CIVIL AIR PATROL
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WNHC 28.83-16

MR. CARL O. SWAIM

NATIONAL HISTORICAL COMMITTEE
Headquarters Civil Air Patrol
Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama

CIVIL AIR PATROL

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interview

of

Mr. Carl O. Swaim

by

Lt. Col. Lester E. Hopper, CAP

Date: 10 October 1983

Location: Manteo, North Carolina

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS:

That I, CARL O. SWAIM, have this day participated in an oral-magnetic-taped interview with LT COL L.E. HOPPER, CAP covering my best recollections of events and experiences which may be of historical significance to the Civil Air Patrol.

I understand that the tape(s) and the transcribed manuscript resulting therefrom will be accessioned into the Civil Air Patrol's Historial Holdings. In the best interest of the Civil Air Patrol, I do hereby voluntarily give, transfer, convey, and assign all right, title, and interest in the memoirs and remembrances contained in the aforementioned magnetic tapes and manuscript to the Civil Air Patrol, to have and to hold the same forever, hereby relinquishing for myself, my executors, administrators, heirs, and assigns all ownership, right , title, and interest therein to the donee expressly on the condition of strict observance of the following restrictions:

NONE

Carl O. Swaim DONOR

Dated 10/10/83

Accepted on behalf of the Civil Air Patrol by L. E. Hopper
L. E. HOPPER
LTC CAP

Dated 10/10/83

CIVIL AIR PATROL ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

Civil Air Patrol Oral History interviews were initiated in early 1982 by Lt. Col. Lester E. Hopper, CAP, of the Civil Air Patrol's National Historical Committee. The overall purpose of these interviews is to record for posterity the activities of selected members of the Civil Air Patrol.

The principle goal of these histories is to increase the base of knowledge relating to the early accomplishments of Civil Air Patrol members who in their own unique way contributed to the defense of our great country. Certainly not of a secondary nature is the preservation of the contributions of individuals as Civil Air Patrol continues its growth.

FOREWORD

The following is a transcription of an oral history interview recorded on magnetic tape. Since only minor ememdations have been made, the reader should consistently bear in mind that he is reading a transcript of spoken rather than the written word. Additionally, no attempt to confirm the accuracy of the information contained herein has been made. As a result, the transcript reflects the interviewee's personal recollections of a situation as he remembered it at the time of the interview.

Editorial notes and additions made by Civil Air Patrol historians are enclosed in brackets. If feasible, first name, rank or titles are also provided. Any additions, deletions and changes subsequently made to the transcript by the interviewee are not indicated. Researchers may wish to listen to the actual interview tape prior to citing the transcript.

SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

In this oral history interview Mr. Carl O. Swaim recounts his early experiences as a radio technician, and his joining the Civil Air Patrol in that capacity at Civil Air Patrol Coastal Patrol Base 16 at Manteo, North Carolina.

He covers many of the difficulties encountered with the use of early radio equipment. Included are many topics, such as in-flight emergencies, arming of aircraft, bomb dropping and the unusual incident of an aircraft landing by a Civil Air Patrol aircraft.

His overall evaluation of the value of the Coastal Patrol Base 16 operations provides insight into the patriotic feeling of the time.

GUIDE TO CONTENTS

Page	Subject
1	Personal Background
3	Work as a Civilian for Base on Skycoe Airport
4	Jolly, Driscoll and Geeslin
5	Building Base Radio
5	Base Communications Officer Fields
5	Allen Watkins a Manteo Airport
5	Joins C. A. P.
6	Work Schedule
7	Coordination with Navy
7	Trailing Wire Antennae
8	Frequency Change
8	Radio Types
9	Prohibition on Aircraft-to-Aircraft Communication
10	Area of Coverage
11	Operations Officer Arnette
12	Handling In-Flight Emergency
14	Cooper Crash
16	Ditching at Sea
17	Ship Sinkings
18	Submarine Sighting
18	Arming Aircraft
19	Bomb Dropping by Overcash and Sapp
19	Submarines Firing at Aircraft
20	Navy Flights
21	Emergency Landing on Aircraft Carrier
24	Acquiring First "Mae Wests"
25	Rate of Pay
25	Base and Supplies
28	Base Command
30	Overall Evaluation

CIVIL AIR PATROL ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Number	WNHC 28.83-16
Taped interview with:	Mr. Carl O. Swaim
Date of Interview:	10 October 1983
Location:	Manteo, North Carolina
Conducted by:	Lt. Col. Lester E. Hopper, CAP

H: Carl, suppose we start off with a brief description of a little bit about Carl's background, early family life, where you're from, where you were born.

S: Well, I was born in Winston-Salem, and lived there until I was nine years old, I guess, eight or nine years old.

H: When was that, Carl?

S: I was born April 17, 1913, and we moved to Asheville later because of my mother's health. She died in Asheville. And then moved back to Winston-Salem, later. I went to school in Asheville. I first started in radio in Winston-Salem, when I was about eighteen, I guess, seventeen or eighteen, I got to fooling around with radios, you know, a man who ran a radio shop, like we did back in those days, there wasn't too much of anything else--just interested in it. Then I busted a lung when I was eighteen years old and was in the hospital three years, and I was twenty-one before I got out again, back to work. They told me I'd never work again as long as I lived, but I did. But after that I went to work for a radio company in Winston-Salem. I worked for C. R. Williams, in the parts department and general repairing, trying to learn some repairing--studying radio. I worked for him for eighteen months.

