island off Okinawa. And that's where I finished the war. And that, incidently, is where Ernie Pyle, the famous newspaper correspondent, was killed and I have a picture of his grave. Where he was shot. I'll tell you why I brought these pictures along is because one of the things I want to tell you about, just to prove the story. Here's Ernie Pyle.

Mark: Ernie Pyle, hum.

Frank: Now incidently, since this interview seemed to be pretty easy going and free wheeling and I was thinking about it, you know. At first when you called me, I was against even coming because I said, 'For crying out loud, what there was 10,000 guys or 10 million guys in uniform, do you have 10 million tapes? You know, I've got nothing to say.' And it was Anne, my wife, who said, 'Oh, Frank, you've got a lot of things to say, so you should go.' So I spent some time thinking, thinking. Now it happened that in my home town of Oshkosh, there was a family of 3 girls and a boy. The oldest girl was a high school teacher of mine, Dorothy Krueger. The next girl was Marjorie and she married Hank Lentz and had 3 little kids. And then came Virginia; she married a fraternity brother of mine, Jim Kimbell, who was killed in the Marines at Cherouwa. And the last one was Billy, the boy. Well, everyone splits up during the war except Marj. She's got these 3 kids and she stays in Oshkosh. And she would write me. And not so long ago, she sent me a letter that I had sent her. And she said, 'Frank, I'm sure you'd be interested in this letter so you make a copy of it but I want the original back.' So this is the letter I wrote here and I recognize right away that I was at Clark Field when I wrote it, so I'm going to read it to you.

Mark: Okay.

Frank: *"Dear Marj. You're the greatest little one-girl moral building department that I know of. Honestly, your letters are from out of this world. I don't know if you continue to treat me with these literary delights out of a sense of duty for the war effort and all or whether my stock is just high at 409." They lived at 409 Vine Street. "Whatever it is, you gracious efforts are far from wasted on me and my gratitude knows no bounds. Your last letter was penned while all honest people were in bed, or so you said. Well, the same goes for me tonight. The sun has long since sunk below the South China Sea leaving for us the mercifully cool night and the glittering stars. On the distant horizon are the lightning flashes of a tropical storm and I silently wish good luck to the boys on the night strikes. Our turn for these nuisance raids come up in rotation and we go out singly and alone. We'll keep vast sections of Jap-held territory Formosa or the China Coast alerted for hours. That means that all anti-aircraft gun crews have to man their posts. Fighter pilots go off. Civilians go to their dugouts. All their lights will have to go out and life in general paralyzed while they wonder where the next bomb will fall. These operations are carried out in almost any kind of weather as we have marvelous equipment that makes accurate, all weather bombing possible. These missions are not exactly milk runs. The Ak-Ak bursts looks like the proverbial balls of fire and when you glance from your instruments out into the night and see the cherry red exhaust of a Jap night fighter streak by it keeps you questioning as to what next? What next? The thought of the fear and havoc that you are causing these people is about the only compensating factor. Finally, all your bombs are away and you leave the target area for home. About six o'clock you begin to see the first faint light of the rosy fingered dawn and, Marjorie, those colors and cloud formations defy description. Their beauty is so breathtaking. Beneath you are the endless stretches of the vast Pacific Ocean gradually taking on its familiar blue color after the inky black of the night. The color changes to brilliant greens or shades of blue and yellow as you pass over a lonely atoll. The waves breaking on the white coral produce a pattern with their foam of*

undulating parallel lines and hold your eyes in fascination. At last after another hour or two the heartwarming sight of your base appears beneath you and a little wearily, but happily, you call the tower for landing instructions. You prepare the ship for this operation and finally you are over the strip. Being pretty tired maybe you don't make as smooth a landing as you'd like to but you're on the ground and that's all that matters. A waiting truck takes you to the intelligence office where you are carefully interrogated and then you walk into the mess hall quite dirty and greasy and your hair all tousled and you mechanically drink a cup of strong coffee and down some toast and bacon and on good days a fried egg or two. When you're through you go to your tent, strip for the showers wrapped in a towel and wearing your clogs. You stumble down between the rows of tents towards the showers. An occasional inquiry on 'How'd she go last night?' is jokingly met with the assurance that you really raised hell and made the--" -- I didn't write out the word 'bastards' -- "--pay through the nose for having started this unholy mess in the first place. The showering is refreshing but brief and as soon as possible you stretch your weary bones on your sack and your last thought before dropping off is that you've done a good night's work and have helped bring the end just a little bit closer and then the sleep of the just. The pictures you sent me of the children made me very happy. They were the first to come my way. I have passed them around and both you and Virginia would swell with pride at the many fine compliments your beautiful children draw. How I look forward to the day that I can hug them and kiss them again. My arms fairly itch to squeeze those cute little bundles of sunshine again. I was sorry to read of their passing sickness however the specialist at child raising that you are I knew that you'd bring them through in good shape. You mentioned Gretchen having had laryngitis." -- That was her first little girl. -- "And here I'll have to take time out to repeat a funny quip which may be old stuff to you but the King came to breakfast one morning and asked the ladies in waiting, 'Where's the Queen?' And they replied, 'Oh, the Queen's in bed with laryngitis.' 'What!', roared the King, 'That dirty Greek again.' Whereat everyone laughed heartily. Anyway, I did. And now the hour waxes late, the hoard of bugs swarming around my light are a nuisance to say the least it isn't my insomnia that keeps me awake but the harry card party next door which is well laced with that rotten Manila rum. Well, the OD will put the lid on it soon so I think I'll give this sleeping business a go. I do this with the intention of resuming work on this report tomorrow. I know I'll be free because I've been grounded for about a week now with dysentery and I'm not yet back on flying status. I bid you all good night, although heaven know what time it is in Oshkosh. Perchance you're sitting down to the noon day repast. I have joined you often enough in this pleasurable business to be able to reconstruct in my mind's eye a vivid picture of the entire proceedings. In fact, I can almost taste Marjorie's excellent cooking. Oh happy day, are you far away?"

And then May 2, 1945 -- "Good morning you lucky people. Note that I am as good as my word for I am back at my desk pen in hand. A couple of fresh eggs, some strips of bacon, a little toast and marmalade, a glass of tomato juice, a cup of coffee have given my pants the familiar well-rounded appearance. I have shaken out my blankets and sheets, folded them neatly on the cot. I've swept the floor, emptied the wastebaskets, straightened up my belongings, dusted off our few sticks of furniture, policed up around the tent and filled the drinking water bag. Then I stepped up to our wash stand supreme and filled it --" -- We made these little stands and we'd put our metal helmets in their for the wash basin. --

