CIVIL AIR PATROL
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WNHC 26.83-14

MR. WILLIAM PAUL BRIDGES

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

CIVIL AIR PATROL

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interview

of

Mr. William Paul Bridges

by

Lieutenant Colonel Lester E. Hopper, CAP

Date: 10 October 1983

Location: Manteo, North Carolina

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS:

That I, William Paul Bridges, have this day participated in an oral-magnetic-taped interview with LTC L.E. Hoppen, 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

William Paul Bridges DONOR

Dated 10/10/83

Accepted on behalf of the Civil Air Patrol by L.E. Hoppen
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. William Paul Bridges recounts many of his early experiences and feelings prior to and during his service at Civil Air Patrol Coastal Patrol Base 16 in Manteo, North Carolina.

He covers many aspects of the opening of the base at the Skycoe Airport and its later move to the Manteo Airport. Additionally, he candidly expresses his view as relates to the base's first commander, Jim Hamilton, and its ultimate commander, Allen Watkins.

His tale of the loss and subsequent search for fellow aircrew-men Cook and Cooper provides detailed information on their tragic loss in December of 1942.

Finally, his summary of the overall worth of the Base 16 operations provides an unusual insight into the feelings of others as regards World War II.

GUIDE TO CONTENTS

Page	Subject
1	Personal Background
1	Early Aviator Ted Malloy
2	First Flying
3	Joins Civil Air Patrol
5	Move to Base 16
5	Reporting to Skycoe Airport
7	Base Commander Jim Hamilton
7	Change of Command from Hamilton to Allen Watkins
7	Building the Base at Manteo Airport
8	Submarine Sighting
9	Flying Procedures
10	Canadian Pilot
11	Fuel Problems
11	Loss of Cook and Cooper
15	Submarine Sighting
16	Dispute with Base Commander
18	Flying Routine
18	Arming Aircraft
19	Dr. Hutton
21	C. Y. Nanny
22	Living Accommodations
24	Blackout Driving
24	Move to Manteo Airport
27	Base Supplies
29	Overall Evaluation
30	Lack of Base Insignia

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Conducted by:	Lt. Col. Lester E. Hopper, CAP

H: Paul, and I hope you don't mind if I continue calling you that, why don't you start off with a little bit of background about Paul Bridges, where you were born, family traditions or anything that you feel like telling us about yourself as an individual.

B: Well, I was born November 11, 1909, in Cleveland County, North Carolina, near Shelby. I was born on a farm. My father was a farmer, and he had a small grocery store out in the country, and I was just raised up as a poor country boy. I remember very well, I split stove wood and carried it to colored town and sold it. We lived about six miles out of town. Back in those days I went to church a million times with my overalls on, my bib overalls, we dressed like that back in those days. The first airplane I ever seen, I guess, my father had went to Shelby in his wagon, with mules, and he found out that the airplane was coming in to town, and he sent word or came back and got me, and I remember standing and looking up to see the airplane coming in. I thought it was the greatest thing in the world I ever seen. I must have been, oh, I wasn't even in my teens, I was below my teenage at that time. The first time I remember, I flew in an old Ford Tri-Motor.

H: Do you know what kind of airplane it was, that you saw first?

B: No, I don't remember that. Well, I do remember, it seemed like Ted Malloy, I don't know whether you've ever heard of him, but Ted Malloy used to carry mail. He was one of the first pilots that ever carried the mail from Atlanta to New York. I

believe that's right, and he come to our town one time and flew passengers. Of course, I didn't have the money to take a ride with him, but I watched his airplane while he went in for lunch that day, and I thought I was a pretty big shot, looking after the man's airplane. But there was a boy from our town, D. L. Willis, he finally went to Germany, when they flight lifted over there, he flew over there, he flew in the war, he was, well, he was just a self-made pilot, and he learned me to fly, really. He didn't even have an instructor's rating or anything, learned to fly in a Cub.

H: Your first flight was in an old Ford Tri-Motor?

B: First flight was in an old Ford Tri-Motor.

H: Was that at a fair or something like that?

B: No, there was a little landing strip there at my home town, and this boy D. L. Willis, some of the boys where they had the landing strip out there, they'd brought this plane in there, and that's where it was, it was on this little landing strip there where I flew. And then they had a flying club. They bought a Piper Cub, and had members, you paid them so much, you know, so much a month and then so much for your flying time when you flew, and that was how I learned to fly.

H: When was that, Paul?

