

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an

Oral History Interview with

VINCENT WIEDEL

4025th Signal Corps and 440th Troop Carrier, Army Air Force, World War II

2001

OH
143

OH
93

Vincent Wiedel, (1925-2002). Oral History Interview, 2001.

User: 1 sound cassette (ca. 45 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master: 1 videorecording. (ca. 45 min), ½ inch, color.

Abstract:

Vincent Wiedel, a Hebron, Nebraska native, discusses his World War II service as a Communications Specialist on Biak (Indonesia) in 1946, duty in Texas during the Korean War, duty in Wisconsin during the Cuban Missile Crisis, and a 6-month stint in Germany in 1971. He details the monotony and amusements of his two years on Biak, as well as a kamikaze pilot attack. Wiedel recalls the difficulty of disciplining troops at Truax Field in Madison (Wisconsin). He also discusses his experiences with the VFW and the DAV. The interview ends with Wiedel describing photographs he is showing to the interviewer.

Biographical Sketch:

Vincent Wiedel (1925-2002) served with the Army Signal Corps starting in 1944. His work as a Communications Specialist sent him to Biak, Texas, Wisconsin, and Germany in a mix of Active and Reserve duty until his official discharge in 1971.

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2001.

Transcribed by Alison Carriere, 2012.

Reviewed and corrected by Amanda Axel, 2012.

Abstract written by Rebecca Cook, 2015.

Interview Transcript:

McIntosh: Okay, talking to Vincent Wiedel and it's the 19th of November, the year 2001. Where were you born, sir?

Wiedel: Where or when?

McIntosh: Both.

Wiedel: Hebron, H-E-B-R-O-N, Nebraska.

McIntosh: I just talked to a guy from Nebraska, born in Nebraska, two hours ago.

Wiedel: Yeah. Ten, twenty-three, '25.

McIntosh: 10-25.

Wiedel: Twenty-- yeah.

McIntosh: Okay. So, when did you enter military service?

Wiedel: Uh, January of 1944.

McIntosh: The Air Force?

Wiedel: I joined the Army Signal Corps.

McIntosh: Signal Corps?

Wiedel: To start with. Attached to the Air Force, Army Air Force.

McIntosh: Did you volunteer or were you a draftee?

Wiedel: Well, in a sense, but I was drafted.

McIntosh: Uh huh, okay. And where did you enter military service?

Wiedel: I took my induction physical in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and went to Camp Kohler, California. I did my basic there and I did my specialist training there.

McIntosh: Right. The specialist training was in what?

Wiedel: Communications, starting with teletype, radio, pole line construction, a little bit of everything.

McIntosh: How long did that school last?

Wiedel: Ten weeks.

McIntosh: That sounds like it might be a tough school.

Wiedel: Yeah, it was.

McIntosh: I bet the drop out rate was pretty high.

Wiedel: No, well, the choice picked ones that want to come in, you had to have typing experience to start with.

McIntosh: Oh, oh, you had to qualify to begin with?

Wiedel: Oh yes.

McIntosh: Well, and so you must have passed the exam to do that.

Wiedel: Oh yeah. Well I got out of high school, a hundred words a minute. So I didn't have too much problems.

McIntosh: That's pretty good.

Wiedel: Yeah, I'd taken three years of typing.

McIntosh: Boy, a hundred words a minute, boy you were slick.

Wiedel: I can still do a few.

McIntosh: Can you? Well that's a lot.

Wiedel: Yeah.

McIntosh: We're looking for guys like you.

Wiedel: Yeah, I'm told old to do my work anymore. I don't want to work.

McIntosh: Oh, well. You're a young guy, you're younger than I am. So anyway, in the Signal Corps after your schooling there, did they send you up overseas?

Wiedel: I went overseas from there, yeah.

McIntosh: Where did they send you?

Wiedel: Uh, South Pacific.

McIntosh: By ship?

Wiedel: By ship. Went from single Merchant Marine ship. Uh, traveled at night, and drifted during the day. Forty-five days on a boat gone over.

McIntosh: Well, I'll tell ya, that's a long time. It took us eighteen days from Korea to get back to the United States.

Wiedel: Well, coming back--

McIntosh: It wasn't going very fast then.

Wiedel: Yeah, coming back was much faster.

McIntosh: Yeah, I bet it was. So did you know where you were going?

Wiedel: Pardon?

McIntosh: Did you know where you were going?