"--stepped up to our wash stand supreme and filled a helmet full of water, washed and cleanly shaved. I finished up with a liberal application of my Old Spice after shave lotion and talcum power which my family so thoughtfully sent me and I might say that I am now as sweet as a rose. It's the little things like the delightful odor of that shaving lotion that remind one of civilization. But let us get on with the story. Much has happened since my last letter went out to you. First of all, at the end of February we moved to a new and better base somewhere in the Philippines. It seems silly not to be able to say where it is because you can undoubtedly easily guess --" -- And it was Clark Field -- "--but we must cater to the whims of the censor. The country here is very much different from the last base which was more in keeping with the conventionalized version of the tropical jungle. You know, palm trees, coconuts, rain, mud and all of that. This new place bears a great resemblance to West Texas. No more palm trees or jungles. It is hot but much drier and a fairly constant breeze helps one bear up under the really blazing sun. The Filipinos here are considerably more advanced than their brethren on the other islands. There are peddlers in abundance selling straw hats, popped rice, cigars (Manila made), chairs, small writing tables, bad whiskey, bananas, watermelons, cantaloupe, cucumbers, eggs and chickens, pineapples and, of course, Japanese souvenirs. I bought a straw hat, a desk and a chair and have tried the various fruits which aren't bad at all. The souvenirs include many things; guns, swords, flags, personal equipment, money and items off ships, to mention a few. Not being a collector, I've refrained from picking up any of this junk. I always figured I could trundle over to the museum any time I had the urge to gloat over captured equipment. It would give me something to do on a Sunday afternoon. Anyway, if I were a collector, there are ample souvenirs in the area that require only picking up. The place is lousy with Jap planes of every description and in various stages of repair ranging from flyable ones to heaps of ashes with a couple of propellers lying twisted at one end, a hunk of tail at the other and maybe a wing tip on either side. The camp area itself is the finest we've had. Many buildings of semi-permanent construction are sprouting up all over the place. We have very fine showers, a barbershop, tailor shop, squadron laundry that starches and irons our khakis, and a library, a mail room, a chapel, an open air theater, and everything else that you'd need to be happy and live comfortably. Most of these service units and the officers and enlisted men's mess halls are staffed by capable Filipinos. The mess halls are producing the best meals to date and newly acquired refrigerating units make iced drinks, fresh butter, ice cream and so forth a delicious reality. This may all seem like so much trivia to you but, Marjorie, really these things loom large in our lives. In my own "house" the four of us, and that would be myself, the pilot, co-pilot, bombardier and navigator, the four officers, the four of us are living like kings or almost. We have a good floor, chairs and tables, air mattresses, books, shelves, a radio, electric lights and many other things which give one the feeling of well being. In fact, we now have a bird cage hanging up containing two cute little birds that have bright feathers and sing cheerily all day long. Some fellows have parrots and other birds for pets and some even have monkeys although I can't stand these darned monkeys. I bought a banjo for \$5 from a fellow going home and as soon as the folks send me an E string and a booklet on how to play the darn thing this place will really have the homey atmosphere. What with the folk songs and all. Did I tell you of my visit to Manila? Manila, the Pearl of the Orient, is a pretty sad looking place today. Gutted by fire, dirty and shabby after three years of Japanese occupation. In a way it looks like an overgrown Tachloben to me." Tachloben was the city over in Leyte. "But there are

few architectural beauties left and many fine homes belonging to the rich still stand. There are many Chinese in Manila and their huge cemetery is one of the spots that the tourists visit because it looks like a Chinese world fair almost. The mausoleums of the rich families are big, elaborate pagoda-type buildings all lacquered in brilliant hues and looking more like a fine home than a bone depository. You see quite a few Europeans about the streets all dressed in the familiar tropical white ducks. On the large boulevards you see quite a few automobiles, mostly American, but also some small European makes. The rich ride in shiny 1942 Buicks, Cadillacs and Packards. However, most of the people have small, dainty, two-wheeled buggies drawn by a dapper little pony all fitted up with highly ornamental harnesses with gold stars and silver bells betraying very much the strong Spanish influence that you see throughout the island. The churches are huge, ancient, stone cathedral-like caverns with huge, old doors, tall, narrow windows, ivy covered walls, steep roof spotted with bird droppings and the whole thing giving off the atmosphere of medieval Spain. Most of them were build by the Spaniards and the old discolored bells still call out in their eerie clank that people to the their Sunday mass. The country is about 85% Christian and 84.99% Catholic. The Catholic dominated countries like Spain and Mexico will give you a fair idea --

[End of Side A, Tape 1]

Mark: 4, 3, 2, 1. Okay.

Frank: *"-- the Catholic dominated countries like Spain and Mexico will give you a fair idea of the prevailing situation here. The place couldn't exactly be called progressive. Even their funerals hark back to the customs of an older day, long parade through the streets, the ugly but ornamental casket toted on the shoulders of eight huskies, little boys in dirty white laces struggling ahead bearing lanterns and incense and big shiny crosses and other church emblems atop a pole. And then more boys in dirty lace and black robes chanting the funeral dirge and the weeping family and the curious all marching down the street are a sight indeed. Also picturesque but non too pleasant, are the crowded, smelly market places where the traffic is terrific and amongst the jeeps and trucks and carts and wagons and horses and people are frequent caribou pulling ancient bamboo carts with wheels that are nothing more than a five inch slice off a big log. Everything is dirty and worn out and cheap looking and frankly, I'm not too well impressed with the Philippines. I think it would be to our advantage to give them their independence and be done with them. But then I could hardly be called an unprejudiced observer. It is now permitted for us to tell of the many places we have visited. The stipulation is that you do not make it possible for the folks back home to link up our APO numbers with definite localities. So get out your map and look Nadzed, Lai, Finchhaven, Port Morisby and Holandia in New Guinea. I've seen all these places, I've spent a night at Guadalcanal where life has settled down to a dull and boring routine with little evidence left of the bloody history made there. See if you can find Canton Island. I got my short snorter bill there. Now skip over to the Netherlands East Indies and see me flying over the Sellabies and Halmaharas, hitchhiking along a coral road on Beeak, swimming off the beach at Ouie, gassing up at Moritai, look for the Pallou group and picture me sweating out the navigator's ETA" --that's Estimated Time of Arrival-- "as we barreled through the weather bound for these postage stamps in the wide Pacific. Stand*

on the flight deck between the co-pilot and me and promise yourself all kinds of wild things as we attempt a landing at Leyte in rains so heavy that you can't see the strip until it's too late to make any further corrections. Either you are lined up or you raise your gear and climb back into the soup for another circle and another try. How would you like to look down on a mess of doomed Japs shipping in the Hong Kong Harbor or track a cruiser in the Sulu Sea or dodge flack over Hainan or Formosa or skirt around a typhoon off Mendenou? Sounds exciting, doesn't it? But you know how familiarity breeds contempt as true here as anywhere. I still count my vacation in Sidney as one of the highlights of my tour of duty over here. Incidentally you mention, Marjorie, of going over to visit my mother one of these days and I'm very enthusiastic about this plan. It would be a wonderful treat for my mother and while you're there have her dig out the few pictures of me in Sidney that she now has. And speaking of Sidney, remind me that if you are ever going to get the presents that I sent you from there. They ought to be coming pretty quick. I believe there were four packages altogether and in one I had several presents among which was one for Mr. Krueger" --that's her father-- "And as I think back, I can't remember if in my haste, I labeled this present for him. So if you find one without a name, it's for Mr. Krueger. I really hope everything arrives soon and in good shape although I am fearful of their long, hard journey. Well, I'm three fifths done with my combat flying. After my last mission I earn my second air medal awarded for sustained operations against the enemy for a specified period of time. Nothing heroic. I'm too cautious to ever win medals for a wild deed of daring. In fact, the CO told me that I was the most cautious pilot in the squadron. You said in one letter that the nature of my part in this war left you a little anxious for my safety. Naturally, I was flattered by your kind concern. While you can be sure that old Frankie is doing everything in his power to ensure his eventual homecoming. However, you've got to be philosophical about those things. Eight of the crews from Tonapaw that I came over with are now lost. A buddy of mine who I had been with ever since San Antonio was hit over Formosa about a month ago and exploded in mid-air. That was kind of hard to get over. Far better men than I have already made the supreme sacrifice. So there's no reason why I should feel picked on. Actually, my religion has sustained me with the knowledge that although I may go through the valley of the shadow of death I need fear no evil for He is with me. A little prayer now and then suffuses you with a certain quite confidence and peace of mind and it washes away the clammy fear of death and keeps you conscience of your heritage, of power, intelligence and skill from your father. There's nothing like it. So don't feel anxious for me. I'm as safe here as in Oshkosh. Our group, the 43rd, led the 5th Air Force last month in percentage of bombs on the target. My squadron, the 65th, led the group. So you see we lead the whole 5th Air Force, which is a very good record. Our group has sunk more Japanese shipping than any other heavy bombardment group in this theater and we have the lowest mortality rate. So it is a pretty good outfit to be in. The group CO is a full colonel. He's only 26 years old, a tough little blond kid who has plenty of know-how. Say, I was interrupted by terrific salvos of anti-aircraft fire all around the field. We wondered if it was a raid but then some guy just dashed through the area with the good news that all organized resistance in Germany is over. I'm happy for this. Extremely happy. But there's no wild jubilation because it was too hard and long in coming. Our big hope now is that the Japs can be finished off within the year. Let's hope so. I know as big a blow to you as to me was the sudden death of President Roosevelt. My knees just went weak when I heard the news. It was a great

disaster for the freedom-loving people of the world. We are all behind President Truman now with our help and well wishes, so here's hoping. News from other quarters is non too frequent. I receive announcements --" then the rest is just some comments on, you know, family stuff and so forth. And that's about it. So you can spot where we were and about what time it was and so on.