H: When was that, Carl?

S: That must have been around thirty--well, I didn't do too much for a couple of years after I got out of the hospital. But anyway that was the first time I really went to a full- time job. I just went in there to learn radio. They had about six servicemen. But that must have been in the late thirties, '36 or something like that. But I stayed with them eighteen months, in the parts department for a long time, I don't remember how long. I quit there and then I went to work for Hay Radio Company in Winston-Salem for a while, and I stayed there through '40, and in '41, Radio Sound Company in Winston-Salem had a contract for sound in The Lost Colony here (Manteo), in organ maintenance and sound work, and I was doing some sound work, also some organ maintenance--Hammond organs--but the guy that was running that, that had the contract to furnish the sound with it, his brother had been operating it up until '41, and in '41 I came down here--they called me up and borrowed me from Hay Radio to come down here and install the sound equipment for them. His brother had been drafted into the Army. I didn't want to come down here, but I did. He told me if I'd come and stay two weeks and put the stuff in and get it hooked up, he said someone would relieve me. Well, he couldn't find anybody. I stayed a couple more weeks until the show opened, and he still hadn't found anybody, so I stayed all summer with The Lost Colony, as sound man. That was why I came down to start with, here.

Then at the end of the show, so many of the boys were waiting for the draft anyway, you know, at that time, '41, like all of us, I was too. I had an application in for the Air Corps, but still the draft was looking down my back. Some of us had been deferred, so I didn't have either one of them to come up, so I went back and quit, and came back down here. I made friends with lots of people on the island, it's a very friendly place, lots of good people, kind of like home, everybody, you lived in houses and ate with people while you were in The Lost Colony, not like it is now, but it was just like one big happy family, the whole island was. I really enjoyed it here. But I decided I'd come back down here because there wasn't any radio man in the whole area, and I

got connected with Jolly, that ran a filling station down here, Texaco station. At the side of the back of the shop there, I got me some test equipment and decided I'd just work on radios, locally, to try to kill time, and I enjoyed it. I had fun, because then I had time to fish. Then after '41 or 42', sometime in that area. I reckon I stayed here seven or eight months, when they called me for the draft, the following January, and I was examined and i was turned down because of that lung.

H: January '42?

S: Yes, I think, '42. Then I decided to come on back down here anyway. because I already had a shop set up here. The war had been declared, you know, and so I said I'd come back down here and stay a while. But the parts got to be hard to get, but I got connected with the filling station, helping him with his stuff, running it and one thing and another, just hanging around. Doing odd jobs, there was plenty to do around here, and plenty of radio work if I could have got parts, but as the war kept going, parts got worse, you know, to get, so it didn't take you long to keep up with what you could get parts for. I'd travel around the country trying to pick up some parts, but I enjoyed it. I just stayed here because I liked it. I was single, no problems. I went on with this same thing until the CAP came down. I had no intention of joining the CAP or anything when it came down. I had no idea. When they first moved out to Skycoe and set up the base, they were putting it together, a lot of the pilots were coming in, and a lot of them hired me to install radios and help them with radios on the airplanes. They had their private planes here. The first one, I think, was a Dr. Owens out of Asheville, he brought a Curtiss-Robin down here, and I put a radio in it. I think it's the first one I did. Then they had a lot of the boys that were putting in ham equipment, stuff that they brought down, and I helped them some with that. They were always short-handed. Some of the time I helped them for nothing, and other times they just hired me to work like everybody else. The guy that was the

manager with it, after a few weeks they tried to get me to go with them, and I didn't have any idea, I didn't want any part of it, but I had my own business and stuff, and I liked what I was doing. I liked working with them. They were a very good bunch of people, and they were trying hard to do something out of nothing, and the more I worked with them, the more I began to see, you know, what they were doing, but I still didn't join them while they set up the old airport out at Skycoe. But they took Jolly, owning an airplane, the guy that I worked for, that owned the filling station, him and another boy together. Also this fellow Driscoll, here, that flew for the government, with the CC camps and the other camp that was here all during their days. Dave Driscoll, he finally operated the airport here for several years. But Dave was flying off of it in a government plane, and he also had a Stinson Voyager, one of these big gull-wing ones. And he would fly passengers to Ocracoke and stuff like that. I did some work for him, used to ride with him some down the bank. He flew to Ocracoke quite a bit. But I wasn't too much interested in flying, really, either. I didn't mind flying. I liked to fly, and I flew with him some, quite a bit and Jolly too, but these boys needed so much help, and I got well acquainted with guys like Slim Geeslin, out of Charlotte, was down here originally, helped them put this stuff, and they brought part of their ham gear down, and Fields and two or three more.

H: They put the base together out of their own ham gear?

