

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
KENNETH G. ADRIAN
Army Air Force, World War II and Korea
1996

OH
118

Adrian, Kenneth G., (1921-2003), Oral History Interview, 1996.

User copy, 1 sound cassette (ca. 40 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master copy, 1 sound cassette (ca. 40 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

ABSTRACT

Kenneth Adrian, a Casseville, Wis. native, discusses his World War II service as a navigator with the 44th Bomb Group in England and his Korean War service as a navigator. When World War II began, Adrian was a student at the mining school in Platteville (Wis.) and talks about the changes the war brought to Platteville including the activation of half of his class with the 32nd Division. Adrian comments on pre-flight training and classification at Kelly Field (Texas), pilot training at Uvalde (Texas), and reclassification as a navigator after being hospitalized for eye problems. He mentions the trip overseas, receiving advice from veteran pilots, and his first mission. Adrian touches upon the emotions of his crew upon learning that the group they shared barracks with had been shot down, feelings toward replacements, and the composition of his crew. He describes military life on the base in England including lack of discipline, recreation activities, and dating. After thirty-five missions, Adrian returned to the U.S. and was trained in preparation for fighting in the South Pacific. He was later discharged and joined the Reserves. Adrian touches upon finishing college using the GI Bill, the importance of navigators to the Air Force, and his service in the Korean War. He evaluates the changes in aircraft from World War II to the Korean War, and the differences between the Royal Air Force and the U.S. Air Force.

Biographical Sketch

Adrian (1921-2003) flew 35 missions with the 44th Bomb Group in Europe during World War II. He joined the Reserves and served in the Korean War before returning to Wisconsin. He later settled in Colorado.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, Wisconsin Veterans Museum Archivist, 1996.

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

Transcript edited by Abigail Miller, 2003.

Interview Transcript

- Mark: We'll start with some questions. Okay. Today's date is September 19th, 1996. This is Mark Van Ells, Archivist, Wisconsin Veterans Museum, doing an oral history interview this afternoon with Mr. Kenneth Adrian, of Cassville, Wisconsin, a native of Cassville and a veteran of World War II, and the Korean period. Good afternoon. Thanks for taking some time out of your day. I suppose we should start at the top. Why don't you tell me a little bit about where you were born and raised, and what you were doing prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, in 1941?
- Adrian: Ah, I was born and raised in Cassville, Wisconsin, and I was going to the mining school in Platteville, when World War II started. We had met a guy by the name of Van Ells over there, by the way.
- Mark: You did?
- Adrian: Yea. He graduated over there, I think, in '42. Is he some relation of yours?
- Mark: He has got to be some relation of mine. I don't know where, though.
- Adrian: That is an unusual name.
- Mark: Yea.
- Adrian: Well, he is still alive. I see him in alumni books.
- Mark: Huh. Interesting. So, you were studying engineering?
- Adrian: Yea, mining.
- Mark: What was it that attracted you to that, in particular?
- Adrian: Well, it was the only cheap school around here. Most of the boys were in the 32nd Division, that time in school. National Guard, you know. The rest of them had to make enough money in the summer time to go to school in the fall. We got rooms for a buck a week, in those days. Did our own cooking. No tuition. All you had to do was buy your books, and we bought them used, so pretty cheap going.
- Mark: So, when the war broke out, you were how far along in your studies?
- Adrian: I was in the third year. When I got called up, I was in the third year.

Mark: Yea. How did things change in Platteville, at school, as a result of the war?

Adrian: Well, in the fall of, I think it was '41, about half the school went with the 32nd Division. And they were on their way to the Philippines when the war broke out. They got by-passed into Australia, instead. They were there on ships at that time, you know. But we had lost about half our people, right there.

Mark: Now, did you finish before you went?

Adrian: Oh, no.

Mark: To school?

Adrian: It was only a three-year course.

Mark: I see.

Adrian: It was set up primarily for local mining engineers back in the old days. And they just continued on. I was in my last semester, but they called me up in March, of '43.