Mark: Very, very interesting.

Frank: I was so glad she sent that to me because, you know, I forget those things. [laughs]

Mark: What's the date on that first letter?

Frank: May 1, 1945.

Mark: Gee, it's hard to know where to go from there.

Frank: Well --

Mark: I've got some more questions for you. You had a lot to say about the Filipinos over there. I ask the question of all my subjects, did you have a lot of contact with the native peoples where you were. Now you were in various places. You went from Indonesia to the Philippines --

Frank: Yeah.

Mark: -- and then the Japanese --

Frank: And I'm ashamed that there were no Japanese that I remember. But, if we'd go over to Okinawa, which we do from time to time, there were natives living there. So you want to know what I think of the Filipinos.

Mark: Well, I'm wondering how did you get along with them and were they perhaps different than the people in Indonesia that you came across?

Frank: Oh, yes.

Mark: And, of course, to look back, colonialism is about to die in Southeast Asia. I'm wondering if, perhaps, you'd have any insight on that?

Frank: My first contact with native peoples was when I joined the outfit in New Guinea and we had to get training to survive in case we're forced down in the jungle. And for that training Australians, Aussies we called them, Australian soldiers would take us out on a two or three day camping trip out in the jungle where they'd point out stuff that we shouldn't touch, or stuff we could eat, and so forth. And in the course of this, we'd come upon a village of native people and they were like prehistoric people running around with no clothes on, you know. They all of them chewing beetle nuts so their faces, mouths would be red. Little

kids with distended bellies. Scroungy looking dogs running around, what not. Then in the Dutch East Indies, the little islands we were on, I don't recall any natives. We really didn't start to run into natives until we got to the Philippines. And, as I said in that letter, the first Filipinos that we meet on the island of Leyte were quite primitive in every way. And it wasn't until we got over to Luzon, where now we move into what was left of Clark Field and so forth, that things pick up. By this time Filipinos are coming to, well, barbers would come. We were getting haircuts and shaves. They'd do our laundry. They'd starch and iron our shirts. And, as I said in that letter, they were working in the mess hall, cooking food for us and so forth. Like so many places of the world where American soldiers, or any soldiers, I shouldn't pick on American. There's a lot of rape that goes on, which is an ugly, sad thing. I remember being in a tent and hearing gang rapes going on where they'd have some little Filipino girl, she'd be hollering, and even, they're saying today, how many children in Vietnam have American fathers, you know. I felt sorry for the Filipinos. I tell you one thing that happened that I'll never forget 'cause it still hurts me. We're going down to Manila in a truck, sitting in the back on benches out in the open and I'm eating a banana. And now we pass one of these little carts like I said in the letter. Just trotting along, one horse and the Filipino is sitting on the driver's seat with the reins and it happened that I threw my banana peeling out and it hit that poor guy in the face. I didn't mean to do that but it was the most insulting, horrible thing. And the truck is moving, you know, so fast there is no way I can get anything stopped to apologize or anything and I thought if he hates Americans worse, it's no wonder. Now, while we were at Clark Field the Japanese soldiers had, you know what was left of them, had backed off into the jungle and there they were starving to death and living horrible lives and finally a bunch of them surrendered. They came in. These are Japanese guys that gave themselves up and they're being loaded on the truck to be taken to the prison camp. Well now they had apparently brutalized Filipinos to the place where the Filipinos gathered around and are shaking their fists at these guys and I remember some of the American military police taking their rifles to drive the Filipinos back. Get back, these guys are better than you. In other words, it's all racial hatred and stuff was oozing out. I thought it was just terrible. This, incidently, is MacArthur's headquarters in Manila. There you see his cadillac, you see the five star license, and here's where he lived in the Philippines.

Mark: Damned nice building.

Frank: Oh, yeah. And this is what so many of the Japanese airplanes would look like where ever we'd go.

Mark: When you were in the Philippines or elsewhere, did you come across WACS and those sorts of things? American women? I know there were some stationed in Southeast Asia.

Frank: Just nurses. I never did see a WAC. And, of course, I never had to go to a hospital and so forth. But I would see nurses once in awhile.

Mark: Let's get some of the military-type things out of the way. I'm interested in some of your comments on the accuracy of the bombing. There's a lot of talk about precision bombing and yet the Army's own strategic bombing survey sort of determined that bombing wasn't all

that effective. And I was wondering from 20,000 feet what your perspective was about how accurate and effective.

Frank: I'm surprised that I made such a comment in this letter and I think I did it because that was part of the mythology that we were feeding the civilians. The truth is, there's very little accuracy. The best we could do was, what did they call it, carpet bombing or something like that, where a whole formation would all drop their bombs at the signal of the lead ship and then, if the target was anywhere around there, you'd hit it. But as far as accuracy and the reports that we got out of the Persian Gulf War, I think it was just bologna, just bologna.

Mark: Perhaps you could comment on what some of the targets were that you were going after. You mention ships sometimes, you mention cities a couple of times.

Frank: Well, it would be things like oil tank farms. Especially around Canton, China there would be these huge places where they'd store oil in these big tanks. Occasionally when we were at Clark Field we would go on what they would call ground support missions. Maybe our soldiers are fighting on the ground and there's a bridge that needs to be taken out or something. We'd go and bomb that. Mostly it would be Japanese shipping, Japanese navy. My very last mission, was against a Japanese aircraft carrier in the inland sea and it was the day after the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. And I didn't know, we didn't know anything about an atom bomb and so forth, or hardly anything but what little we'd hear on the radio. But my navigator, he's standing on the flight deck behind me and he says, 'Oh, Frank. Down there, that's where they dropped the atom bomb.' And I looked down and I see what looked like a big bowl of brown dust, some little smoke coming up, and that was it. But, anyway, here's an island in the inland sea and here's this aircraft carrier and it's camouflaged into the island. Now, it's true that it wasn't operating but its guns were firing and there were ak-ak guns all around. And every one of these guns would fire. Their ak-ak would explode in different colors so the gunners would know which was theirs. So it was like the Fourth of July. Every color of the rainbow, all around you. And I think, my memory is that half of our squadron got shot down that time. You'd be flying along and suddenly off to your right there'd be just an orange ball. That was another guy that went down. Well, we hit this ship and so here's a picture the next day and it's rolled over, it's about a third under water. And, you know, so that was one of the main things. Or, here's a case where a Japanese fighter plane at one of their bases are being bombed and these guys are coming in low and you see they had parachutes on these bombs because the bombs would go off before the planes could get out of the way. In fact, I've even got a picture here of just such a situation where, here's a Japanese ship along the South China coast. They've camouflaged it and so forth. Some plane has just flown over and dropped a bomb. The bomb burst is just starting. You can see the wing and engine of another plane coming in here. He's too damn low and he flies into the bomb blast itself. Here he's going into it. These pictures are being taken by a third plane out here. He's flying into it. That's what's left of him. Hitting the water. And so they finally got so that they're putting parachutes on the bombs and then they wouldn't drop right away and you could get the hell out of their, you see. Now, like I told you, I never tried to get promotions or anything and didn't care but finally I became a captain and a squadron leader. And, because we had to take off being on an island and our missions were so long you'd fly thousands of miles it seemed like before you got to your target, we

oftentimes had to take off at midnight, one, two, three in the morning. It was pitch dark. And maybe you don't know, but formation flying takes almost twice as much gasoline as if you're just flying on your automatic pilot. So, we'd fly separately to the target to save gasoline. But as we got close and it was necessary to come in to formation we'd do that, now we're off automatic pilot. Well, as the leader, I had on my ship a flare gun and it would be screwed into a socket in the roof of the cabin. Now I didn't do it because I'm the pilot and I'm sitting there but one of the crew members would screw the flare gun into the socket and then the flare would go off and it would be different colors for different signals and so on. It would go up in the air, a parachute would open over this little flare and it would hang there in the air burning and all the other guys could see it and they'd get the signal what they're supposed to do and we'd form into our formation and go over the target. Well, I, like I say, never got to fire one of those. So one day I'm lying on my bunk back at the camp and I look over and here's a box of these flares and the flare gun. And I thought doggone it I'd never shot one of those things I think I'll just shoot one. So I screwed the flare into the gun, stepped outside the tent, pointed it up and shot it off. It went up in the sky, the flare went off, the parachute opened and it burned and I watched it slowly come down and when it was on the ground I went over and picked it up and stamped on the parachute was "Made in Japan".