S: Oh, that's where the whole thing came out of. The government made us all do away with ham licenses, do away with all radio licenses--they were cancelled, like everything else, pilots. But anyway, all this equipment was brought down, parts, and their own transmitters, and receivers, and stuff that we needed, and it was all assembled. I helped them do a lot of that. And the main one that got me to help them with that, and I helped a lot with that, just on my own at night, because Geeslin was in charge, he was a good radio man and a good old ham. Geeslin was from Charlotte, I

think, Slim Geeslin. He's dead now, he's been dead for several years. Fields, he's still living, was still there, and the base commander at that time, was a very nice guy. He talked to me several times, but I still had no desire to join the CAP. I knew what they were doing, and it was a good job, and I liked it. The more I seen of it, the more I admired them. In fact I thought some of them were nuts to do it, you know. And I tell you the job they were doing flying out on that ocean, because I'd flown enough up and down this outer banks to know how fragile it was. I've landed on the beach with Driscoll. I knew it was dangerous to do that. He did it, in the outer banks villages. But I still helped them with their radios, anything I could do with them. So they hired me, they paid me for it, sometimes they did. And I could work for them almost as much as I wanted to, because they just didn't have enough help. I knew they were having to borrow stuff and put it together, beg, any way they could get it, I guess. I don't know too much about it, but they were a nice bunch of guys. They really tried, and they were good friends, they all became good friends. We got along fine, and I thought a lot of them, but I had no intention of joining at all, I'll be honest with you. Until Allen Watkins took over, he was the commander who helped when they started working on this base here on the airport at Manteo, over at the new airport, they finished it then, and took over the facilities there, and Watkins and Fields came to me several times, when I was down town, and they kept talking to me about it, and Allen said I want you in there, we need you, why don't you come on and stay with us. Well, they kept on, and then finally, Allen talked me into it. And so I came out here. He took my picture and picked up all my papers for me, and I think that was just about the time they moved, ready to move, before I joined, so I wasn't with them too long. I don't remember exactly how long from then until the base closed.

H: They moved up from Skycoe in December of '42.

S: Something like that. I'm not sure.

H: And you stayed with them until the base closed.

S: Out here, I did, yes.

H: They closed the main base in August of '43.

S: Yes, that's right. And I decided to go with them then. I stayed with them, and most all of my time, we alternated, we would operate one day, one shift, and then we would repair for a day, a shift or two, and that's the way we worked, all of us. I believe Geeslin had gone and Fields was in charge of it, really. We had two more operators, Thatcher, who died some time ago, of Greensboro, was one. If I remember we only had four at that time, because we were short of radio operators, and they were hard to get. We just couldn't find them. Most of them had left. But anyway I'd operate, and all except Fields, I don't know whether Fields operated at that time or not. It was between the three of us. There were four shifts, two shifts each day, morning and night.

H: Well, you said morning. How long was a shift?

S: I went to work at four o'clock in the morning, and the ships would go out at daylight and stay out, what, four hours, something like that, and come back. But I worked from four o'clock in the morning until one. I did that most of the time, until one in the afternoon.

H: Then the second shift would take over.

S: The second shift would take over from one until dark. Most of the time I was with them I was on that same shift. I liked it.

H: When they weren't flying, you didn't have any requirement to monitor any frequencies or anything like that? Strictly CAP frequencies, only.

S: Strictly CAP, and after we got in here, of course, after we'd been here a little bit, and all the base got set up, the Navy, we had to put a radio loop to the Navy tower. Of course, we had to coordinate all our take-offs and landings with the Navy.

H: Was it a radio loop or landline?

S: It was a radio loop. We had a little short AM low- powered transmitter we made up for each one. We made them, one for the Navy tower and one in our--they weren't too far apart.

H: So you could talk to each other to coordinate take-offs and landings.

S: That's all.

H: Did your radio control the take-offs and landings, then?

S: Yes. All take-offs and landings.

H: You acted like a control tower then.

S: We were a control tower as far as coordinating through the Navy. After the Navy got in there and got to flying off of it--well, before they got to operating planes off of it very much, even before that, they had control of it, because they were coming in here for inspections, and they had a commander, and he stayed in here, and he flew to Norfolk every day with a trainer. I think he was flying an AT-6, but anyway we still had to have coordination to get in and out. Then we had a shop in a hangar, where we repaired our radios, and we did a lot of flying, of course, with our radio checks. The worst thing that happened to them with that particular type of equipment, they used a trailing antenna, a piece of wire, and we lost more of them than anything else, but I think that was done because they'd fail to pull it in when they'd land. The pilots wouldn't take it in.

H: Left it in the trees.

S: That's right, or somewhere along the runway, when they set down, or dragged it off someplace, but we'd have to replace a lot of those and then tune them to get the right length on them.

H: For curiosity, how long was that trail?

S: Well, if I remember right, the maximum was around sixty feet.

H: Well, that varied, because you had a frequency change about mid-way through, didn't you?

S: Yes.

H: Then you had to re-crystal everything.

S: That's right. Recrystal and we had to cut our antennas and all this stuff. I was just thinking the other day, I realize we had some Lear at that time, there was some RCA, some Link radios in there too, primitive to what we have now.

H: Just a hodge-podge of everything. Let me ask you something. How did you get a set in and out of an airplane? Did you standardize on a package, or did you just--each airplane had its own radio and each one of them was custom?

S: Most of the planes they flew out of here were like a Stinson, there were more of them than anything else, and we had room enough in the dash panel or right under the edge of it that they could make a rack, mount the rack. In other words they were in a housing anyway, and you could just mount the racks underneath the control panel in a corner, maybe over the pilot's side, either that or on the observer's side, whichever one we had room for it. And there was a few of them that we could cut out part of it, if it didn't have a support across it, we'd cut out as

much as we could to raise it as high as we could to give him more room for his feet.

H: Some of the bases finally standardized and put it on what looked like a board, and then they could just unhook three or four leads and move it from one airplane to the other, and that way if they had an airplane down for radio they could swap it.

S: Well, you could get underneath of ours and unplug it from the back and slip it out, no problem there, and then we had a bench set up where we could yank it out and put it on the bench and repair it. But, if I remember, most of ours were mounted up in the panel, or close to it. They did a remarkable job, but with one frequency, and of course one plane couldn't talk to the other one, which was a handicap.