Mark: I see. And you entered the Army Air Corps. What was the Army Air Corps at the time.

Adrian: Yea.

Mark: There were several services and different options to choose from. Why did you select that one, in particular?

Adrian: I was a damned fool. [laughter] No, it looked like a good way to go, but it sure as hell wasn't.

Mark: When you say, a good way, you mean it was a step up for you?.

Adrian: Well, I thought I could get a good education in there. And what it ended up with, killed most of them off.

Mark: So, you went to the service in 1943, I guess?

Adrian: Yea.

Mark: Why don't you just walk me through your induction process.

Adrian: Well, we were given physicals just prior to going in. In Madison.

Mark: In Madison. Okay.

Adrian: And then, in March, '43, they finally found room for us. There were to damned many people volunteering for the various cadet programs, you know.

Mark: Right.

Adrian: I finally got called up in '43. We just got on the train and went to San Antonio, out of Madison.

Mark: And, what sort of training did you do down there? Was that at Kelly?

Adrian: That was, yea. At Kelly. That was pre-flight, and classification. They classified us. We probably did tests for a week. And then, we were classified. And we just had to wait for an opening on the other side of the tracks.

Mark: Right.

Adrian: To go to pre-flight.

Mark: And you were selected to be a navigator, at which point?

Adrian: No, I was selected to be a pilot, at that time.

Mark: Yea. So, there was pre-flight.

Adrian: Yea.

Mark: What sort of training was involved there? Was that classroom type of thing, or —

Adrian: Well, just classroom stuff, like, oh, different things about an airplane, engines, and how they fly, and why. Stuff like that. And then we got a lot of physical training, too. You know. PT, and stuff. I imagine we went to classes four or five hours a day, at least. That lasted nine weeks.

Mark: Nine weeks. And then from pre-flight, you went from there to where?

Adrian: I went to primary over in Uvalde. I had an eye go bad over there, and that eliminated me from pilot training. I was in the hospital for over forty days, before they got it straightened out. And then they decided to make a navigator out of me. I wasn't much interested in navigation, but they talked me into it, anyway.

- Mark: You weren't wild, I guess, you say, about being a navigator?
- Adrian: I wasn't wild about anything. Just, you had to be in service. You had to do something, you know.
- Mark: Yea. So, then, you were selected to be a navigator, and where did you go for that training?
- Adrian: We went to San Marcos. That was San Marcos, the navigation school. There was only about two or three in the country. San Marcos took care of the center, pretty much. There was one at California, Mather, I think was that. And that was it, about two schools was all they had. They turned out a lot of them, though.
- Mark: Yea. Was there much of a wash-out rate? People who didn't, weren't able to complete the courses?
- Adrian: I would imagine. Navigation, I don't imagine, was over five percent, probably. Between five and ten percent. They had it pretty well cut down by the time they got in there. We lost a number of guys.
- Mark: So, you finished your training. How long was it until you actually got overseas?
- Adrian: Well, it was over a year. We went overseas in June, '44.
- Mark: Why don't you just describe that trip to me.
- Adrian: Overseas?
- Mark: Yea.
- Adrian: Well, we went up to —
- Mark: Did you fly, or did you take a boat? How did you get there?
- Adrian: We flew. We picked up a new B-24 at Topeka, and we flew to Manchester, New Hampshire. And had to take a physical up there. And the pilot always dripped when he took a physical. They threw him in the hospital. They thought he had gonorrhea. This happened to him all the time. So, the rest of us, they didn't know what the hell to do with us, so they sent us down to New York. We stayed in a big hotel right on Times Square, practically.
- Mark: Kind of exciting for a kid from Cassville, I suspect?

Adrian: Oh, lots of fun. Everything was free, you know.

Mark: I suppose. For a GI, you mean?

Adrian: Yea. We had about eight or ten days there. The gunners, they were in another hotel, the enlisted men. And they got in a fight, or something, two or three days after we were in there. They shipped them to the island for the rest of the time down there. And they never got to come back to town. We went overseas by ATC.