Mark: Oh, geeze. [laughter]

Frank: You know, it was just stunning. But that's the way it was. We'd take over these old abandoned Japanese camps and we'd find Packard automobiles that had been staff cars of the Japanese army and stuff like that. That was one thing I wanted to tell you and in trying to think of how my experience was maybe a little different than some of the others, my last base was Iishima like I told you. And when the Japanese finally surrendered, MacArthur gave them instructions that they were to come Iishima with their delegation with all of the plans of the Tokyo Harbor so that our battleship, The Missouri, could go up to Tokyo for the final surrender ceremony without running into any mine fields or any danger. So we got word that the Japs are coming to Iishima. And some of our fighter planes went up to be escorts for the last few miles and so on and pretty soon we're all down at the strip to watch them. Now amongst the fliers, well, do you golf? Do you know anything about golfing?

Mark: Well, I'm not very good at it. I go about once a year.

Frank: Well, you maybe don't realize that when a group goes out to golf it's almost always a foursome or more, when it's your turn to tee off, everybody else is watching you, so you're kind of nervous. You want that ball to go so far and so straight and everything. This is a test, you're on stage so to speak. Well, with fliers, the test is the landing. This is the maneuver that requires the most skill because you know it's the air streaming over the wing at a certain speed that gives you your lift because the air hits the leading edge and it's pushed up creating a vacuum on top of the wing. So air pressure pushes the wing up, holds it. And when you cut down your speed to the place where there's no longer any vacuum, the airplane will drop like a rock. And that's when you want to be right at the ground. You don't feel the drop. So everybody is interested in how the other guy is landing. So we're going to be down there to watch these Japanese ships come in. Pretty soon we hear the

motors and we look up and we see, and MacArthur had told them paint your airplane white with big green cross on it, they came down in twin engine planes which we called, my memory is, a Betty is the name of it. And how we watched them circle and make their landing. Well, they make beautiful landings. Just greased it in. And they finally got stopped and I'm down there with my camera and I've got some pictures here to show you. Now that the delegation is coming out. There's admirals and generals, some of them with swords clanking against their legs. There's some civilian diplomats and they get lined up under the wing of the airplane. Now I wasn't close enough to hear any exchange of conversation but I did see that the American Red Cross passed out box lunches to everybody. And the head of the delegation reaches in his pocket and he pulls out a wad of American money and, you wouldn't know it but back in the '20s our bills were about a third bigger than they are today. It wasn't until the Roosevelt administration that they cut our paper money down quite a bit in size. But he had this old 1920 money, which was funny, and he wanted to pay for the Red Cross box lunches. Well, of course, they didn't take the money. Well, now they're going to go from Iishima to Manila in one of our big four-engine transports, I think it was the C-54, and it's, the body's quite high up, they have to go up a ladder and they all go up the ladder and the ladder's pulled away and the door's slammed shut and we all move back so they -- and they couldn't get it started. Of all the embarrassing things. They tried and tried. So pretty soon they pushed the ladder back to the door, opened it, they all come marching down and there was a backup plane, and they went up in that. And that did get away. Well, here is when we first saw them coming in and here's a couple shots of the landing and it wasn't what we call "tricycle" landing gear where there'd be a nose wheel. No, it was a wheel in the tail so those are a little harder to land. Here they are getting out. You can see the swords there. And here they are lined up getting their box lunches. Now they're going on board our C-54 and then they had to come out and this --

Mark: These are photos that you took?

Frank: Yeah, these. And here the plane is finally taking off and they go on down to Manila. And that's, how many American soldiers got a chance to be in on something like that? Now that the Japanese plane itself was, the flight crew, the pilot, co-pilot and probably an engineer and so forth, they didn't go on down to Manila. They stayed with the plane and they taxied over to what we call a revetment area and you can see all the American soldiers clustered around. And when they came crawling out we were just amazed at what gorgeous uniforms, it was dark green silk. They were just, none of us never had uniforms that fancy. And I don't know what --

Mark: So what was the reaction of the American soldiers standing there watching the Japanese get off the plane? Was it silent?

Frank: Oh, yes. It was just, there wasn't any bitterness or anything like that. We just realized that we were witnessing a very unusual event. And, of course, we were so glad the war was over. See, it used to be a common saying, Golden Gate in '48. We thought sure the war was going to last 'til '48. And now, suddenly, the prospect of going home. Oh! You know, I wanted to beat my sword into a plowshare so bad. I disappointed the old man because as soon as I got home I took off my uniform and never wore it again. He wanted to show me

off, you know.

Mark: I've just got one more service-type question and then I want to get on to some post-war experiences. I wonder if you could tell me a bit about your crew on your plane. Did the personnel change over time? What were they like? Where'd they come from?

Frank: Interesting question. These are cadet pictures. In the Pacific, especially when we were flying missions in and around China, there was always a chance that we'd be forced down in China. And, just as the fliers in Europe would wear, and I think Cliff probably told you, that he had to wear civilian clothes under his uniform?

Mark: No, I don't remember that part if he did.

Frank: Because if you got forced down he would hide his uniform and try to pass himself off as a civilian. In fact, you'd even carry bogus passports. And so it was the same with my outfit. We would have civilian clothes under our uniform. We had, and I can't remember what country the passports were for -- Now where are my pictures of my crew here? So the pictures that I have here are the ones from the passports. Oh, here it is. Okay. There's the captain, John Johnson from Des Moines, Iowa, he was co-pilot. Wayne McKillip was the bombardier and Harry Hunt was the navigator. Now, the first thing is Harry Hunt. When you're flying over the Pacific, you know, as a matter fact when the war was over and we started figuring up our losses, my memory is that we figured that we lost almost half of our planes in bad weather and running out of gas and being lost. So this guy is very important. When I'm on my way to get my crew at Tonopah, Nevada I'm riding a bus from Stockton, California or someplace and I get talking with a soldier. And it turns out he was a navigation instructor and he asked for combat training, combat duty. And his name is Harry Hunt so I think, oh, if I could get him to be my navigator. So I, you know, make the arrangements and sure enough he gets to be my navigator. And it's true that he was an excellent navigator; we never got lost and sometimes we would be in terrible places like trying to come into to some goddamn island where there's mountains on both sides and rain coming down so hard, and of course, we didn't have instrument flying, and he's standing right behind me telling me when to turn and so forth and we'd get in. But he was the child of a broken family, was the only son and his mother and father divorced. Each spoiled him so rotten that when it came to living together, see the four of us would live together, he was selfish and wouldn't do his work. And then, one of the jobs of officers was to censor the soldier's mail which was a terribly boring thing, and he'd never do his share. We'd have to do it. And towards the end of the war he got drunk one night and threw up all over the floor. The next morning he woke up and he wouldn't clean it up and the place stunk. And I got so mad I picked up his steamer trunk, threw it out of the tent, 'You're through. Get the hell out of here!' Kicked him off the crew. So for my last three, four, five missions I had different navigators. I never saw him again. I was told by people that he went with that he could not say enough good about my flying, which I was impressed. And so when the war was over and I'm back home in Oshkosh and I'm thinking about Harry Hunt and I'm beginning to think, 'Frank, you could have been a little more decent.' so I wrote him a long letter to apologize, let's bury the hatchet, and never heard from him again. Now the rest of these guys are Blizzard was the nose gunner. He was the engineer. The radio man. These

two guys were waist gun and this was tail gun. Now, incidently, none of these guys ever come to the reunion. I've never seen them again, never heard from them again. This fella I want to tell you about. Bill Remmer. When you are flying, do you know how to fly?

Mark: No.