H: They couldn't talk to each other?

S: No sir. Not under any condition.

H: Why was that?

S: They only had one frequency and they wanted them to--evidently--

H: They could, technically, but operationally they weren't allowed. Is that what you're saying?

S: Yes, I guess they could. They could have put a frequency in it, but I think operationally was what was the cause of it. In order to make it so the two planes were always talking to the base, not to one another. So that they could keep them separated--also they'd know the coordinates of one, you know, against the other. This was done for that reason, too. Because every fifteen minutes or so they had to report in where they were. We had a map up on the wall, you know, we'd put a pin, and we'd know

exactly where he was all the time, within a fifteen minute distance. I thought afterwards, the way they had it was for their own safety, and it did work. It paid off a couple of times. Most of them were real good at this, pilots and observers, gave pretty close coordinates to each one. They reported where they were. They knew where
they were, pretty close.

H: Well, one of the problems you had was overuse of the radio channel, you know, I think, all up and down the coast here, all CAP was on that one frequency.

S: That's right. And then we had weather conditions. You get out there with lightning and weather like that and you couldn't hardly read them. It was terrific, if they were very far off shore.

H: What was your range? What size transmitter did you have on your base? A hundred watts, a thousand watts?

S: We were running around a hundred, I think, most of the time that I was there. We could have run more, but we didn't. I think 100 did it. We were only covering from Virginia Beach to Hatteras, and then they doubled back.

H: And how far off shore did they go, do you recall?

S: No, I don't, but I think they were running about five, six, ten miles, somewheres in there. Maybe some of them ten miles. I had quite a bit of problem with them. Our map, if I remember correctly, I'm not sure about it, but our maps were ten miles, to the top of our control maps, but over and over again, you'd find them off the map. They'd report off the map, a lot of them.

H: They either were off the map or they were lost.

S: That's right. I found them as far as 40 miles off shore.

H: Tell me about one of your operating days. You came in at four o'clock in the morning. Tell me what happened.

S: Well, it was normal. It was routine. They'd take off, two of them going south, two of them going north, and you'd give them permission to take off in the morning at dawn, soon as it was light enough for them to see, and get them out, and then they'd come back and give you their coordinates every fifteen minutes or whatever time it was, where they were, and they would go further out to sea. Also they had a rule that each plane had to fall back behind the other one at intervals. After fifteen minutes or so intervals one of them would fall behind the other one, you know, to see if anything was wrong with the other airplane. All the time they would do this, and you'd ask him if his sister ship was all right, and if he saw anything, and the other one too. We'd check periodically with them on that, which he required. Fitz Arnette, out of Hendersonville was operations officer at that particular time, and up until the end, I think, and he was pretty thorough, he knew airplanes, he knew how to fly, he knew what was going on there.

H: Now your maps, was that the so-called plotting room or just in the radio room?

S: Just in the radio room.

H: Then did you send them out to the plotting room?

S: Yes, we had a map of the whole area, and all we did was to just keep tab of the locations, exactly of the latitude and longitude, where this plane was at a particular time, which was on this plotting board, but they had another one inside too, if they could, if they wanted to plot it. I don't know what they used when they first started, but their system changed, when we

were out there, of what they made the pilots do offshore. The pilots had a better method of calculating their positions than they did, when they first started down here it was kind of a haphazard thing. They used buoys offshore. When I first started working with them, they were using buoys. They'd say we are at buoy so-and-so. They used a coast and geodetic map.

H: They finally taught them to navigate.

S: Yes, that's right, exactly. They finally taught the observers to navigate and you'd have a lot of--typical of them. I tell you, I really admired them, those pilots. The job they were doing--it was risky as it could be, but you covered up for a lot of them too, because a lot of them would go out there, and I know, they'd get up at four o'clock in the morning, and you take your older pilots that had been flying with an observer that can fly too, probably most of the observers could fly, but they would turn it over to the observer and go to sleep. This happened quite often. Lots of times you'd have one plane that would report in at a certain time and say I'll give you his position, and you'd ask the other one for his position and he wasn't there, you knew what had happened, and you'd say you check again, be sure where you are, you're not right. But rather than put it on our plotting board and let the officer know what happened, you covered a lot for them like that. It was minor, it wasn't anything serious, and we never thought too much about it. But they were funny--

H: What do you mean, funny? They'd just go out there and go to sleep?

S: Comical, yes. They were comical sometimes, in the remarks that they made. They were a pretty happy-go-lucky bunch of people to be out there where they were in planes. But they would cruise their patrol and turn around and come back, which was normal, which was daily incidents and things that were just