B: When was that? Really, I don't know, it was, I'd say in the late thirties, because I'd been flying several years when '42--when I come down here in the war. So I just love to fly, and of course I joined Civil Air Patrol when they organized the Civil Air Patrol there in Shelby, and I went to that. And my wife, I remember my children was all little, and in fact, this boy that's down here, he might not have been born yet. And I remember she wanted to know when I signed up to come on anti-submarine patrol,

she says: What are you going down there for? Said you've got a family here and these kids, and I said: Well, I don't mean for them so-and-sos to come over here, and that's exactly how I felt about the war at that time. But I guess, as everybody else does, that's ever been in any kind of service, I don't know, that's the only service I was ever in, except I was in the National Guard some there, when I got into it and seen some of the things that happened in it, sometimes I was a little disappointed, which I guess we all are.

H: Let's go back a little bit. You were in the National Guard before you joined CAP?

B: Just for a short time.

H: That was in Shelby?

B: That was in Shelby.

H: That was what, an infantry outfit or something?

B: Yes. So, we come down here on anti-submarine--

H: You joined CAP, then, what, right away in December of '41 or something like that?

B: No, I belonged to CAP probably a year--I don't know--whenever it first started.

H: That's when it first started.

B: When it first started.

H: Do you recall your serial number, by any chance?

B: No, sir. You've got it, but I don't recall.

H: I've got it, because that tells you how early you joined.

B: Yes. I was in on the first. So, I fell in love with the island down here, and I fell in love with the base, as far as that's concerned. There's some of the things that didn't go right, I could go into them, but I don't think, maybe, you'd want to hear some of the things I might say about that.

H: When you're studying history you've got to study the good and the bad both.

B: Well, me and the commanding officer didn't get along too well, really. Mr. Allen Watkins, of course he's a good friend of mine now, and the last reunion we had we, I think we cured some old sores that we had betwixt us, maybe, but I left the base. That's one of the reasons I left the base before it did close out. But I noticed a lot of the people, I really made a lot of friends on the base, and I still think a lot of them. In fact I love people, and it was a good lesson to me. In fact, I didn't go into my educational background, I only have a eighth grade education. I quit school. I got girls in my head, when I got up big enough when I was going to school, and I got married real young, and when they got to talking about public relations officers and all that kind of stuff, I really didn't know what they was talking about. I didn't have hardly enough education to know what public relations meant, but I found out a lot too. Really, I got an education in the Civil Air Patrol. Of course, we get a education in life, you know that's the best education we get sometimes I think. And I fell in love with the island down here, and of course bought some property down here, and you see I'm down here today. I love it down here. I love the island, I love the people on the island. Really, I believe I've got some as good friends or better down here than I have back in my own home town. In fact I know a lot more of them. Of course a lot of the people now at my age that I knew and were good friends of mine have passed on.

H: Well, now you say you came down here. When did you come down here, Paul?

B: July 1942.

H: How about telling me--what was your first thought, when you first walked in and saw CAP Coastal Patrol 16. What did you see?

B: Well, there wasn't much base to it at that time. It was the south end of the island. It was a little strip down there, and I remember well, when we come in and we operated off of a private home out there. That was our operations office out there. And we come in, had to come in off of the end of a bunch of wires, fly in off of a bunch of wires and land on this little strip down there. Mosquitoes--

H: Did that strip have a name?

B: Skycoe.

H: Skycoe?

B: Skycoe. Dave Dricoll and some other people had flew down here, and that was the little strip that they had used to fly from down here.

H: How do you spell that?

B: S--S--I don't know. S-Y-C-O?

H: Okay, Syco.

B: Skycoe. Skycoe.

H: That was a grass strip.

B: Yes, and the mosquitoes were so bad out there, believe it or not, I've seen them in daylight, they'd just light on people, just cover them up like mats, and when you'd go out on dawn patrol in the morning, you'd have to take a map or some of your papers to keep them out of your eyes, there was so many of them down there. And I've always been right much mechanically minded, and I helped service the airplanes some out there. We'd buy this mosquito stuff by the barrel, fifty-five gallon barrels, and while one of the men was working on the airplanes, another one would be back with a hand spray, spraying him to keep the mosquitoes from eating him up. That don't sound reasonable, but that's a fact. And that grass was up pretty high, you know, and when you're stirring that grass with the mosquitoes, that just made them swarm that much worse.

H : Okay, now did you bring an airplane down here with you or did you--what did you fly?