Frank: One of the first things you do with a strange airplane, I don't know what it's like today. I've never flown a jet or anything. But one of the first things you do is to find out what's your stalling speed. In other words, what speed will this airplane quite flying. And, usually with a small plane, you stall and you fall off on one wing and you go into a tail spin and then you learn how to break out of that and so on, but with the B-24 because they were mass-produced and slapped together, we were told don't ever let it get into a spin, your wings will come off. But still you had to find out at what speed it's going to stall. So when I first got my crew, the very first day, and it was at Tonopah, we all get on and we're going to go up and I'm in this strange airplane and, I forget how high we are, but I put it into a stall. And, of course, I'm watching the air speed very closely and I'm not going to let it fall into a spin but I, and in this stall the whole plane is just shaking something fierce and if these poor guys didn't know what was going on and realize what I'm doing and so forth, they're scared to death. Well, when I get back down a messenger comes to me, my tent from the squadron or whatever, that Remmer has asked to be relieved from duty in the Air Force; he wants to quit, go into anything, the infantry or whatever. Well, I can understand and I feel sorry for him because I think, you know, if Bill allows himself to -- oh, and the minute you'd say anything you're looked down upon as a yellow coward and blah, blah, blah. You know, you're name is mudd, and I knew that he'd carry that guilt that he couldn't for the rest of his life and I just felt so sorry for him. So I went to the enlisted men's quarters, hunted up his tent, he's busy putting his stuff in his duffel bag, he's leaving, and I said, 'Bill, I can appreciate how you felt. I understand--' the whole thing '--and I just wanted to let you know that if you change your mind and want to come back I'd be glad to have you.' And usually the theory was that if anybody showed any cowardice, you wouldn't want them. But I went and told the head guy, who ever it was, that if Bill Remmer says he wants to come back, I want him. Well, that's what happened. He came back. And he stuck with me through all 45 missions, he was the hardest working, most devoted, friendly guy. He was, you know, when I'm flying, he'd bring me cold water to drink. He couldn't do enough for me. And it was a feeling of mutual respect and gratitude and everything. And I've often wondered, you know, what happened to him. This was the only guy on the crew that was ever severely wounded. He wasn't killed or anything but flak did cut him up. But all the rest of us got through pretty good.

Mark: So, it was pretty much the same crew throughout the whole?

Frank: Exactly. We had the same crew except for Harry. Yeah.

Mark: Was that unusual?

Frank: Yes. That was unusual for several reasons. One was that, ordinarily, it was the pilot's job to break in the co-pilot so he could become a first pilot. And I tried doing that. Big John

couldn't fly that airplane worth a damn. He couldn't hold it on course. If we'd come in for landings and he's flying, he'd drop it in from 20 feet, you know, and of course, maybe I was fussy and hard to please, probably was. I just got to the place where I was more relaxed and happy if I was doing the flying and he was satisfied. Here, let me tell you one thing that happened. It's while we were still at Tonopah on the practice missions and we were going to fly over the harbor at Los Angeles and drop bombs and, of course, the bombardier would have cameras in the bomb site and so forth. Now we're coming back over the Grand Canyon. Just about a month before, I had read where a B-24 had, they had to bail out. They had engine trouble over the Grand Canyon and the guys jumped out and sometimes when they're falling down, their parachutes would hit the side of a cliff and collapse and they'd drop and were killed. And then for the forestry people to find the remains it took a week or more to get through and what not. And now, we're over the Grand Canyon, we're about 20,000 feet, 25,000, all four engines purring along nicely, and we've got our oxygen masks on. In those days, you didn't have compressed, cabins that were pressurized you had oxygen masks. Suddenly all four engines quit. I mean, all four engines quit! Dead silence. And I look around. Big John looks at me, we got our masks on so we can't talk but the bit eyes, you know. I check all the instruments. I don't see any indication of what's gone wrong. I knew we had enough gasoline. Meanwhile the altimeter is unwinding. And I knew that at a certain place where I'd have to push the emergency button which would indicate bail out because if I waited any longer it wouldn't be enough room left for parachutes to open. And finally I realize that I'm at that point and my hand is going out to hit that red button when suddenly all four engines come back on! All came back on with a great roar! And I can't imagine. And there's Big John, he's sitting to my right, he's pointing. What's he pointing at? With a B-24, like with probably lots of other four engine bombers, if you have some kind of a crash landing, there's what we call a crash bar switch. You'd hit this bar and all four, the electrical circuits of all four engines would be cut off to cut down on the chances of an electrical fire. Big John's sitting there, he had his feet cocked up, he's reading a magazine or western novel or something all during this thing and his foot inadvertently hit the crash bar switch. He knocked all four engines off. Never realized it until, just before I, oh, and then he puts them all back on. Well, that was.

Mark: Wow.

Frank: So Big John stayed with me. He never was anything but a co-pilot. And so you asked. Now other crews, the co-pilot would become a first pilot and so forth. Sometimes people would be wounded. Sometimes there'd be terrible fights between guys. Their personality clashes and whatnot. So I think that the fact that my crew stayed together was fairly exceptional. The fact that I finally had it out with Harry was par for the course.

Mark: Where'd all these guys come from?

Frank: Most of them were Southerners.

Mark: Albert.

Frank: DeMotta, I think he was from New Jersey. My memory is that most of them were all

Southerners. He was from Seattle and Big John was from Des Moines and he, I think, was from Portland, Oregon.

Mark: They all look pretty young but it's a variety of ages too.

Frank: Well, he was the oldest. Blizzard was the oldest.

Mark: He must have been, what, nearly 30?

Frank: Could have been.

Mark: Okay. Well, let's move on to post-war experiences then. When did you come home to the United States?

Frank: Well --

Mark: Explain the process between VJ Day and how you got --

Frank: Yeah. Okay, the war's over and we're in Iishima. And typhoons were hitting the island. They were all over in the Pacific. Terrible wind storms; they'd blow everything away. And so on this little island, everything got blown away. And I was supposed to, incidently, get a medal for sinking that aircraft carrier, but everything's blown away. And so then finally after things are settled back; our wells were filled with salt water, we're drinking just canned grapefruit juice and whatnot, and the CO came and said, 'Frank, now we're going to have to start over again applying for your medal because everything's blown away.' And here were endless forms to fill out and I had to reconstruct what altitude we were at, what heading I was at, what air speed, all this stuff. And it was, oh, forget it. So I never did apply. But we were furnished with chunks of galvanized iron. This is what we made to live in while we were on this island. Well, there we sit. This little island. And we listen on the radio that back home in the States people are being discharged with, and they had a point system. Now I can't remember the points, the actual points, but it would be something like this. That back in the States you'd get discharged with 45 points. We were sitting there with close to 100 points. Not a ghost of a chance of getting off that island. Now, they did ask me if I wanted to fly a B-24 back to the States. I said no. Well, you can get promoted to major if you will. I don't care about that. I've used up all my luck. I don't want to fly. So we'll just sit there and wait. Well, we waited and waited. Lived through a couple of typhoons and whatnot and one day a big boat came. There wasn't a harbor here. This boat just off the island, threw over an anchor. We were watching this boat and they lower a little boat and this boat comes up to the shore and the guy's got a bit megaphone and he hollers out, 'Anybody here want to go home?' We run to our tents, grab what we can in our duffle bags, get in this little boat, go out to this big ship, they threw over a landing net, we scrambled up the net. And that's how we got home.

Mark: On this very same boat? All the way across the Pacific?