minor, not too many major things happened when I was operating with it, except we did have one one morning, went out and an example which really paid off for these two planes. one flight went north and he got up the beach about ten or fifteen miles, and I think he was about ten miles offshore, if I remember correctly, and the sister ship called and said smoke was coming out of his exhaust, and so I checked with him and asked him for his manifold pressure and oil pressure, and he said it was perfectly all right. So then I talked to Arnette, the Operations officer, and he said to keep asking him, keep questioning him every five minutes or so about his oil pressure and manifold pressure, and see if his engine is bothering him, and the sister ship fell back and kept following him. He went from maybe fifteen or twenty minutes into his flight and continued on, but the smoke kept coming, so finally Arnette said to tell him to come to the beach. So we kept checking with him every five minutes on his oil pressure and manifold pressure, no change, nothing wrong with the airplane, the pilot couldn't even see the smoke. But he came to the beach, and then, by the time he came to the beach, we got the mechanic, Brown, he was from Piedmont Communications. I think, one of our mechanics, and he was good--one of the best. I got him in there and asked him about it, and Brown asked me to ask him the same thing, and I asked him, and he was all right. And Brown said to bring him in. This was later after the Navy was flying right much off the base at that time. They didn't have a squadron here, but they were doing a lot of flying. So he said to get him in here as quick as possible and let him land straight in. So I got permission from the Navy for him to come in, straight, and just before he landed I checked with him again for his oil pressure, and he said it was perfectly normal, but he landed, got down all right, and taxied up to the hangar to the strip where he was to leave his airplane, and it cut off on him just before he got it where he wanted it. The mechanic took that airplane down and the motor had frozen solid. The pistons were one solid piece of metal--that close to losing it. They lost some airplanes. They lost some of them down. But I don't remem-

ber but one when I was on operating duty when they lost it. The other boys happened to be on other times.

H: Which one was that, Carl?

S: I don't remember who it was. I can't tell you, but he ditched it, and he was close in and the Coast Guard went out and got him. No problem. They lost several like that, I think.

H: They did lose several at sea?

S: Yes, I don't know how many, I wouldn't say too many of them, but they did lose some that way. They'd go down with mechanical trouble.

H: Were you on duty with them when Cooper went down?

S: No.

H: That was your off day.

S: No. He was on an afternoon flight, and i was off that afternoon, but I know when he went down. I was over on the beach when they were trying to get to him. He wasn't too far out, but it was just so cold, and the ocean was so rough the Coast Guard couldn't go get him. You'd freeze to death in twenty minutes or less.

H: Hyperthermia. You didn't know the word back then, but it worked just the same.

S: Well, they stopped it after that. They wouldn't let them go out there when it was that rough. They cancelled the flights when the ocean was rough as it was at that time, and cold. They couldn't get to them. That's the only one I know they couldn't get to. That's the only one we lost. We were real lucky.

H: You said there were several that ditched at sea though.

S: Yes, they lost some airplanes. I don't know how many they ditched at sea.

H: That's one of the hard things I have to find, and I'm sure I'll find it when I get to read the S-2 reports, that I just recently got, but it's difficult to piece that together.

S: Well, I don't know. I only know one, I know they did lose some more, they lost some airplanes, but I don't know how many or anything.

H: The one that you were on duty for, why don't you tell me a little bit about it.

S: He knew that his motor was quitting, and he wasn't far off, in fact it was off Kitty Hawk, and he knew that he was having motor trouble, and he got just as close in as he could. He was coming to the base. He got just as close in as he could to the Kitty Hawk Coast Guard Station, and he said he was going to have to ditch it and he ditched.

H: Did he give you a Mayday or something?

S: No, he just told me that he was having trouble with the airplane, and he was afraid he was going to have to ditch it, and I kept talking to him, and I told his sister ship. She knew what was happening to him, that he was going to ditch it, to watch it, so he knew where he was, and stayed with him. So they just ditched it and they got out. The Coast Guard was watching them all the time, too. They already had a boat in the water. They knew he was coming down.

H: It's amazing how cool a pilot is at a time like that.

S: It is, it's just-- They were not rattled, at all.

H: I've only had one serious emergency like that, Carl, and every once in a while I think back about it, and I say you had to be out of your mind to be that easy-going. The primer on the airplane that I fly is inside the cockpit, and I switched tanks and threw on a booster pump, and a shower of gas just came shooting out my primer, all over my lap and everything else, and I was in a bad weather situation, and all I told the tower was--I happened to be within reasonable distance of an airport--I said I need clearance for a straight in, I have a minor fuel problem.

S: These boys were amazing, the way they operated it. They really surprised me. I'll be honest with you, if--the first ride I took with them, after they'd been flying a while, the first test flight I made, radio test flight, was in a Cessna, and I was sure the plane would fall apart. You know, just rattled all over, just fall to pieces. It sounded like it. You know, that's the way it was, and they were flying that thing. They'd been flying it on patrols. Well, all the airplanes are like this, and I got to thinking they'll hold together, I guess. But the King equipment that they had back in those days--people today who are not old enough to know what radio equipment we had, can't imagine what we fooled with, what we were fooling with.

H: Just to reverse this, I flew back in the forties and didn't fly any more until the seventies, and the biggest problem I had when I started flying again was that all the darn radio equipment drove me crazy.

S: I know, I know what you mean.

H: That was too complicated.

S: That's why you got with us, because you kept--well I've kept up with it for years, because I've been in the communications

business since that was over. As soon as two- way radio came in, I went into--I got a Motorola and General Electric service station, and I had a Motorola and I just sold it in the past year, here. So we grew up with two-way radios, that's all I've done--sold communications equipment, to police, fire, pilots and stuff of that type for years. We worked on fourteen counties here, so we had to keep up, pretty well with it, but back then it was primitive.

H: Let me ask you. When these guys went out, they flew an area, or did they fly along with a convoy, or how did they do it?

S: Well, they flew, no they flew an area. They would go out like five miles or something and would fly down the outer banks for five miles out. What they were flying, really, the thing that they were flying and the course that they were on was the shipping lanes. The ships were coming just as close to shore as they could come, because you could see, watch tankers going up and down this coast, and they flew just out beyond that shipping lane where submarines could be within torpedo distance of the ships. You could watch the boats. The boats were always out there, night and day.