Mark: What is that?

Adrian: Air Transport Command.

Mark: I see.

Adrian: C-54s. We landed at Prestwick. Went right straight over from New York to Prestwick. I think we had to stop and gas up at Gander. And then on over.

Mark: And after you got to England, how long was it until you started to actually fly the combat missions?

Adrian: About a month.

Mark: About a month. That's not really very long.

Adrian: Well, they gave us two weeks in northern Ireland to find out what the hell was going on over there.

Mark: And what did you find out, exactly?

Adrian: Well, one of the old fighter pilots, he said, had finished the tour and was an instructor on aircraft identification, he says, "All you got to do is just shoot anything down that points its nose at you. Don't pay any attention to what they look like." And then we got to learn how to run the G-set, which is a real good English radar set. Give you locations and stuff. It was very good. Except the Germans had it jammed when you hit the continent. You could get in France, maybe fifty miles.

Mark: So, why don't you just describe the first mission? I suspect, of the ones that you flew, that one sticks out in your mind.

Adrian: The first one?

Mark: Yea. Or does it?

Adrian: It was a good deal. We thought we were, nice, sunshiny weather, you know, it was in July. We could see all the ships floating around down there, coming in from Sweden with iron ore for Germany. And everything was so pretty. Flak came up. It didn't bother us any. We unloaded our bombs, and went home.

Mark: What was your target?

Adrian: I forget what it is. I've got it here, if you really have to know.

Mark: Well, not particularly. Just curious.

Adrian: Munich, I think. We flew a lot, went the first time to Munich, I think.

Mark: I was just wondering —

Adrian: But, that was, we didn't see the ships on that one, except on the Channel.

Mark: I see. I was wondering about your emotional state, and, I suppose, it may be a stupid question to ask, but you scared? What was going through your mind in your first mission?

Adrian: No, I wasn't scared. We all got scared when the other crew in our barracks went down. Had a mid-air collision that killed all but one of them. So that woke us up to the fact that you could get hurt over there.

Mark: Yea.

Adrian: We had about six or seven missions in at the time. Maybe ten.

Mark: So, in all, you flew how many missions?

Adrian: Thirty-five, in Europe.

Mark: I see. Are there some in particular that stick out? As especially harrowing, or anything?

Adrian: Well, we had one to Munich around, I think it was around the first of August, that was real rough. We lost four crews on that one.

- Mark: In flying a mission like that, what is the most dangerous part? Is it flak, is it fighters? Or could you even —
- Adrian: Flak was our biggest problem.
- Mark: Flak was it? Okay.
- Adrian: We had a group in our wing that the Germans had picked out for to get rid of, 492nd Bomb Group. And they'd go right through us to get at them. And they wiped them out in ten weeks. That was the end of the group. Broke them up. They had shot down, well, over five hundred guys killed, at that time, in the Group. And there is only seven hundred and fifty flying people in a group, so they had lost all their airplanes, practically. And they just broke her up because we can't go on any more. And they were a highly trained outfit. These were mostly former instructors in the States, and guys flying sub patrol.
- Mark: Yea. I would imagine you got replacements. As you lost men, there were other people coming in.
- Adrian: Yea. They come in real fast. We lost about twenty-nine, thirty crews while we were there. I replaced—
- Mark: That's quite a few.
- Adrian: What?
- Mark: That's quite a few.
- Adrian: Well, it was worse in '43. Two-thirds went down in '43. We only lost half in '44.
- Mark: Yea. So, as the new guys came in, as a veteran, now, I suppose, did you have any advice for these new guys coming in?
- Adrian: I had to go up with them and teach them how to run the G-set. I think I would sit in the back end of the airplane and talk to them on the interphone, how the hell to run the God-damned thing. But they learned how, I guess. Before they got lost too bad.
- Mark: Yea.