Wiedel: Uh, not when I left, no. Nobody did. We weren't--

McIntosh: That's the usual situation.

Wiedel: Yeah. We weren't sure what island we would be dropped off on.

McIntosh: How big was your outfit?

Wiedel: Our outfit total was about, uh, I would say 6,000. My unit, which was a company, or the 165 [Company].

McIntosh: And this is the full two-part Signal Corps?

Wiedel: Yeah.

McIntosh: And the 440th Troop Carrier, what was that like?

Wiedel: That was near Milwaukee, after I came back.

McIntosh: That was later?

Wiedel: Yeah.

McIntosh: So at the beginning, in the Signal Corps, and your company of 200 men?

Wiedel: About that, yeah.

McIntosh: And all of you are in the same business then, you're all—

Wiedel: Well basically yeah. We all—

McIntosh: Did you change starboard or senders and receivers at all?

Wiedel: Senders, receivers and radio, code ciphers, sending and receiving and teletype, radio teletype. Oh everything. String wires to run teletype wires. I had to do it all.

McIntosh: Oh my, and you repaired the equipment too?

Wiedel: Yeah.

McIntosh: Did they teach you about how to repair all that equipment when you're learning how to use it?

Wiedel: Most of it, yeah. Except, well the, like the radio teletype machine. We could do the minor maintenance on it.

McIntosh: I see, so what island did they put you on?

Wiedel: I was at the little island of Biak.

McIntosh: Biak?

Wiedel: B-I-A-K.

McIntosh: I know, I know the island, I'm trying to think of the [unintelligible]

Wiedel: It was the Dutch East Indies.

McIntosh: Yeah, I was going to say, its north of New Guinea, right or no?

Wiedel: No, it's almost straight north of Olandia[?].

McIntosh: It's north of New Guinea—

Wiedel: Yeah, that's in there, yeah.

McIntosh: That's where I thought it was.

Wiedel: Yeah.

McIntosh: And that wasn't a very big island.

Wiedel: Uh, less than a mile square.

McIntosh: Oh my. Just your company was there, or-

Wiedel: No, Uh we had a—

McIntosh: The whole signal corps was there?

Wiedel: Uh, no we had just our company in the signal corps, but we had engineers and we had CV's [hull classification for Cruiser Aviation] and we had the Air Force, uh Army Air Corps.

McIntosh: Was it a training base or just-

Wiedel: No, it was a front line.

McIntosh: Front line. So what were your specific duties on Biak?

Wiedel: Send out messages.

McIntosh: And you're transmitting them?

Wiedel: Transmitting and receiving, yeah. It all comes in the same category.

McIntosh: Okay, and to the aircraft?

Wiedel: No, normally it was land, land base.

McIntosh: Where would that be?

Wiedel: Well, headquarters, stuff, all over the world, where we had to send to. Send, you know, supply their post.

McIntosh: Transmit back to the United States from there.

Wiedel: Not very often. It was too—we had to go through relay stations.

McIntosh: I would imagine, yeah.

Wiedel: We sent down to Australia quite a bit.

McIntosh: From there they would go to the main land probably. And was your equipment, uh, powerful equipment that you had?

Wiedel: Our radio teletype was, yeah. So, our radios were really powerful. We could get anyplace with our radios.

McIntosh: Short wave?

Wiedel: Uh-huh [affirmation].

McIntosh: You don't say. Towers standing all over, radio towers all over?

Wiedel: No, there wasn't that many.

McIntosh: There wasn't?

Wiedel: Uh-uh [disagreement]. We maybe had five.

McIntosh: And how many did that kind of work that you are talking about? How many others did that?

Wiedel: Well, we had about sixty-seven, sixty-eight. In different shifts we worked. We worked twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

McIntosh: It's in eight-hour shifts?

Wiedel: Mostly, yeah.

McIntosh: Eight on, then sixteen off?

Wiedel: Uh-huh [affirmation].

McIntosh: There wasn't much to do in those sixteen hours off in Biak, huh?

Wiedel: There was nothing. Uh-uh [disagreement].

McIntosh: That's a pretty small island.

Wiedel: I'd go out and fish, once in a while bring something back. Nobody wanted to eat the fish after so much of it anyways.

McIntosh: You got tired of the fish?

Wiedel: Yeah.

McIntosh: Well you could play softball or volleyball.

Wiedel: Yeah, but it was too hot.

McIntosh: That's right, that's right.

Wiedel: Well we were right at the equator, yeah.

McIntosh: That wasn't good noon[?] at all.