H: Did you ever see any of them get sunk out there?

S: Oh, yes. I saw them from the shore. I know of two. I stood over in that old casino on Nag's Head one night in the winter time when it was cold, and he was right close to shore, and I saw one of those tankers go up just like a firecracker, and you could see the men flying out of it, and the oil burning on top of the water. The Coast Guard went out with them. They'd go out there. But there was a lot of them. I saw two or three blow up, just standing looking, I mean we were just standing there talking, looking out the window. People don't realize how hot it was here, and CAP did a world of good. I began to really admire them

afterward, after I got with them, because I knew they were doing--it's the only thing we had. They'd call in and say they saw a submarine, when I was on duty and we had a teletype to the Navy in Norfolk, and I'd call the Navy and tell them they had seen a submarine, which is what we were supposed to do, and where it was, the location of it, and the Navy said sorry, there's one PBY flying and he's off Florida someplace. From Florida to above Norfolk, they had one PBY flying at a time. They covered that whole coast. We had no protection. We didn't have nothing. And if the planes didn't help them, the Germans could come on in any time they wanted to. They didn't know how little we did have.

H: Finally they put some bombs and depth charges on these little airplanes.

S: When they took us in the Air Force. If I remember correctly, they came down here and, I don't remember who came, one of the National Commanders came down.

H: It would have been Earle Johnson, probably.

S: Probably, from Washington, and he made a speech to us, and told us that we were outlaws. That's the first thing he said. I'll never forget it. He said you are all a bunch of outlaws, you've been outlaws. If a German catches you, they'll shoot you, because you've got no protection whatsoever. And we were, theoretically we were, and he said that they were going to take us in the Air Force and send an ordnance crew. And they took us in the Air Force and they sent an ordnance crew down here and they put bombs on and racks, and the soldiers in the ordnance crew took the bombs off when the planes came in.

H: Did you hear any of the pilots, while you were on duty, talk about dropping bombs or anything?

S: Yes. I did. Some of them got excited about it. I remember Marvin Overcash was an observer, and I believe he was flying with a fellow Sapp, but one morning on early patrol, he said he saw a submarine and they had the bombs with them then, but evidently when he first saw it, I'll never forget, Marvin called in and said: I see a submarine, and Arnette was in the radio room with me at that particular time, standing behind me, and he called in and said: I see a submarine, can I drop my bomb? I said: Man, you're out there, not me, and Arnette said, Yeah, what's he doing out there? And he did.

H: He dropped it.

S: He dropped it anyway, but he asked me permission, if he could, he was so excited.

H: You don't remember when that was.

S: No. He was so excited I won't forget him. He won't forget that, either.

H: We at least know one of them got dropped.

S: They dropped some. I know they did, when I was on, they dropped some.

H: Some. One? Ten?

S: I don't know. You take two planes dropping four bombs. He was submerging, but before the end of the thing, they got to where they were shooting back, you know.

H: They were?

S: Oh, yes.

H: I hadn't heard about that. What did they do?

S: Submarine lay out there with a gun on deck, a cannon, and if the plane came close he'd shoot at him.

H: Do you remember anybody specifically got shot?

S: No. Nobody got shot. They got to stay away from them. They got to watching them, and if they didn't submerge, they wouldn't go close enough to them. They knew this was going to happen, and the first incident of this began to happen to them when the Navy put their patrol on. You see, before we quit, the Navy came down here with a squadron, and they took over out beyond where the CAP was. They went to sea. They'd go out forty to fifty miles or more to sea. You probably knew about them.

H : Were they PBY'S, or what?

S: No, they were flying small, looked like trainers. They called them the Sugar Squadron, that was their code name, was Sugar, and I'll never forget them. But they came down here and they had a squadron of them, there was two of them, an observer, open cock-pits, and they cut our range down to five or six miles and to good weather, only good weather flying before the end of it. And they would go to sea when they went out.

H: I hadn't heard that.

S: Yes. I don't know how long it was, maybe a month or two months before we quit, the Navy was flying, they went off at daylight just like we did. They took off at the same time, dawn, and came back about the same time. That's where our coordination got together. That was along at the last. And when the weather was bad they'd take over the inside convoy if the ocean was too rough for them to fly, because they stopped them after they lost

them. they stopped them from flying in real rough cold weather, extremely cold.

H: Well, what about your living conditions? Where were you living during that period of time? Oh, before I get to that, tell me the story about the guy that landed on the aircraft carrier.

S: Oh, yes. He was on convoy, and they are radio silence, you know, when they are on convoy. They'd go out and pick them up coming up the coast going in to Norfolk, with the base's carrier and three destroyers, I believe, with them. We knew from the other bases at Morehead City that they were coming, you know. They'd bring them up to Hatteras, and we'd go down and meet them at Hatteras and escort them up through here. And usually they'd do it in the morning. If it was in the morning they'd go down and get them and bring them up here and the next squadron would come on in and they'd go back out. They had to leave the escort before they could break radio silence and say they were coming in, you know. The next bunch would go out and pick them up and take them to Norfolk, up to Virginia Beach. But anyway, they were escorting them back up that way, and under no condition could they break radio silence, and they couldn't fly over the convoy under any condition, over any ship. They had to stay within--they'd circle once in a while, and then fly along side of them, but we didn't hear anything from him. I didn't hear anything about it at all, and of course we weren't expecting anything, radio, unless he came ashore. If he had trouble or something he would have come ashore and then called in, but nothing happened, and then the sister ship called when she started to turn back and she said he had landed on the carrier and was safe.