- Adrian: Well, it was, forming was real rough, you know, in the morning. We'd put fifteen hundred bombers up in an area about the size of Grant County, flying in all God-damned directions, and fifteen thousand feet of cloud to fly through, it was pretty hairy.
- Mark: I am sure it is.
- Adrian: You'd come out on top and the planes coming at you in all directions, you know. They did lose quite a few in mid-air collisions, but theoretically, you weren't supposed to.
- Mark: Yea.
- Adrian: See, they were supposed to fly from one radio station to another. But, some guys would get off and the Germans had tuned in right behind it, on line, see. And when they get the radio station, why, sometimes you just continue right on past the station, because you didn't know it. You were heading right for Germany.
- Mark: Yea.
- Adrian: Of course, by the time the guys got out in the North Sea and the Channel, the fighters were there waiting for them. They got wet before they got home.
- Mark: Yea. In terms of your targets, what were the most frequent sorts of targets —
- Adrian: Well, generally we were after railroad yards and oil, mostly. Of course, we were after airfields and stuff like that, off and on.
- Mark: Yea.
- Adrian: But it was mostly oil. Oil was the big thing.
- Mark: Now, there were times, of course, when you weren't flying. And you perhaps got some free time, off base. In England, somewhere. I was wondering when you weren't flying, and you weren't training, what sort of social activities did you and the other airmen have?
- Adrian: Well, we had a big brawl party about once every three or four weeks.
- Mark: Was this on the base, was this off base?
- Adrian: On the base. Yea, we had some real dandies there. We'd save enough scotch up to have a good party, and haul in about six or seven loads of women out of Norwich.

It got to be pretty rough before the night was over, because there wasn't enough women to go around. We got some good fights, and usually the furniture all got destroyed. Next day, you'd see somebody hauling a tray down to his hut, and you'd know he had a woman in there.

Mark: I suppose such activities were frowned upon by the brass, I guess.

Adrian: No, hell, no. I found out later on the generals on the base had his girl friend living with him out there. He was married in the States. He had a girl friend living with him, and her mother was cooking for him. There out at wing headquarters. I didn't know that until after the war, but we had, at that time, General Johnson, he was a Congressional Medal holder. He was only about forty years old at the time. So, he was a pretty good old boy. And our colonel was an old airline pilot, so there was no discipline on the base. I mean, there was no saluting, or anything. You just did your job.

Mark: I'm interested in the plane you flew. The one plane the whole time, or did you have to—

Adrian: We flew one plane about twenty-five missions.

Mark: I see. Now, if you look at the imagery in the movies, and that sort of thing, you often see the plane has the nose art, and that sort of thing. Did your plane have a name?

Adrian: Yea.

Mark: What did you call it?

Adrian: "Down the Hatch," was the name of it.

Mark: And what did that—

Adrian: It had a bomb going down the stool.

Mark: I see. And, if you could, just describe the crew of the plane. You were the navigator. If you could just describe the other personalities.

Adrian: Oh, we had a good crew. The pilot had an extra five or six hundred hours. He'd lost his first crew in training. He went to the hospital, for some reason or other. And while he was in the hospital, another pilot took over and they ploughed into a mountain. So he didn't have a crew when he got out of the hospital. So, they kept him there full time in planes that had engine overhauls, and such. So he got an

extra probably five or six hundred hours flying time. So we got a good pilot. And that's what it took on a B-24. They were real hell to fly.

Mark: Yes.

Adrian: And he was very good. And the co-pilot, he was the weak link of the crew.

Mark: Why was that?

Adrian: Well, he couldn't sleep nights, so he got on bennies, and then he couldn't, he still couldn't sleep at night, so he slept on the missions. He'd be flying formation, and the first thing you know, he'd be heading for an airplane next to you.

Mark: That's kind of the opposite of what you want.