Wiedel: Well, you know it was better than being in—

McIntosh: China.

Wiedel: Well, China, even up in the Philippines. Philippines for a long time was rough duty.

McIntosh: The guy I talked to just before you today was a Chinese interpreter. He was American, but he went to school in Yale. They taught him Chinese and he was at a listening post in Formosa. That's what he did. He would just listen to the radio tracker from the Chinese, he wrote down some of them but—

Wiedel: Well he was an intercept operator, basically, that's what they're called.

McIntosh: Yeah, that's what he did. He did that for a couple of years. So, was the work hard for you on Biak, or just boring?

Wiedel: Boring. No physical or pickup. We had Japanese prisoners doing KP [kitchen patrol] so we didn't have to worry about KP. They wanted to do it, they turned themselves in.

McIntosh: Oh really? They were on Biak as soldiers. Oh my goodness. So when you landed on Biak they were—

Wiedel: Well we routed them. After we got to know what we were doing, we routed them out of the jungles. They'd either come—

McIntosh: They were getting hungry.

Wiedel: Yeah, they were hungry, and if they didn't come through they got shot anyway.

McIntosh: [unintelligible]. Well that's interesting. Were they good help?

Wiedel: Oh, yeah. Never had any problem with them.

McIntosh: That's the power of food, and not being shot.

Wiedel: Yeah. We had all different kinds of fun. Go out and find a wild boar and try to kill it.

McIntosh: Didn't you shoot it?

Wiedel: No, with a .45. We shot with a .45 and it'd take six or eight, ten shots.

McIntosh: Before you hit it?

Wiedel: No, before it would die, to kill it.

McIntosh: Oh, it took several shots from a .45 to put that thing down? I'll be darned.

Wiedel: Well half the time the shells didn't get penetrated in it.

McIntosh: That's right. Unless you hit them directly it burns out. Well if you're trying to kill there, you'd have some decent fresh meat there for a while.

Wiedel: Yeah, a couple of days. Just about all you could keep it.

McIntosh: Was the food generally pretty good?

Wiedel: Well, when you were hungry it didn't make much difference.

McIntosh: Did you get mail on a regular basis there?

Wiedel: Yeah. After it got started coming. Took about two and a half months.

McIntosh: And you weren't married then?

Wiedel: No.

McIntosh: So your mom wrote you.

Wiedel: My mom was home, and I wrote to some other people.

McIntosh: Did you have a camera to take pictures?

Wiedel: No. I've got pictures that were taken. I worked in photo parlor, this is a hobby. [coughs] I had some pictures of Hiroshima but I don't know what happened to them.

McIntosh: So how long were you on Biak?

Wiedel: Eighteen months.

McIntosh: Then you had to change for—

Wiedel: Oh, I came back home.

McIntosh: Came home. You were on Biak from when to when? You went on '44, you were there until the end of the war then?

Wiedel: I got there in about [coughs] August '44. Stayed until March of '46.

McIntosh: Your official designation was a code—?

Wiedel: No, Communications Operator.

McIntosh: Communications Operator. Did you have no trouble with the Japanese airplanes coming in? They didn't—?

Wiedel: Well, we had one, that came in.

McIntosh: Oh, you did.

Wiedel: After the war was over. Come in on us, on a suicide mission, he hit a theatre.

McIntosh: Theatre, oh my goodness.

Wiedel: It didn't kill anybody, but it injured about 160.

McIntosh: That was a surprise.

Wiedel: Came in on a tail end of a 47 [Douglas C-47 Cargo Plane].

McIntosh: Nobody knew it was coming? You had an airbase there for a—

Wiedel: Armor.

McIntosh: Of fighter planes.

Wiedel: No, most of them were bombers.

McIntosh: Well you said a 47 so.

Wiedel: Well, a 47 was a cargo plane.

McIntosh: Oh, oh, oh, I see what you mean.

Wiedel: Bringing in supplies.

McIntosh: I thought you were talking about the fighter.

Wiedel: No.

McIntosh: So all of the sudden everyone, were you in the theatre at the time?

Wiedel: Uh-huh [affirmation]. Everybody started running.

McIntosh: So you are sitting there watching the film and then what was the first thing you noticed?

Wiedel: Well, it was flying low.

McIntosh: That wasn't right when they get that low, right?

Wiedel: Yeah

McIntosh: Did you think that it might have been a Japanese plane?

Wiedel: No, we weren't sure. We thought maybe one of our own planes had trouble.