H: Who was that?

S: That was this guy. I'm trying to think of his name. Paul was telling me his name a while ago.

H: That was the Canadian?

S: Yes.

H: Why did he land on the carrier?

S: Well he said he was having trouble. His motor was running bad, skipping. I don't know whether it was bad enough that he would have had to land it. I guess it was. But he said it was minor. It was something he could have fixed if he had had it on the ground, I remember that. But the carrier was watching him and heard him, and the captain pulled the nose of the carrier into the wind, nothing said, but he knew what he was asking for, so he set down on it. He was planning on setting down on it, fixing the airplane and taking off and coming on in, you know. Then when he sat down on it, that was it.

H: That's a real good story. Do you remember about when that was?

S: No, I don't. It was along the latter part, I'd say within the last two months or so of the base operation, because your carriers were coming back beat up, you know, this one was, battle-scarred.

H: You don't remember the name of the carrier?

S: No, I don't. But they were battle-scarred. I think he said the whole front end of this one was knocked out. They'd go into Norfolk for repairs.

H: That's a real interesting story. I hadn't heard that one before. I've got to follow that one up.

S: Follow that one up and talk to--have you talked to Allen Watkins?

H: No.

S: If I remember, he hit the ceiling when they wouldn't let him off. And they had to go up there and disassemble the plane, take it apart and bring it back.

H: They had to go to Norfolk and disassemble the airplane to bring it back?

S: Yes. Yes, sir. They wouldn't let him fly it off of there.

H: Do you know what kind of airplane it was?

S: It was a Stinson. Same type they were flying. Most of the ones they had here were Voyagers, most of the ones they were flying. Some other types here too, there were Stearmans here. I remember that one, because I remember Watkins hit the ceiling because he couldn't get off of it. He could have got off, but there was a Navy regulation, you know, you don't do this--nobody does it.

H: So they wouldn't let him off. How about any other little incidents, amusing or otherwise, that occurred during that period?

S: Well, let's see, not too many unusual incidents. I know that there were some of them that landed on the beach. They'd see something they wanted or something so would roll it in, which was strictly against regulations and dangerous as heck, but they would do it. And down at Hatteras, because a lot of stuff was washing ashore, dead people, Germans, and stuff like that. In fact, I think the first Mae West they got from some of that stuff

down there that washed ashore off of Germans or--. We didn't have any Mae Wests.

H: Yes, the first ones you got, that's the way you got them. You got them off of bodies.

S: Yes, I know they landed down there and got some off of bodies. The first ones we ever had, the first four, I think, I ever saw here came off of dead Germans on the beach. But that's what I say, they were out there without any protection whatsoever for a long time. You really admired them. Nobody realizes the good they did. I mean there's no way of saying it. Because they had nothing to fight with, and I know the Germans knew this, but they knew they had radios, and they didn't know what else was coming.

H: What did you do in your spare time?

S: Ran my radio shop.

H: You ran your radio shop in town.

S: And also I was helping Jolly with his filling station. He was running the filling station, and he was in the plumbing business at that time, too. The filling station was just a side line, so I kind of worked with him. We kept the filling station going. We had a boy working in there, and I kind of helped manage it when he was gone, and he did the same, and I ran a radio shop in the back side, with what parts I could get. Like I told you, you know tubes and stuff was so hard to get, you just patched up whatever you could. Sometimes I had two or three distributors from Richmond and Norfolk that would save me a few tubes, and I'd go up and pick them up, on the side, and stuff like that. That's the only way I could do it.

H: What were you, a tech sergeant or something like that at the time?

S: Yes, all radio operators were technical sergeants. My pay was $7 per day.

H: $7 per day. That's right. Technicians got paid a little bit better than the rest of them.

S: It was $7. Pilots got $8, I think.

H: Regular ground people didn't get paid that much.

S: No, we had several different--I think $5 for a guard or something.

H: $4 or $5. The three key people were pilots, mechanics and radio operators, radio technicians.

S: You see, it was perfectly normal that none of the radio men wanted to operate. I didn't. I hated operating. They did too. They'd rather fix radios, but that's what I wanted.

H: But they made you take your turn at operating.

S: Yes. Somebody had to do it, so we just alternated in doing it that way to keep it from being so monotonous.

H: Now, just a couple of general questions. How well do you think the base was equipped when it got up here at the main base at Manteo?

S: I think very good, very well equipped. I think we had good facilities, as far as I could see.

H: Where did you get that facility? Did the government give it to you?

S: The government bought it. The government did, up here, they built it.

H: Well, I meant like your tools and your test equipment and things of that nature. Did you get them out of the Army?

S: Yes. We got it from Fort Eustis.

H: But that was toward the tail end of it.

S: Oh, yes. Well, all the time that we were in there, I think we got all our supplies, radio supplies out of Fort Eustis, Norfolk.

H: So you got pretty well supplied.

S: They flew up there and got it. There was a plane went up there almost every day.

H: You really didn't have any shortages once you got started up here.

S: No. Not after we got straightened out down here. I think the whole CAP had trouble until after we got over here, really, till the bases got settled down. But after we got in here we didn't have too much of a problem. I didn't see much. We had a real good set-up here. We even had a mess hall and a cook for breakfast.