Adrian: Well, it wasn't working right. And the bombardier, he had ice in his veins. So, we had a top turret gunner that was on his second tour. He couldn't stand any discipline in the States, so he volunteered for another tour. He was a good man. He had shot down three German fighter planes. And we had a nose gunner who had some time in the South Pacific, in combat. Radio man, he was in trouble all the time, because he wouldn't go to school. But he was a good radio man. We had a good crew all the way around, except for the co-pilot.

Mark: So, when the war in Europe ended, were you still flying, or were you out of the rotation by that time?

Adrian: Oh, we had finished up in November, of '44.

Mark: Okay.

Adrian: We came back in probably, they let us rot over there for a couple months. We were back, I think, in about January.

Mark: And then you came back to the States?

Adrian: Yea. We came back by boat.

Mark: And did what? Were you discharged?

Adrian: To Ellington Field for a refresher course. And I think their idea was to get us all on B-29s. You know, the South Pacific. But they didn't get very many volunteers.

Mark: Why was that?

- Adrian: Well, they'd had enough combat.
- Mark: Yea. Okay.
- Adrian: We finished the refresher course, and they just started teaching calculus, and algebra, and crap like that, until they could get rid of us. And every few days, there would be an order down for somebody to take a job somewhere. And I put in for—there were three things came up on the board, Truax, Chanute Field, and Scott. And, of course, I put in for Truax. That was Madison. And Chanute, second place, and Scott, third. I got Chanute. I went down there and they made me assistant post engineer. That was mostly a title job. It didn't amount to much. At first, anyway. It finally did, after a while. That was in, probably, about May or June of forty —
- Mark: '45?
- Adrian: Yea. Well, probably, at least May.
- Mark: Yea.
- Adrian: And, of course, things were quieting down pretty much, by then. Because the end of the war with Germany came in about that time. Of course, they figured on Japan was going to last a long time, at that time. So, I thought I had it made down there.
- Mark: Yea. But, of course, it didn't, and the war ended that September.
- Adrian: Yea.
- Mark: And, I suppose, you were, at some point, you were offered a discharge from the service? Is that right?
- Adrian: Oh, yea, I was eligible for discharge right away, soon as that came up, but I didn't want to get out at the time.
- Mark: Why was that?
- Adrian: Well, I had a good deal going. I was pulling pretty good money, and I was in solid with the post engineers. I almost didn't take a discharge at the time. I finally broke down in October, and took one. But I could have got out, probably, the first part of September.

Mark: Now, as an officer, I suspect that you had to stay in the Reserve status?

Adrian: No, I didn't have to.

Mark: But did you?

Adrian: I was a damned fool. I signed up at the wrong table. They said, there wouldn't be any more wars, so I might as well sign up. And I did. And between wars, they decided they didn't need navigators any more. They had this little black box they put in the planes with longitude and latitude, and when you got someplace, it told you where to go. And they found out it didn't work about the time the Korean War started. So, these pilots are over there killing each other because they were getting lost all the time, so they finally had to call the navigators up.

Mark: And so you went back to active duty during the Korean War?

Adrian: Yea. I was called up in, let's see, they got me in July, '51.

Mark: I've got a couple questions about the inter-war period, there. The post-World War II period. First of all, after you got discharged from the service after World War II, what did you do with your life after that? You had finished college already?

Adrian: Yea, I went to — no, I hadn't finished college.

Mark: Oh, I see. You hadn't finished college.

Adrian: Well, we went back to Platteville for, let's see, a semester. And then we bought, there was a hell of a lot of us went down to Rolla, Missouri, to get the degree, in mining. And some of us took several in metallurgy, and stuff like that. It was all engineering, you know.

Mark: Yea.

Adrian: And, we graduated down there in '47. Missouri School of Mines.

Mark: Yea. Did you use the GI Bill, by some chance?

Adrian: Beg pardon?

Mark: Did you use the GI Bill?

Adrian: It was all GI Bill.

Mark: Yea. I suspect college campus was a very different place before and after the war.

Adrian: Yea. Before the war, we had to work pretty hard. After the war, the government was paying for it. And we didn't work near as hard, neither. You know, we didn't study as hard as we did before the war. The hell with it.