Frank: That same boat took us all the way to San Francisco. We get into the harbor at San

Francisco, went under the Golden Gate Bridge, and we were told that there was no room for us at the camp where ever it was; now I can't remember it's name. So, it was going to be a hotel ship; we'd have to live on this ship for awhile. So we did. And finally, finally, I get on a train going back to Oshkosh and this train with all people, soldiers heading East to their various homes. Every time some important passenger or freight train would come through, we'd sit on the siding while they raced passed. I remember we finally got to some town in Kansas and I called home. And at our house, like so many homes in those days, for hot water you had a hot water tank in the basement but you had a gas burner under it, so on Saturday night when you're taking baths you go down and light the heater. So I call up from Kansas, someplace, 'Listen, you better turn on the heater. I'll be coming home.' It was a joke. Well, I land at Camp McCoy and the folks are there to meet me and we drive to Oshkosh and my plan, see I was, I wanted to be an historian. And so I go back to Oshkosh and I wanted to finish at Oshkosh State Teachers because I had several teachers there that were the tops. The president of the school at that time, Bob, er Forest R. Polk, his son Bob Polk, eventually became assistant vice president here at this university. He's retired now. But Forest Polk, the president, asked me to make speeches around town about the war and stuff. And I remember one time I'm talking to the student body. Here I am, big hero from the war, and I'm trying to synthesize the whole thing, what can I say. And I thought and thought and, finally, I said, and I'll never forget it and I still believe it, if I was to put my finger on the main feeling that I had of the war, it could be summed up in the word "waste". Everything was waste. It started from day one. Now I grew up in the Depression. My dad had gone through bankruptcy. And, if we ever had bacon in our house for breakfast, two slices, that was it. We treasured it. Now, I remember at Shephard Field, we're going through the mess line and here's a tub full of bacon. I thought, bacon, holy smokes. I'd load my plate with it, went back to my table, took a bite and I couldn't swallow it. The dummy cook had salted it so bad you couldn't even chew it and so I saw that great big tub of bacon just being thrown out. Waste, that was the first. Overseas, endless waste. On this boat that brought us home, when I, it was run by the navy and I had brought along my army blanket, my OD. They took all the army blankets, ODs threw those overboard and gave us navy blankets; white ones. I saw airplanes worth God knows how much, just being bulldozed into the ocean. And it wasn't just that kind of stuff that was being wasted, it was human life that was wasted. Young men that became alcoholics or disease-ridden or, you name it, you know. Waste, waste, waste. That was the main thing about the war.

Mark: Let me ask about readjustment problems. You know, in the media today, we're all familiar with Vietnam veterans.

Frank: It wasn't like that, no. I feel sorry for the Vietnam veterans and I know some of them. Their lives are messed up, ruined. But it wasn't that way with me. I jumped back into school and as soon as I got my bachelors from Oshkosh State I started on a masters at the University of Chicago. Got my masters in history down there then transferred to Madison here. I was working under Merle Curdy. I wanted to be a history professor. But, Joseph McCarthy arrives. And it gets worse and worse. And I say to myself, 'Frank, you spent four years fighting fascism, you risked your life a thousand times for democracy. Are you going to sit by now and see this goof ruin everything?' I mean, I thought we were going fascist. You've got to get out and do something. What are you going to do? Well, I said, he's got to be

opposed. Where in this country is there enough strength, enough people to oppose him. And I thought the labor unions. You've got to get into a labor union. So I dropped out of graduate school and I got a job with the Chicago Northwestern Railroad as a locomotive fireman. And would have stayed on; I loved it, I loved it. And it was when we were still shoveling coal in the steamers.

Mark: About 1950 wasn't it?

Frank: Yeah, yeah. But then as they switched from steam to diesels, I became the victim of technological unemployment and so forth. Eventually, all my options were used up. I already had teaching license from having finished up at Oshkosh with a masters. I go back into teaching.

Mark: On what level?

Frank: Well, high school. Eventually, I ended up at West High School teaching History at first. Later, I switched into Library. One funny thing that happened, we always enjoy going down on Wednesday nights to the Concerts on the Square and you know, now they get maybe 10,000, 20,000 people there and they close off all the streets and we either take along folding chairs or blankets but we noticed that on the main sidewalk where the orchestra's here and the sidewalk goes down to the corner where that Norwegian soldier is, that there's tables and chairs --

[End of Side B, Tape 1]

Frank: -- the bank at their table down, for the concert. Wonderful, yeah, we'll be glad to. So we head down there and Charlie meets us and we get seated at the table, the food is furnished by Ovens of Brittany, he's got a big basket filled with bottles of chilled wine. And, finally, the other couples come. There must have been, finally, maybe four or five couples. Almost all of them were University professors. And, because we were there first, we were sitting right at the very edge of the table and then starts the grass and people were on blankets and stuff. Well, it was a beautiful evening, the food was great, the music was great, I was facing the Capitol, I'd look up and see this gorgeous dome and then the blue sky up above and then the white clouds. Yeah, I thought I had died and gone to heaven. Finally, intermission. The music stops, people get up and start moving around. And I'm sitting right across from Mr. Kiteling, our host. And he looks up and he says, 'Oh, here comes the president of the bank.' He means the president of FirstStar, the whole schmere. I don't know who he is. So he comes and he starts being introduced to all the couples down the table. Down to me, finally, 'Mr. Stoll, I had you for History at West High in 1960.' And I, you know, 'I even remember a story that you told.' And I'm thinking, oh, what could that be because I hated teachers who waste class time with stories that are inappropriate. But the story that he told word for word perfect was this one about the "Made in Japan". I must have been talking about the war and so forth and how, you know. And one funny thing, he said, 'You wouldn't remember me.' And I didn't, Richard Hanson is his name. His office is over here in this big glass building, you know. He said, 'I wasn't a good student. Didn't get good grades, sat in the back of the room, a lot of times didn't have my lessons.' And he said,

'People think that because I'm president of the bank, I must have an MBA from Harvard. No,' he said, 'I've got a bachelors in geography from the Milwaukee State Teachers College.' And later I went up in the attic and dug up my old class books and found, yes, there he was with C's and D's and F's and stuff. But, and it's a lesson. That you can't judge a kid when he's at that age. You don't know now they're going to turn out.

Mark: I was a late bloomer myself. That's how I ended up in the Air Force. I was 18 and had a 1. something grade point average. That was about all there was to do in 1981 or whatever it was. But, enough about me. I'm interested more in the college experience and how the veterans affected the university and college and maybe we can start by my asking, did you use the GI Bill at all?

Frank: Oh, yes.

Mark: It was a major piece of social legislation.

Frank: You better believe. I used it all up.

Mark: What was your experience with the GI Bill?

Frank: It was perfect. I can't say enough good about it. I don't think that I could even have gone to the University of Chicago without it. And then in 1949, June 22, yesterday was our 45th anniversary, I got married.

Mark: Congratulations.

Frank: Blind date. Young lady from Crawfordsville, Indiana. She's going to the University of Chicago. I was supposed to have a date with another girl from Crawfordsville and this girl, I met her and she decided that she didn't really want to go with me and I didn't particularly want to go with her so she rigged it up for me to go with this other girl. The girl that I was supposed to go with, she'd been angling to get a date from the editor of the Chicago Maroon, that was the school paper. And she finally got it and this guy is now a famous columnist for the Washington Post and name is, just suddenly gone, but you'd recognize it right away. He's written books and so on. And they're still married. They live out in Washington and so on. We're grateful to her because she made it possible. Yeah, uh --

Mark: Where there lots of vets on campus?

Frank: What?

Mark: Where there lots of vets on campus?

Frank: Oh, yes, yes. Lots of vets. And, at both schools, Chicago and here. I remember when I came here, you know, the veterans were living in these Quonset huts and I remember the saying was "if it's hollow, rent it". They were living everywhere. I didn't join any veterans organizations. I was leery of outfits like the American Legion because they were so blatant

in their so called flag waving patriotism which I couldn't go along with. It just didn't ring a bell with me.

Mark: Now there was a group active on a lot of campuses called the American Veterans Committee. Do you remember them?

Frank: No, I don't, but I think some of my friends did belong.

Mark: I know there was a big chapter here in Madison. I don't know about Oshkosh or other places.

Frank: Well, at Oshkosh there were very few veterans. I don't hardly remember any up there. But it wasn't until I went to Chicago that I really began to --

Mark: What was the social life like for the vets on campus? Did you associate much with the kids coming through? What did you do for fun? While you were in college. I assume you were mature men of 24 by this time.

Frank: I didn't associate with the kids.

Mark: Mostly vets?

Frank: Not even much with them. You know, I was studying hard and while I was still at Oshkosh, like I said the president asked me to give talks to the Rotary Club and whatnot so I'd be writing speeches and he'd be checking them over and that was fun. And then in Chicago, I was hard pressed to keep up because I wasn't that good of a student. I mean, well for one thing, I was a very slow reader and I'd be in these seminars, graduate seminars, and guys would be dropping titles of books and whatnot and I'd be sitting there and thinking how could they get all that read? I can't do it. So it was always a real struggle to keep up and I had little or no time for social life. The courting of Anne, I can't explain, it just, as my roommate said, 'Well, Frank, you've reached a time when you have to get, you want to get married. You have that urge to settle down for companionship and so on.' And, so, my roommate at the University of Chicago, so I talked to him for a week about this girl I met. I think I ought to ask her to marry me. And we finally decided, yes, so I had a date with her the next week and asked her to marry me. And she was so surprised and put me off and so, okay, we'll wait. [laughs] A year later she married me.