H: Now that mess hall, did they serve three meals a day or two or what?

S: I don't think so. I don't believe they did. I never ate anything but breakfast there. That's all I was interested in, because that would be usually four o'clock in the morning, and then the pilots would eat, and the crews as they came in would eat.

H: Who ran the restaurant? Civilians?

S: Yes. Had a lady, Mrs. Davis, here on the island, was cook and took care of the whole thing. In fact she fed The Lost Colony, the year I was here with The Lost Colony, she fed the whole cast in her house. She turned her living room and dining room and all into a mess hall and her kitchen and part of another room. She had a two story house, big two story house right down on Main Street, and she served us all our meals, I ate three meals a day with her, she served every one of us for $5 a week.

H: $5 a week.

S: Yes sir, three meals a day. The whole cast of The Lost Colony. Can you imagine?

H: Good eating, too, probably.

S: Yes. It wasn't too bad too. When I came down here I boarded for $5 a week for a room and $5 a week to eat. Couldn't beat it.

H: How well do you feel the base was managed?

S: Well, I tell you. After I went in it, several of them had trouble with Watkins. What it was, I don't know.

H: Most bases did, by the way.

S: And a lot of the pilots had trouble with him. I know it. I knew about it. I heard there were a lot of gripes, and scut-

tlebutt about it, and a lot of them would get on his back, and he'd get on them. And I don't know, I felt like Watkins--well, I shouldn't tell this stuff.

H: Don't worry about it. It's not going any place. If it's bad, I take it out.

S: I liked Allen. I tell you, Allen was nice to me. I never had a minute's trouble. He talked to me, when they talked me into joining this base, I never had any pressure on me whatsoever. Any time, even one time I overslept, he was really rough on them, you know, if they didn't show up, oversleeping, and I overslept, and he never said one word to me about it. Because I think he had the feeling he had talked me into it and I'm liable to go, you know, too, if he'd said something, which I wouldn't, but Allen was good to me, he was just as nice to me as he could be. I don't know, I never felt regimented or anything while I was in it with him. I felt free to talk to him, and we didn't have any, there wasn't any rank on us, you know like us, as far as that's concerned, it was no regimentation, like it was with some of them, who got to feel this way. But Watkins did have his problems. There was some dissention in the base. Allen was kind of a playboy type. I knew him before he came down here. He was in Greensboro, and he married into a wealthy family, so he flew airplanes, and stuff like that, you all know about it.

H: Yes, we've met them before. That wasn't the same name, but you know.

S: Yes. But I liked him. I got along good with him, I'll admit it, and no problems. I never had any problem with him, don't know why, he just never gave me any. He seemed to take kind of a liking to me.

H: Well, aside from that apparently it was run pretty well.

S: I'd say it was. I'd say it was. I'd say it was very efficient.

H: They made their flights and all the stuff like they were supposed to, and that's the bottom line.

S: That's right. That's what I would say. He ran a tight ship. He did that, no question about it. Arnette was a good operations officer. We had very little radio trouble, I mean, where they'd quit in flight, or anything like that. They would get noisy, but we'd check them out anyway, they got periodic checks regardless. And we didn't have too much of that, except for antenna problems. Most of them, if one of them went off the air, you knew about what had happened to him, right off the bat, ninety percent of our problems, but some other technical stuff. our transmitters, we didn't ever need it. We were in good shape. We built this transmitter, like we helped them with first, and used it the whole duration of the CAP, but we had two more units that we could have put together.

H: Good stand-bys.

S: They were laying out in parts. All we had to do was assemble the parts, receivers and stuff that the boys had brought down and just left, among themselves.

H: Well, what's your personal overall evaluation of the relative worth of what was done down here?

S: I think they did a remarkable job.

H: Well, not they, you. All of you did.

S: But as far as what the CAP did, not particularly this base, but the organization as a whole, I think was a good idea, remarkable, and I think they did a good job of it. The volunteers, the

people that volunteered their time to do it, it amazed you so much, that they volunteered from all kinds of occupations, about every occupation. We had doctors, politicians, and everybody you could imagine here, you know, that had volunteered for this thing, and they did a wonderful job--no question about that. The public will never know how good they did do. I know they did.

H: I hope some day they'll read a book.

S: Yes. Well, there's some way you could, because after that we thought, well, the general said to us when we did this, you know, you should never tell anybody, you were doing this, and then just forget it.

H: Well, during that period of time, of course, they didn't want to scare the general public by how close the war was on their doorstep. So they kept everything pretty quiet.

S: Yes. We never told it. And far as, like us as operators, we were told that you don't repeat it. After you leave the radio room, that's it. Nobody ever knew. If you saw a submarine, they'd ask you, but nobody ever knew you saw one. And I mean for years, nobody'd ever tell it, because there wasn't any use to do it. They saw them. There's no question about that. Some of them saw whales they thought were submarines, and then parts of ships that were sunk. All in all, that's all I know. Dot can tell you more about it because she was with it all the way through, and she was in operations. She can give you some idea of how the base operated within itself. All I was connected with, as far as the physical operations, was with the pilots and the airplanes and stuff.

H: We'll let you in on a little secret. For the most part, the radio people knew more about what was going on on the base than anybody else. They were pretty much on top of it.

S: You knew everything going on. There was not much you missed. These little things that came up, and things that are never mentioned, odds and ends.

H: Well, I think we got a good interview. Everybody has their own version of it, and you put all these together and you come up with a complete story.