Mark: Now, after the war, I would imagine most of the students were veterans such as yourself.

Adrian: I'd say ninety-five percent, at least.

Mark: Yea.

Adrian: In Rolla, we had three thousand students, and ten women. The women liked that.

Mark: And so, you finished school, and it came time to go out and get a job.

Adrian: Yea.

Mark: What did you do? [Pause on tape]

Adrian: I went to work for an outfit called Four Laboratories. We logged holes, oil holes, oil drill holes.

Mark: Down in Texas?

Adrian: Yea, I went to work in Huston. And I ended up in California. They sent me out late in the summer of '47, to take a truck out, a portable lab, out to Bakersfield. By the time I got out there, they needed someone, so they kept me. I never come back. My car was sitting in Huston.

Mark: And so, when you were called up for Korea, you were in California, then?

Adrian: No. I quit them in '49, I think it was. Too much traveling. It was worse than the service. We'd go, a lot of the jobs would only last a week, and then you'd move someplace else, you know.

Mark: Yea.

Adrian: It was all expense account type stuff.

Mark: Yea.

- Adrian: It got pretty old. So, I quit, and came back to Cassville. My dad had a farm implement business. I worked with him until Korea.
- Mark: I see. So you were in Wisconsin when you were called up for Korea?
- Adrian: For Korea. Yea, I was called up for Korea. I got letters from Ellington Field at least once a month telling me they were going to kick me out because I didn't go to meetings. I went to one meeting between the wars. And then when, I damn near threw the letter away when I got it in July. I thought it was another one giving me hell, you know, for not getting points, so I finally opened the damned thing up, and it had it all spelled out. Even told me when the hell I was going to get to Japan.
- Mark: Were you, how did you feel about that?
- Adrian: Well, we had to go to the field and take another refresher course.
- Mark: No, I mean, in terms of having to leave a job, and that sort of thing, and go to war again.
- Adrian: Well, you didn't have any question about it. You had to go. There was no backing out.
- Mark: Okay, so they got you prepared for the Korean War. Why don't you just tell me a little bit about your Korean War experiences. You went overseas to Asia?
- Adrian: Yea, we had a refresher course at Ellington, and then crewed up in B-26s. And then they let us go home for leave, I think, for ten days, or so, maybe two weeks, or so. And then we went to Travis, which is next to San Francisco. And they flew us over to Tachikawa, in Tokyo, by Pan Am. We got, I and, we were pretty all retreads, you know. While we were at Langley, we heard they were going to send four second lieutenants through to see how long it took them to kill off a crew, with maybe less than three hundred hours flying time, and fly B-26s, which they thought was impossible, you know. We went up to the bulletin board one day, and I was flying with a captain as bombardier, and he says, "Son of a bitch," he says, "you are not going to both fly, when you are going to kill both of us. Take turns flying." So, we did. And we got him through training there. It wasn't so hard, you know. Light loads, and not too much gas. You know. He could fly it. Well, when we got to Japan, you know, we decided we were going to get rid of him. He was ahead of us. We spent a month in Tachikawa, taking hot baths and going down to the officer's club, having a good time. We thought if we go over to Korea, and got another crew, you know. We finally decided we better get our butt down there. We had to clear the base at Tachikawa, so we just took time and didn't finish until

the last days. We got a bullet train down to Itazuke and they had a courier going over to our base. We got there, the old pilot was sitting there waiting for us. You know, hadn't got another crew. He says he has dollar rights. And we got three rides with another crew to introduce us to what the hell we were getting into. So, we were stuck. We got hung with him. But, he turned out all right, after a while. After he almost killed us a dozen times, you know.

Mark: What sort of missions were you flying in Korea?

Adrian: Night strafing, and dive bombing.

Mark: I see.

Adrian: On highways.

Mark: Against the —

Adrian: Against trains and trucks.

Mark: I see.