Mark: And then you began your contribution to the Baby Boom, perhaps?

Frank: No, not right away. We came up here and I was going to go on for PhD and she was in social work school. The first child came in 1953, I believe. Joe Stoll, and he works now at the Department of Public Administration here. And then we had one other child, another boy, Carl. And Carl had good experience at West High in elocution, speaking, poetry reading, acting. When he started college we sent him to Earlham College which is a Quaker school in Richmond, Indiana and they have a tremendous play that they put on once every four years and anybody in the whole school can audition. And they put on Taming of the

Shrew, if I remember, and Carl got the lead. Here he's just a freshman. So he thinks he's an actor. So he goes on pushing this and to hell with school. Acting is the thing. He finally gets admitted to American Players Theater out here as an apprentice. You know, they used to call themselves an academy and they'd take young people as an apprentice working for peanuts and then after four years you'd get a regular contract and you'd be admitted to Actors Equity. Well, he went there for four years, as he said, as spear carrier, breathless messenger, all those minor roles. Living on peanuts, working winters here, there, where ever he could. And when it came time for Actors Equity and whatnot they were so low on money they couldn't follow through. So he, in anger, went to Chicago thinking surely he could get a job there. He worked there for a year, auditioning sometimes three times a week hoping for television commercials, anything. Nothing came through. He supported himself as a waiter. We, of course, had been telling him all along, forget acting, at any one time 99% of the people in Actors Equity are waiting on tables, washing dishes. Oh, he'd say, he can't help it, he's an actor. And on his own it finally dawned on him that he really was fighting a losing battle and he had saved up by this time over \$10,000 from his tips so he came back to the University and entered the department where he became a speech pathologist and he got his masters in that and he's just now finishing his first year as a speech pathologist for the public schools in Monroe, Wisconsin. And are we grateful. [laughs]

Mark: Did you use any other GI Bill benefits for housing? There was more to the GI Bill than just education.

Frank: Yes. All I ever got was the GI Bill. When we decided to buy a house here, at that time you could get a second mortgage through the government at something like 2.5% interest. And, it's a long and dirty story, but to make it short, the house we asked for, the lady wanted \$16,000 and the law was you couldn't go over \$15,000 to qualify for a second mortgage. So we made arrangement to buy some of her furniture and curtains and stuff for \$1,000 and then the house could be \$15,000. Okay, the bulk of the mortgage I got from First Federal but I'm thinking if I could get this second mortgage, the first mortgage was at 6%, if I can get at second mortgage at 2, it would average out at 4 or whatever. So now I apply to the Veterans Administration for a second mortgage. Four years in the Army, 45 missions, captain. I felt I qualified. I had to produce a financial statement, list all my assets and liabilities and whatnot and they said, why are you holding back so much money? Well, because this is the first time I've ever owned a house, I don't know what it's going to cost. I've got to buy a lawn mower and a garden hose and snow shovels and then we have to move, at that time we're living in St. Charles, Illinois, we have the moving expenses. Oh, and one other thing I said, the hot water tank in the basement does leak a little bit, I noticed a little stream of water that goes from the tank down to the floor drain. And I checked with Madison Gas & Electric about getting that fixed and they said a new one would be \$250 so I said we'll probably get a new heater. Oh, said the VA guy, your house doesn't cost \$15,000, it costs \$15,250 so you're disqualified. So that was the end of that. Well, I was so mad and felt so put upon I can't tell you. And I'm still mad about it, but anyway, I said the hell with them, walked out, we got the 6% mortgage, I got the house paid off in ten years and so on and we're on our own.

Mark: I just have three more things here.

Frank: I'm ready.

Mark: You mentioned McCarthy and you joined the unions because of, so you could --

Frank: Fight McCarthy.

Mark: I'm wondering how successful you think you were. I know, well, you're from Oshkosh. That's McCarthy territory almost.

Frank: Well, he was from Appleton. My dad, who was in the oil business did business in Appleton with people who knew McCarthy personally. My dad was a dyed in the wool Republican, as were all his friends, but he said we wouldn't let McCarthy dirty our rugs. He was scum, even for the Republicans. And, of course, he ended himself. He drank himself to death. Anybody ever hear about what happened to his wife, you know. She's disappeared into thin air. He was finally married. And, of course, McCarthy corrupted our idea of democracy. The idea of democracy, as I saw it, was a marketplace of ideas where you could go with your idea and argue with people and the truth will come out. Well, Evjue used to have, on the paper, and it's still there on the Cap Times, let the people have the truth and the freedom to discuss it and all will be well. I happen to believe that. But McCarthy, if you disagreed with him, you're a communist. Well, that's a word that might cost you your job. So that's what he did. Fortunately, he croaked. I don't see McCarthy today as the worst thing that happened to us. In my opinion today, the worst thing that happened to us was the Vietnam War. I see the Vietnam War, this great criminal atrocity that our government led us into and kept feeding us, you know. It cost us the moral authority of the government, the moral authority of our schools, our churches, our very families. Any decent kid in those days was fighting against it. He was out in the street. And then, of course, a gang of other kids would come along, they didn't know what it was all about but they knew they could throw a brick through a, you know, the drug store window and stuff and then all kinds of dumb, crazy, goofy things happened. You know Paul Soglin at that time was in law school and he had long hair and a beard. And at one time, he was living in what we used to call the student ghetto on Mifflin Street and so forth, they asked to have a block party like the kids on Fraternity Row did cause the police used to let them block off Langdon Street with horses, you know, wooden horses. They'd have a party. So these other kids, they wanted it. No, couldn't have it. So they had it anyway. Police raided them--teargas, the works. They grabbed Soglin, took him down to the jail and shaved his hair off. Of course, later he become mayor. That's all for the good to Madison. Anyway, I remember that in this period, because of the crazy stuff that went on, a truck load, not a truck, a bus full of welfare mothers from Milwaukee came to Madison and these crazy kids who were throwing bricks through windows and stuff tipped over the whole bus. Well, you know, they weren't proving anything by all that bologna. And as you know, when they finally blew up the Math Research Center, that pretty much ended the peace movement.

Mark: I'm interested in your involvement. You were a member of the Vets --

Frank: Vets for Peace in Vietnam, yeah.

Mark: How did you join?

Frank: Oh, I can't remember. In those days I don't even remember that you got membership cards.

Mark: That's what I was going to ask. I was going to ask that because my understanding of the 60s groups was that membership was very loose.

Frank: Exactly.

Mark: You didn't sign a membership card. All you did was go to meetings.

Frank: That's my memory.

Mark: Or just showed up. Was it before or after 1968 do you recall?

Frank: I can't, the war was still on. We were marching up State Street. All of the protests that we could do but when it comes to pinning that down to dates, it's just drifting away. I never made records or anything.

Mark: And of your fellow veterans who were involved in this, were they mostly Vietnam veterans or World War II veterans? Maybe you could describe some of the personalities.

Frank: The guys in it that I was with were World War II veterans who felt the same as I did. That this Vietnam War was a crime. And the sooner we can get it stopped, the better. But I didn't, I'm holding down a job at the same time. I'm teaching History at West High and stuff. I didn't have time to do much else. And I remember, you know, the kids at West High would sometimes have sit down strikes and fill the principal's office and what not. And I would be, I could feel sympathy for them and what not, but I couldn't always agree that their tactics were smart. They oftentimes made far more enemies than friends. And then, you know, along came everything else. The marijuana, crazy, well with the breakdown of morale authority they quit working in school. They just drifted, they didn't give a damn. All of the things that I thought you needed to do to build any decent life, they just said the hell with it. I had to say I can't blame 'em. The adults who were running the society sure goofed it. With the same time, tomorrow is another day. There's got to be groceries on the table, all that nasty stuff.

Mark: But you did have contact with the Vietnam veterans?

Frank: Yeah. Oh, wait. With Vietnam veterans, yeah right.