B: I flew a Stinson 105 down here. It wasn't my plane. However, I had a Fairchild 24, bought a Fairchild 24 and brought it down here two or three months later after I come down here, but I flew a Stinson 105 down here. We'd fly in pairs--of course you know all about that, I guess--

H: No.

B: You don't know how the base operated or anything?

H: No. That's what I want to know. I want to hear your version of how everything worked.

B: Well, to start with, the base opened up, we had a Navy man that was commanding officer of the base, Jim Hamilton--

H: Well, that's after you moved up to the other end, but down--

B: No. That was at Skycoe, when it first opened up. He's the man that left the base.

H: His name was what?

B: Jim Hamilton. He was a very good friend of mine. I knew him before that, but he was pretty strict, he was pretty strict, and he'd line us up just like they do in the regular Army and all that stuff. He'd give us shoulder arms inspections, or they started out like that, and the only thing, he argued with them in Washington, I understand, but he didn't like the red shoulder loops we had to wear. Back in those days, you know, the difference betwixt the regular Army and the CAP, we wore the red shoulder straps on our shoulders, and he didn't like that, and he kept arguing with them in Washington, and they tell me that that's one of the reasons that he lost his job. But Allen Watkins from Greensboro was the operations officer at that time, so he took the base over and managed the base after Mr. Hamilton left here, Jim Hamilton. He was the commanding officer. At that time the Navy, they had the runways built up here, or I think they was building them or having them built. They was cutting the timber off of it, and there was an old CC camp betwixt here and the town of Manteo. We're on the north end of the island, where we're having this inverview now, and betwixt here and town there was an old CC camp down there with a sawmill on it, so they had the old trucks down there and all, and we took the trucks, and we took chain saws and went over and got this lumber, took it down to the sawmill, sawed this lumber and built our own operational office building up here on the Navy base, where we moved to.

H: How long did you stay down at Skycoe?

B: We was at Skycoe, I'd say, well, we come up here right about the first of December, I'd say. It hadn't been too long. We was down there two or three months, and then we got our operations offices built up here and come up here.

H: Down there, what did you all do? Did you fly your patrols?

B: Yes, sir. We started--

H: Tell me about your dawn patrol, as an example, down at Sky-coe.

B: Well, I'd say we started flying within a week or ten days after we come down here in '42. We flew in pairs. George Wash-burn, Lt. George Washburn and myself, we was partners in one airplane, and then there'd be, you know, he was my partner all the time most, we rode together. And then the other plane, and we'd fly together, and when we'd want to make a turn, or see something, now we started flying like this--we changed it later--if we'd see something on the water, 'cause the man from Washing-ton come down here and told us, he says: Boys, you're going out there, you're going to see schools of fish, you're going to see wake slicks and you might see a submarine. You're going to see all these things, so just don't get excited. He didn't tell us that we didn't have nothing to do nothing with, but he'd just as well. It wasn't much use to report it, because there wasn't nothing nobody could do about it, I don't think at that time. But anyhow, later, we got bombs on the airplanes. So, we'd go out there, and if somebody'd see the buoy or see something and we'd want to turn, why we'd signal and the other ship would follow. On the second patrol, I guess, I was ever on, I had a chronograph on, and I saw something on the water myself. So I punched my watch and made a signal to the other ship and made the turn and my observer, George Washburn, he said: What do you see, the buoy? I said: No, that ain't no buoy. And all I can tell you, it was something on the water, black, big, I mean just see something on the water. But we was six minutes from it, flying approximately 90 miles an hour, which would have made the object nine miles away. We wasn't excited. We didn't even report it, 'til we come in back to the base. But I noticed on the reports,

they've got it marked as the first submarine spotted.

H: Now how would you have reported it? Did you have a radio out there?

B: Oh, yes. We had a two-way radio.

H: How good were your radios?

B: Well, I'd say they was fair. They wasn't like what we have today. But, I had never used a radio. For some reason, I've always been a little afraid of a radio--to talk on the radio. I have a radio on my boat, where I can talk to the Coast Guard or what have you, but I'm always a little hesitant about it, and I think there was a lot of the boys, maybe, that had never used a radio, and that makes a whole lot of difference. I don't know whether other people are like that or not, but, you know, just talking into a microphone is just a little bit funny, when you're not used to it. But anyhow, that's about all I can say about that time.

H: Okay. Now, did you just take off from Skycoe and go out and hunt in an area, or were you following a convoy, or what were you doing?