McIntosh: And so what'd he hit?

Wiedel: He dropped an egg, a small one.

McIntosh: Oh he didn't crash land into you.

Wiedel: No he went off to sea.

McIntosh: And jumped out there?

Wiedel: And jumped out at sea.

McIntosh: So you never did recover the plane or him?

Wiedel: No.

McIntosh: That was his last flight. A 250 pound bomb, well then?

Wiedel: Yeah, about that.

McIntosh: So the plane noise and then the next thing you heard was the explosion.

Wiedel: Yeah.

McIntosh: How far away were you from that?

Wiedel: Oh, I was probably 200 feet. I was lucky.

McIntosh: I was gonna say, if you were much closer it would have taken you out.

Wiedel: Well it, see it didn't take anybody out. There was nobody killed. They were all injured and uh, nobody knows why. I don't know if it went off before it hit the ground. Concussion and ah, fragments of the bomb hit people.

McIntosh: A lot of people were wounded though.

Wiedel: 162 of it.

McIntosh: Right, but nobody was killed. Well that was an exciting movie night.

Wiedel: Yeah, Well we didn't go to movies for quite a while afterwards.

McIntosh: [Laughs] I'll bet.

Wiedel: We were all too scared.

McIntosh: I'll be. My, oh my, oh my. That's an unusual experience.

Wiedel: Uh-huh [affirmation].

McIntosh: Wow. Nobody slept that night. I suppose you were wondering if there was gonna be more were coming that night.

Wiedel: Well, yeah. But this was, uh, five months after the war was over.

McIntosh: Yeah, I suppose. That's right, they shouldn't have been any there.

Wiedel: You take '45 in August, the war was over. They didn't know it was over.

McIntosh: Did you have any idea where he came from?

Wiedel: Uh-uh [disagreement].

McIntosh: Probably somewhere in New Guinea.

Wiedel: Somewhere close to us.

McIntosh: Sure and they weren't in contact with the rest of the world.

Wiedel: Nope that's right.

McIntosh: Huh, that's unusual. So after you were there, an eighteen months, where did you go?

Wiedel: Came back home.

McIntosh: Discharged right away?

Wiedel: Well, yeah. Discharged and then I joined the Reserves. I was discharged at Camp McCoy. My parents, during the war moved up here. So I changed home of record while I was—

McIntosh: Did they move to Madison?

Wiedel: No they moved to Milwaukee. My home of record was changed while I was overseas and I didn't know it until I got back to the city of California. And then I joined the--

McIntosh: What tempted you join the Reserves?

Wiedel: Well I didn't know what I wanted to do. It was a pretty good sales pitch.

McIntosh: Earn what kind of money?

Wiedel: I was at that time, about 120 dollars a month.

McIntosh: It was good that you were getting paid fortunately, because there was no other job that earns more money besides that.

Wiedel: Cause I didn't know what I was going to do.

McIntosh: That's right, so what did you end up doing?

Wiedel: Electrician.

McIntosh: Electrician. You go to electric school in Milwaukee somewhere?

Wiedel: Yeah. I took my apprenticeship.

McIntosh: And then you worked for—?

Wiedel: Contractors, all over.

McIntosh: Building contractors? In the Milwaukee area.

Wiedel: Yeah, well in that area, yeah.

McIntosh: Of course, and you did that for many years?

Wiedel: Yeah, I worked in construction until 1971 and then I went to work for the V.A. [United States Department of Veterans Affairs], retired from the V.A. in Milwaukee.

McIntosh: As an electrician you worked for—

Wiedel: Yeah

McIntosh: But you had replied back to active duty, it says here in 1950.

Wiedel: I was transferred from the Army to the Air Force, when the Air Force came. New branch, so I transferred to the Air Force, and we were starting to do the 440th, I got called out there about my records. They still used old records and they needed my career field, so they called me up to duty, and I went down to Texas and we were all looking to go overseas, but at that time they had a law that unless you had a year of active duty left to go when the orders came, you couldn't go. So we stayed in Texas for a year.

McIntosh: Was that a surprise when you got orders back to service?

Wiedel: No, I'd expected it.

McIntosh: Because the Korean thing had started?

Wiedel: Yeah.

McIntosh: So you knew that your group was likely to be called?

Wiedel: Well we were called individually; see it wasn't a group—

McIntosh: [unintelligible]

Wiedel: Yeah, we were called individually and I served there for a year.

McIntosh: In Texas?