Adrian: We practically stopped them moving stuff at night. But it was kind of dangerous, you know. Flying up there about a hundred feet off the ground at night. Got pretty dark, you know.

Mark: Yea. How had the Air Force changed in those five years?

Adrian: Changed uniforms, that is about all.

Mark: That's about it? Well, they also had jet aircraft. You were flying the B-26.

Adrian: Yea, they had some F-84s, and F-86s over there. But they were too fast for the work we were doing. They couldn't get down in the valleys. They are too fast, and when they make a turn, they slide. And they just slid right into the mountains when they got down there doing the work. They used B-26s on about half the routes, and the marines and the navy had about the other half with Corsairs. In the daytime, they flew 51s. They were all propeller type stuff to get the stuff, though. The jets were no good for it.

Mark: Yea. And you spent how long in Asia in the Korean War?

Adrian: Oh, God, they flew the hell out of us. Flew fifty-five missions, only took us, oh, probably about four months, five, something like that.

Mark: And then you went back home again?

Adrian: Well, I came back to the States and got thirty days leave. Then they shipped me up to Great Falls, to navigate planes between McCord and Alaska. They were having trouble up there with weather. Pilots are real good at getting lost when the weather is bad. You don't believe me, look at what happened to them in Bosnia. If anything, if they'd had a navigator, that would never have happened.

Mark: Yea. And the Air Force kept you in for how long?

Adrian: Well, when they got up there, they told me I had to fly from McCord to Anchorage, mostly. And I says, "Hell, I've got an engineering degree, now, and I've got quite a bit of experience with the post engineers, I'll stay in if you want me, if you will give me a deal with me." And they said, "Hell, no. Either fly or get out." So, I says, "Okay, I'll get out." I think they thought I'd back up, but I didn't.

Mark: And so, you got out for the last time?

Adrian: Yea.

Mark: Okay.

Adrian: By that time, I had ten years of service. I mean, Reserve and otherwise.

Mark: Yea.

Adrian: I should really have stayed in the Reserves. But I didn't. Of course, maybe not, I'd be called up for Viet Nam. They used those damned B-26s in Viet Nam, too, you know, doing the same thing. So I might have got called back again. You know, the regulars, they take all the desk jobs, and get all the promotions. And the Reservists did all the God-damned work. That is the way it worked in Korea. Our barracks was entirely retreads. Well, we had one or two guys who just got out of cadets. All the regulars, they sat at their desks over there and flew once a month, every two months. And we were flying three or four nights a week. But all the promotions went over there.

Mark: I've just got one last, I have one last area of questions, and that involves veterans organizations and reunions, and that sort of thing. Are you a member of a group like the American Legion or the VFW, or anything like that?

Adrian: Yea, I belong to the VFW. Also belong, the 44th has got, that was my Bomb Group. See, our bomb group was the first bomb group to hit Europe. And they had

more time over there than any other bomb group. They knocked down more German fighters. They knocked down three hundred and thirty German fighters, which is pretty good, you know. And they probably had more guys killed than any other group. They had eight hundred and sixty guys killed in the group.

Mark: Yea.

Adrian: So, it was a pretty well-known group. You go back to England, they know what the 44th Bomb Group did. They went over there in the summer of '42 when England was on their knees, see. And those people remembered over there. But we have a reunion every year. Most—a lot of them are at Ellsworth. Two of them were at Ellsworth. That's where they crewed-up in '41.

Mark: Yea. And, you have been involved with that for how long? I mean, when did these reunions start?

Adrian: Oh, God, they must have started probably in the sixties, I imagine. I didn't pick them up until in the eighties. And they probably got two thousand guys that belong to the organization.

Mark: And do you go every year to the reunions?

Adrian: Yea. We are going in St. Louis, this year. Last year, it was San Antonio. We've been to Norfolk, Virginia. They were going, I think they did go to Los Angeles, back in the old days. And Dayton, Ohio, they got a big deal there. They go to that every once in a while. Next year, we are going back to England. They made one to England here a few years back, but we didn't go to that. Next year, we are going to England, and we're going over to D-Day, on the beaches. And then we are going to Paris for three days. And then they are coming back to England, again. It's going to be a good three weeks, I imagine.