Mark: Could you describe some of the relationships between the World War II vets and the Vietnam veterans? What did you have in common? What was different? How did you get along?

Frank: Well, my contact with the Vietnam veterans was very sparse. It would be an occasional person. It just so happened that it would usually be the husband of some woman that my wife got to be friendly with. My wife, eventually, became a librarian, too. She worked in the public schools. She'd make friends and then we'd get to know them socially and then, they'd be younger people, and in several instances the husbands were Vietnam vets. In one case I remember the man has physical problems, probably poisoned in some way. In another case, the fellow had picked up the drinking habit. It's so easy to do, and with drinking it's sort of, it's a drug, and if you are chemically geared to be susceptible to be addicted, you're almost done for. You have to abstain or else. So that marriage broke up, you know. And I'd see things like that. But I never sat down with a Vietnam veteran and talked things over. One book that I recently read called Chicken Hawk was written by a Vietnam veteran who was flying helicopters and at the end his life is a mess. I think he's facing five years, I think when he finishes the book, he's facing five years in prison for dealing in drugs or something like that. I felt so sorry for that guy. He gave his life, you know.

Mark: What do you personally think was the difference between veterans of your generation and the Vietnam veteran? As you said, you came back fairly well adjusted.

Frank: I think the main difference was the fact that we were, as Studs Terkel would say, "fighting the good war." Now no war is good; every war is bad. But there was a purpose -- there were principals to what we were doing. But in Vietnam, you know, my own son had number 13 in the draft. Draft board tells him, well you've got to go over and start killing the Vietnamese. I don't want to kill any Vietnamese, I've got nothing against them. Well, you mean you're objecting on grounds of conscience? Yeah, I guess you could say that. Well, now it so happened that we had sent him to a Quaker school, too. And there he'd heard chattering about the first commandment, "Thou Shalt Not Kill." What are we doing over there killing them? So he got CO status and he served out his alternative duty as a Goodwill truck driver in Milwaukee and when that was all over he came back and finished school. And, you can be sure that his mother and I were grateful that that happened because if he'd gone over there it might have been the end of him. Might have been a dope addict or poisoned with Agent Orange or you name it. Yeah, I think that that was the main thing was the purpose of the war, the quality. Now I think Studs Terkel, who I think even wrote a book called The Good War would say that no war is good and that was just an expression and so on.

Mark: Were you active during the Persian Gulf at all? Or however long it lasted?

Frank: What I did with the Persian Gulf War was to go over to the Mifflin Street Co-op where they were selling yard signs and it was a big sign and I've still got it in my attic but it says something to the effect of "Stop the War. Get the troops back." And I live over in the Hill Farm area, it's upper middle class. I put that in my front yard, my friends said, 'Frank, you're going to get a brick through your window.' I was the only one in the neighborhood that had, everybody else had yellow ribbons, yellow ribbons. A few people, who we might call closet liberals who were afraid to take an open stand, did tell me they admired the sign and I was grateful to get that. And of course we wrote letters. With the Vietnam War I tried to

withhold paying my taxes, whatever we could do. With the Persian Gulf War, thank God it was finally over. I took the sign up.

Mark: And one last thing. You mentioned you were against the Korean War as well. Now that's something you don't hear about. This is in the middle of the McCarthy Cold War.

Frank: Yeah.

Mark: I'm wondering, did you, was there active resistance on your part or was this something you kept private? Knowing your feelings on Korea, what sort of actions did you take?

Frank: Okay. I was a graduate student at that time. You might remember that in 1948, I believe it was '48, there was a third party formed in this country called the Progressive Party. They nominated Henry Wallace for President. He lost, Truman got reelected but the Progressive Party, and I always thought of myself as a member of the Old LaFollette Party. I was a strong supporter of the LaFollettes. Now the Progressive Party that was started under Henry Wallace was maybe more to the left. See LaFollette came out of the Republican Party but even so he was very unusual. LaFollette was one of I think just two senators who voted against our participation in World War I and, incidently, I don't know if you know it but William T. Evue, who maybe is dead now but you might recognize as being a leader of the liberal movement in this area, was a young kid, not a young kid, he was a college age boy in Madison at the time working for, there was no Capitol Times but the Wisconsin State Journal which was quite liberal at that time. And he was a reporter for them. And then the war breaks out and LaFollette votes against participation and the State Journal turns against him. Anybody that would vote against it was a rotten German. As a matter of fact, my grandfather, Frank Stoll, came from Bittburr Germany, and after he became successful in 1906 he took the whole family back to Germany for a year's visit. They went over on the North German Lloyd Steamship Line. They stayed in hotels in Berlin and what not. And the trunk, the steamer trunk was in the family and when my dad went off to war in 1917 or '16, he took along that trunk with those German labels on it. And after he finishes his training and gets his medals, his wings, his bars and there's final inspection in the BOQ and he's standing there by his bed and the inspecting officers are marching through until they come to him and they look down and they see that steamer trunk with those German labels on it, he's arrested as a German spy. Put in jail and it wasn't until he got letters from the mayor of Chicago Heights, the pastor of the German Lutheran Church, superintendent of schools, president of the bank, and I've got copies of all those letters, attesting to the patriotism of the Stoll family, that he's finally released. That's why they never sent him to France, he became an instructor. That was the feeling about anybody that, you know, this German thing. William T. Evue was on LaFollette's side when he voted against going to war and so he quit the Capitol Times, rather the State Journal. He quit the State Journal and he started the Capitol Times in 1917. And he supported the LaFollettes and then old Bob dies and young Bob takes his spot in the senate and then finally Phil is governor and so forth and Evue, as I look at this state or Madison, we're the second best city in the country they tell us, what makes Madison different and so good? Well, there's a lot of things but I would give William T. Evue credit for a big share of the atmosphere in this community. Okay.

Progressive. Now Wallace, as you know, lost, he was offered a job as editor of the New Republic, which he took. I immediately bought a three subscription to the New Republic, but then the New Republic starts supporting the goddamn Korean War. I dropped my subscription. The Progressive Party limps on and here in this state, it continued and a lawyer in Milwaukee by the name of Michael Essen, who was a labor lawyer, is running for governor on the Progressive Party ticket. And this is the election of, I think, 1950. And I was approached to go on the ticket for Attorney General. Well, I said, I'm not a lawyer. If anybody questions you, they said, in the first place you won't get elected, if you get a chance to speak if anybody says, and what if you get elected and you're not a lawyer, what would you say. Well, what you'd say is that in cases of legal question, you'd hire competent legal advice otherwise you'd run the Attorney General's office. So I ran. You can get the Wisconsin Blue Book for 1950 and go in the back and you'll see Frank C. Stoll, Attorney General listed and I think I ended up getting a total of 3,000 votes or something. What I liked about it was the fact that I got a chance to speak against the war. And I remember the League of Women Voters even had a radio program; I got to talk on the radio. And I felt that the way the war started there was something fishy about it. It looked as if we had provoked this thing and so forth. I don't remember the details anymore. It's past history and it's floating away. But I took the position of the Progressive Party. Vincent Hallinan, a lawyer in San Francisco, was the, ran for President in '52 I think it was on the Progressive Party ticket. He's now dead. That's what happened. My dad, of course, was heartsick that I did this but I have no regrets and I was against the war then and I still think it was a mistake.

Mark: If I may run the risk of being contemporary here, what do you think about what's going on in Korea now?

Frank: I don't know. I can't imagine North Korea being so stupid as to declare a war against anybody. You know, the United States is the most heavily armed country in all history. A couple of bombs and we'd eliminate North Korea. Don't they know that? Apparently, Carter has helped smooth things over and the heads of the two countries are going to get together. But I haven't followed it. You know, if you're going to be a student of every trouble spot in this world, you won't have time to do anything else. And so, as far as Korea is concerned, I'm sorry. [chuckles]

Mark: Just curious. Okay. That's about all the questions I have. Do you have anything you want to add before we finish off?

Frank: No, I think that I have filled enough of your tapes. I am flattered that I was asked to come here. I can't imagine that what I've said is all that important. It's just one more guy's experience. So with that I think I better shut up. [chuckles]

Mark: Well, thanks.

END OF INTERVIEW