Wiedel: Yeah.

McIntosh: What did you do down there?

Wiedel: Same thing.

McIntosh: Same thing. But by now you were rated as a Sergeant.

Wiedel: Yeah, I was a Tech Sergeant when I went to Texas, so.

McIntosh: What was it like to go back to the military, after you assumed that you were not going to do that?

Wiedel: Well I didn't assume that, because I figured, you know being in the Reserves.

McIntosh: You had to put some summertime in anyways, didn't you?

Wiedel: Yeah, and I was young enough. When I went back to Texas, I'd gotten married though. But I took my wife to Texas with me, one son.

McIntosh: How did you enjoy your duty in Texas?

Wiedel: Well it was not too bad. You know, of course summertime was hot there. Lot of different culture than up here. It was surprising, you know. And I got back home and I pulled my annual tours and everything else and then when, um, Cuban Crisis broke out, 1961, the whole unit was called.

McIntosh: The 440th?

Wiedel: Well that was actually the 438th at that time. And the whole unit was called, the whole wing.

McIntosh: Where did you go?

Wiedel: Stayed right in Milwaukee. We were only called up, the whole unit, for thirty days. But I took the option of staying on for the year, so I came up here to Truax Field [Madison, Wisconsin].

McIntosh: What were your duties there?

Wiedel: First Sergeant.

McIntosh: What were your duties?

Wiedel: Where?

McIntosh: What were your duties?

Wiedel: First Sergeant.

McIntosh: What were your duties?

Wiedel: My duties. Making sure all the troops behaved and did what they were supposed to. All the reports in and inspections and—

McIntosh: How many men did you have under you?

Wiedel: I had 327 enlisted and 270 civilian.

McIntosh: Well you had a big job.

Wiedel: Yeah. Make sure all the treading reports were done.

McIntosh: And who did you report to?

Wiedel: Some full-bird colonel. I don't know. Don't remember his name.

McIntosh: At Truax?

Wiedel: Yeah.

McIntosh: Was that tough duty?

Wiedel: Yeah.

McIntosh: Because there was a lot of work to it, or—?

Wiedel: Well the stress was because of the number of the number of people I had to handle.

McIntosh: Keeping them in line.

Wiedel: Uh, yeah. I didn't have to keep all of the names, you know, because I had some pretty good clerks, but you better know your people. I had to know my site at least, especially civilians.

McIntosh: How did you deal with those civilians? You couldn't really control them as well, could you?

Wiedel: Well, certain parts of it yeah, because they were under federal rule. They work, like for the federal government, there say. A lot of them were in bomb shelters. Worked in bomb shelters, it had big bomb shelters. I think the building's probably still there.

McIntosh: That was in '61, a month you say.

Wiedel: I was there for a year. In Truax, yeah.

McIntosh: In Truax a year.

Wiedel: Then I got separated again, went back home. Stayed in the Reserves. My wife wouldn't let me out then.

McIntosh: [Laughs]

Wiedel: '71, when they had a shortage of people in Europe, I volunteered for six months over there.

McIntosh: That was your fourth trip of active duty then? My, my, my, what a long career you had.

Wiedel: Oh , I had forty-two and a half years of total service.

McIntosh: Forty-two. That's a record. I've interviewed 500 people, but I've never interviewed anyone who's had that much time in the military. Forty-two years.

Wiedel: I stayed till my sixtieth birthday. After my wife passed away, I says, I had uh, before she got sick I had about a year to go, and I says I'm sticking it out. I'm going to draw that check on, before I get out.

McIntosh: Forty-two, wow that's incredible. I've talked to, there is a guy that lives just south of Madison, in Oregon, Wisconsin. He was the last World War Two serviceman to be discharged by the United States Government, he was discharged in 1970 something. His name is Ralph Schroeder he was the last of the World War Twos, who had continuous service, and you know he was finally discharged.

Wiedel: His was all active duty?

McIntosh: Yeah.

Wiedel: I had about eleven years total active duty. My term was basically reserve time.

McIntosh: Well looking back, was it worth all the time you spent with that?

Wiedel: Oh yeah.

McIntosh: You must have enjoyed it a great deal?

Wiedel: I enjoyed, you know, I'd leave Wisconsin at least once a year.

McIntosh: That two weeks, something and somewhere. Now when you were recalled in 1970, was the whole unit recalled?

Wiedel: No. It was an individual. They asked for individuals to volunteer.

McIntosh: What did they want you do specifically?