Mark: Yea. Now, in terms of the VFW, when did you join that group? Was it right after the war, or were you —

Adrian: Yea. They chartered an outfit here in '46, I think.

Mark: I see.

Adrian: And I joined then.

Mark: And, for what reason? There were a lot of vets that didn't want anything to do with veterans organizations, and you chose the —

- Adrian: Well, a good place to play poker. And, we had some pretty good beer busts, and stuff like that. A bunch of young guys at that time. We had a lot of fun.
- Mark: Yea. And so, I get the impression it was more for social activities than say, politics, for example?
- Adrian: Right. No politics whatsoever.
- Mark: Were you involved with the organization to the point where you held office, like the treasurer, or commander? That sort of thing?
- Adrian: No. I was in college at the time. I just, I think the summer of '46, I joined up and in three months I was back in college. I kept, I belonged to it all the time, but I didn't get back to it very often.
- Mark: Well, those are all the questions I have. We've pretty much run through my standard questions. Is there anything you'd like to add, or anything? Anything we've skipped over, perhaps?
- Adrian: No, that covered things pretty good.
- Mark: Okay. Well, I thank you for taking the time.
- Adrian: Well, we lost, like I say, we lost half, fifty percent, in England, and we lost about a quarter in Korea. Guys would get down too low and run into a mountain, you know. That is what got most of them. Or the Gooks would set up a trap down there. They'd have a bunch of lights down there, and flash them on, and they'd usually put a cable across the road, or have a whole bunch of guns to shoot them down, you know.
- Mark: Yea.
- Adrian: But, they had ways. We didn't lose near as many as we did in England, but we did lose some.
- Mark: Yea. It was still very dangerous.
- Adrian: Yea. Well, compared to the RAF, it was pretty small stuff. I was just reading the other day, fifty-one percent of the guys that went in the RAF on flying duty, died. Twenty, something like twenty-five percent became POWs. In other words, about twenty-four percent survived. They had some evadees, too, you know.
- Mark: Yea.

Adrian: One of two percent. They took it. The reason that only fifty-one percent died was because the last year of the war, they flew the hell out of things, and didn't lose too many. Only lost one percent per mission, you see.

Mark: Yea.

Adrian: And they flew thirty mission tours. So they had a pretty good chance of getting through. But the guys back in '42 and '43, they just wiped them out. You know.

Mark: Yea.

Adrian: They said that the average crew lasted thirty days. With the RAF. Well, we lost a hell of a lot of guys in the first six or seven missions, because they weren't good. You know. The pilot wasn't good enough, he didn't have enough time, flying time, stuff like that. Some other reason. But the other air forces in Europe had an all together different way. I was talking to a guy about the Air Crew Association, which is an old RAF outfit. And we went back to the reunion in '90 and I was talking to a B-24 pilot, with the RAF. He was shot down behind enemy lines three times. Now, in the American Air Force, when you got shot down behind enemy lines, that was the end. You went home. But those guys, they put them right back to flying. And the same thing with the German air force. Like Erik Hartman got shot down behind enemy lines a few times. You probably heard of him.

Mark: Ah, the name sounds familiar.

Adrian: Yea. He was the ace of aces. He shot down three hundred and fifty-two airplanes. His fighter group was on the Eastern Front, shot down ten thousand Russian planes, and some American, too. He had seven p-51s he shot down.

Mark: Yea.

Adrian: He was pretty good.

Mark: Yea. Sounds like it.

Adrian: Okay. I'll let you go.

Mark: I appreciate your time.

Adrian: Yea. Okay.

Mark: Very helpful. Very interesting, actually.

Adrian: Okay. Be a good boy.

Mark: Thank you.

Adrian: Bye.

Mark: Bye.

[End of Interview.]