Wiedel: Uh. communications. Installation maintenance.

McIntosh: And they sent you to Europe?

Wiedel: Yeah—

McIntosh: To Germany, I assume.

Wiedel: Yeah, I was supposed to install a switch board and the, off the runways for telephones and jet shelters.

McIntosh: What air base in Germany?

Wiedel: Bitburg.

McIntosh: Bitburg.

Wiedel: But when they built the shelters, they put the boxes for the connections for the phones on the wrong side of the shelter, and every time the jet came in they turned that way all the time and they melted all the—

McIntosh: [unintelligible] I'd say.

Wiedel: So it never did get done as far as I know. They never had telephones in them.

McIntosh: They didn't start on the other side of the runway?

Wiedel: They couldn't, they had to tear up all the ramp.

McIntosh: What a screw up. That cost all us tax payers a lot of dough.

Wiedel: Uh, I don't think it cost us anything.

McIntosh: Oh really?

Wiedel: Yeah the civilian contractor put it in. They just left them and used them without hangers, and he didn't get paid. That's the last I heard.

McIntosh: That was your last effort for the United States Government?

Wiedel: Yeah. Well, I didn't get out then, but it's the last active duty I basically had.

McIntosh: You were there in Germany for—

Wiedel: About six months.

McIntosh: How did you enjoy living in Germany?

Wiedel: It was different. Quite different.

McIntosh: [Laughs] That sounds like a careful answer now.

Wiedel: Well, it depends, you know. If you are on base it's all the same, but even that, it was a lot of German on the base, people who were there, but you could also base the culture with. They were real nice.

McIntosh: But?

Wiedel: But, you know, they were very quiet, in there. Cause we were in the kind of, semi-mountains there. Their biggest industry—

McIntosh: You didn't fraternize with these Germans very much?

Wiedel: No. Well I couldn't speak German.

McIntosh: Yeah but most of those people spoke English.

Wiedel: Yeah I know, but I didn't get off the base that much.

McIntosh: Did you have your wife with you?

Wiedel: No. I couldn't.

McIntosh: Well, I'd think you'd try to pick up some German culture. Eat at their restaurants or something.

Wiedel: Well, yeah, but we were told better not to get involved too much with them, see. 'Cause we still had to fight on, because of the Berlin Wall. You know, at that time that Berlin Wall was still up.

McIntosh: Oh I see. So you were told to be cautious. Well did you have any secrets that the Russians had been interested in?

Wiedel: Oh a lot of them.

McIntosh: You did. What codes?

Wiedel: Yeah, you know I knew code.

McIntosh: So you did have some value to them.

Wiedel: Oh yeah.

McIntosh: Well, what I like to see, you weren't one of those wandering around small streets.

Wiedel: Uh-uh [disagreement], I've seen too many pictures of what happens to people.

McIntosh: Who are reluctant to say anything?

Wiedel: And those that said something, what happens to them after they get back.

McIntosh: Yeah, they kill them. Oh when they get back, what happens, what do you mean?

Wiedel: They almost dressed as a traitor.

McIntosh: Did you have any problems like that at the base you were in, in Germany?

Wiedel: No. It was just, you know, we took our course and then.

McIntosh: When you got back from Europe, you went back working for the contractor in Milwaukee?

Wiedel: No I went back to work for the V.A. then.

McIntosh: Oh I see, that's when you got involved with the V.A.; there's one in Milwaukee?

Wiedel: Yeah.

McIntosh: And you worked there until you—

Wiedel: Until I retired in '87.

McIntosh: Did you join any veterans' organizations?

Wiedel: I belong to the American Legion, the V.F.W. [Veterans of Foreign Wars], and the D.A.V. [Disabled American Veterans] I belonged to Leagues of Men already—

McIntosh: How were you disabled?

Wiedel: I have a twenty percent disability. I've got an ankle that was broke twice, it's never healed right.

McIntosh: Oh my goodness.

Wiedel: In World War Two, I had malaria, I got thirty percent on.

McIntosh: You still get thirty percent, from that malaria?

Wiedel: No.

McIntosh: I was going to say they wouldn't let you do that.

Wiedel: Well, I'm going to take an interview, sometime this next month about it. I'm going to talk to a couple doctors **[End of Tape 1, Side A]** I know and ask them what could happen.

McIntosh: It doesn't bother you anymore, I'm sure.

Wiedel: Well you don't with some of the sickness I got, whether that's part of it see.

McIntosh: Oh, wait from the malaria?

Wiedel: Uh-huh [agreement]. All that affects your mind sometimes.

McIntosh: You'll have a tough time. From my experience, as a military physician, tells me you're going to have a tough time selling that. Malaria is a limiting disease and once it's passed a certain number of years the military is not interested in giving any disability unless they have to have you. You may get it but it think it will be hard to sell.

Wiedel: Well, they can always deny me.

McIntosh: [Laughs] Yeah right, well you still got your ankle. How much do you get on your ankle, twenty percent?

Wiedel: Twenty.

McIntosh: Twenty, That's pretty good.

Wiedel: Well, I've also got a finger here, that I laid back in for. There is no feeling on the—

McIntosh: Oh, oh they'll give you one percent for that finger.

Wiedel: Well the whole thing is twenty percent.

McIntosh: That's pretty good. That pays you what 1200 dollars a month?

Wiedel: 190—

McIntosh: 200 dollars a month.

Wiedel: 200 dollars a month.

McIntosh: Have you kept track of any of your mates that you were in the service with?

Wiedel: Not overseas, no.

McIntosh: None of those people. Never saw them again, or?

Wiedel: I tried to talk to them, to write them letters, but the addresses move, there's no forwarding address.

McIntosh: Oh, that too bad. Did you make a lot of good friendships?

Wiedel: Oh yeah. I've got pictures of a few of them. One guy, two guys went up, taking up the front line, they needed them up there and never did hear from them.

McIntosh: In Biak?

Wiedel: Yeah. They take them up into, uh, Manila proper.

McIntosh: They were probably killed.

Wiedel: Who knows, yeah.

McIntosh: One of these units that you were in, have you been to any of the reunions?

Wiedel: Uh, No. I went 440th, I go.

McIntosh: They have the two carriers, they have a—

Wiedel: Well we have, it's called Air Force Sergeants Association, we meet out there once a month.

McIntosh: Out where?

Wiedel: Mitchell Field.

McIntosh: Once a month, that's an active group.

Wiedel: Yeah, and they have national conventions. It's—

McIntosh: How many of the 440th are still alive?

Wiedel: My originals that I went in with? Probably over half of them.

McIntosh: Pretty good. Lucky group.

Wiedel: Some of them are up like me, getting up in there.

McIntosh: [Laughs] Right.

Wiedel: Some of them were a lot older than I were, when I went in.

McIntosh: Did your training that you got in the Service, did that serve you well in civilian life when you got out?

Wiedel: Probably did, I can't say for certain. As a First Sergeant, I took a psychiatric course about every two years, a refresher course.

McIntosh: For what purpose?

Wiedel: To deal with enlisted people.

McIntosh: Were they a problem?

Wiedel: Quite a few of them did yeah. Lot of [unintelligible]

McIntosh: A lot of what?

Wiedel: A lot of problems, family problems.

McIntosh: Sure and alcohol. I'm sure alcohol—

Wiedel: Oh yeah. That was one of the primary things they had. There was nothing for them to do; they couldn't afford to do anything.

McIntosh: So they would go and get drunk and then get into trouble and you'd get called in the middle of the night to come down to some jail and bail out some of these guys?

Wiedel: When I was at Traux, yeah I had.

McIntosh: Did you? [laughs] Get them back to the base put them on extra duty for a month.

Wiedel: No, not put them on extra duty, that don't help them any. Sent them to the base psychiatrist. Let him. And if they do anything that was against codes, well then they got a court-martial.

McIntosh: And then they were out.

Wiedel: Well, sometimes yes, sometimes no, depending on the board. I didn't decide it.

McIntosh: No, that wasn't your decision.

Wiedel: No.

McIntosh: Like a mother hen looking after her chickens, weren't ya.

Wiedel: Yeah for the first offense, the commander gave fifteen days of extra duty, but nothing hard. Clean up around. But if you got the second time or the third time, why then you went for a court martial.

McIntosh: Yeah, then they try and ease you out because you are too much trouble, right? Couldn't trust them, couldn't rely on them. Alright well it sounds like you should be writing a book.

Wiedel: Well I've got my autobiography.

McIntosh: Oh, well, see you are already doing it.

Wiedel: Well I wrote this quite a while ago, it needs a lot of correction, but I brought that along for you.

McIntosh: Is this for us to keep or do we—

Wiedel: You can keep it.

McIntosh: Oh thank you.

Wiedel: These pictures here are fifty-some years old. I carried that all during the war with me. This is my godmother.

McIntosh: These your folks?

Wiedel: This is my folks, this is my godmother and this is my first cousin, who wrote back and forth to me all the time I was in service.

McIntosh: Did you marry her?

Wiedel: No it was a cousin, I couldn't marry her.

McIntosh: So you got married and had a couple of kids?

Wiedel: I have three children.

McIntosh: Three children, grandchildren?

Wiedel: I have four grandchildren.

McIntosh: Very good, oh my.

Wiedel: I brought a few pictures of them. Let me take the ones out back in and I'll give those to you first so you can take a look at them.

McIntosh: That's Japanese money or?

Wiedel: That Filipino money and Japanese government.

McIntosh: This is post-war right?

Wiedel: Yeah

McIntosh: Pesos?

Wiedel: This was a club we built overseas.

McIntosh: This is in Biak?

Wiedel: Yeah, okay take a good look at that picture. Take a really close at it, look at that fan wheel.

McIntosh: Where is that?

Wiedel: That's in Hiroshima.

McIntosh: Oh is it?

Wiedel: Yeah. These people were standing there afterwards, and uh, I don't know how they got on the picture, because you can see the devastated land.

I had four brothers that were all in service. This is two of my younger ones. This is that lady there, before she went into service. Here's my older brother and his wife.

McIntosh: They had a baby then?

Wiedel: Yeah, and this is one of our tents. It had a parachute to keep the heat out.

McIntosh: That was wise.

Wiedel: This is my next, my brother, just older than I am.

McIntosh: He was in the army?

Wiedel: Yeah he was Army. They were all Army. My one brother, Navy, but the rest were all Army. This was when I was young and curly-haired. Here's the bridge across the bay.

McIntosh: These are nice pictures you have.

Wiedel: Here's some more of the destruction.

McIntosh: I was at Nagasaki, I saw it there.

Wiedel: And this is, we finagled a camera somewhere, and this guy here, you know were they all were together. They run around that way. This is a kid with sent ups, went up for the part. I don't know if you want any of those pictures but. This is our barber, we had a barber that was one of our operators and he kept us all trimmed. This guy here was contacted general up[?], and we never did find out what happened to him.

McIntosh: They didn't kill him.

Wiedel: No but uh, these were the tents, most of our tents with a parachute on them to keep out the heat. That faded away, that's out to sea. Out rowing the navy's boats. This is one of our river routes. That's our mess hall.

McIntosh: Would the Navy's come out and bring you food?

Wiedel: When the Navy's came out and got the fish. We got to the point were we didn't want to fish anymore, so we took hand grenade and dropped it in the water.

McIntosh: And they picked up the fish.

Wiedel: Yeah. He's feeding a monkey.

McIntosh: A pet monkey?

Wiedel: Yeah, he caught it when it was a baby.

McIntosh: Was it a trouble pet or would it behave pretty well?

Wiedel: It was wild pet, yeah. And this is the entrance at one of the tents; we had uh a tornado, not a tornado but a hurricane. Came through and—

McIntosh: Tore everything down.

Wiedel: Demolished a few tents.

McIntosh: Sure did.

Wiedel: This is where the quartermaster was, the hill above it. Back up in here there was a mountain or hill part, where there was an entryway where the Japanese planes copitted[?] out of. That's why we had a hard time get—

McIntosh: They what?

Wiedel: Shot out of the cave.

McIntosh: The airplanes?

Wiedel: Yeah.

McIntosh: I didn't know that.

Wiedel: Yeah, that was. This is one guy up on the pole but I don't know who. And this, we had a dog out there. Somebody got a dog from Australia. This is about the end, when we were leaving, so. These were all glued in there but--got a few more. This is a niece of mine. That's me at about 245 pounds.

McIntosh: Geez, you were good looking then.

Wiedel: Oh yeah.

McIntosh: [Laughs] Handsome. Hair and everything.

Wiedel: Oh yeah, it was all curly. No, I don't know what of any of this you want, so.

McIntosh: No, well those kind of things have only meaning for you. You want to remember most of this stuff.

Wiedel: Yeah, because I don't know what to do with this.

McIntosh: This stuff we can use.

Wiedel: Keep it.

McIntosh: Okay. Yeah sure, we like those kind of things.

Wiedel: Where'd I put my rubber band? I got one other thing here that I would like to have you see. This is my father-in-law's discharge of 1919 supposedly.

[End of Interview]