B: Well, we'd usually pretty well draw out our map to buoys, where we was going, from this buoy to that buoy to the other buoy, you see. And I remember well one day our sister ship was with us. There was a buoy off of Oregon Inlet down here and then there was another buoy off shore, and we picked up this buoy off shore and I told the observer, I says he thinks that's that buoy at Oregon Inlet. I says he don't know where he's at now. We followed him for thirty minutes going to sea, and I signaled and then we turned, and we flew I think it was fourteen minutes before we hit a buoy that's fourteen miles off shore off of Nag's Head, up here. So, I don't know what, if we'd have just kept

going, I reckon, but that's how easily you can get lost out there on water. We was all sort of green pilots, back then, and it's just like the boy that came down here with me, he just died recently, about a year ago, and he was a bus driver, and he told me every little town and every little bend in the road from Charlotte all the way down here. I said: Listen, where you're going you ain't going to see these here marks like you're seeing now. You've got to learn to watch that compass, and fly that compass and your watch and you had. You'd better learn. I haven't got a instrument rating or anything like that, but I know that you've got to fly your watch and your compass, and when you start on it you'd better believe in it, if you don't you ain't coming back from out there, maybe.

H: Now you say you laid out your course. How far out in the ocean did you fly, Paul?

B: Well, we flew approximately 20 or 25 miles, I'd say. We flew out to the shipping lanes. Because, I wasn't in this flight, I don't know. Is it all right to tell something about one of the pilots?

H: Yes.

B: We had a man down here--I think he's passed away maybe now--George Hatch, he's a Canadian. He come down here from Canada, and he was a pilot, and he took his observer out in a well, and they flew down on a ship out there one day in the shipping lanes, and his observer told me, he said: Listen, them fellows down there on that ship, they was battling them guns. So you'd go out there flying over a ship, they don't know who you are, they're liable to shoot you down out there, you see. So there's a lot of things like that happened down here, not a whole lot, but some. I know the engineering officer very well, he used to tell me, he'd say you fellows that's got a family flying out there in the ocean, you're just crazy. We got something in our gasoline down

here. It was a brown looking substance and it stopped up the filter, you know we went to cleaning the filters every day before we took off. And I remember one day the plane that I was flying and that thing, it all but quit on me about eight miles off shore. Well, I signaled my other ship and I started pumping the pump over on the side and it coughed a few times and caught up and I went on flying my patrols, and after a little bit that thing done the same thing again, so I decided we better come in. And we got in, I was afraid I wasn't going to get across the sound, but we got in and I come in to the airport out here with a dead stick. And I never will forget, Captain Watkins had come up here, he'd took over the base then, and he called me in his office, and he said: Listen, Paul, don't go out there talking about that motor quitting on you the way it did, he says there's some of these boys down here that's about ready to leave down here now. I said well it doesn't bother me. He said, I know, you don't be talking about that because--it was a little bit scary, when you think about it when you sit down and talk about it. Because we did, we lost these Cook and Cooper and it was in December just before Christmas.

H: Okay, were you flying off of Skycoe then?

B: No, we was flying off of up here then. Of course, I pretty well know what happened to the man, Mr. Cooper. I was lucky. I had read an Air Facts magazine, not too long about that, about carburetor icing. There's a lot of people back in those days didn't know about carburetor icing, and they thought if you pulled your carburetor heat on that you was keeping it from icing. But if you pulled it on just enough to create freezing conditions in the throat of that carburetor, that's when your ice started sticking, you see. And he'd keep messing with the heat. I told him one day, I said: Mr. Cooper, pull that thing all the way on like the outside or push it off. Don't leave it pulled in part way, and he's the man that was flying the ship and Cook was the observer when they went down just before Christmas, when we

lost these two fellows, and that was one of the coldest, rainiest, windiest nights--windy like it is now, but in December it was cold, you know, and they never did, I don't believe, it's in the records I think, but I think they found Cooper's life jacket back up in one of these creeks. I don't think they ever did find Cook's, or find anything of his.

H: Did you all put up a pretty good search or something when they got lost? When did they go down, do you recall?

B: Yes, sir. Well, I don't believe I ought to tell you just exactly what happened.

H: Tell me. We'll edit it out of the tape, if you don't like it.

B: It's a pretty bad lick on the commanding officer.

H: Well, I'm not going to tell him.

B: He had an old two wing airplane, I forget what it was, and he went out there by himself, after they reported he was down. He didn't call the Navy on the other side of the field. These boys out there in the water, Ron Destory, he was one of the boys that was the observer over them, and he seen them in the water, knew they was there, seen them, stayed with them until it got nearly dark.

H: Story was flying in the second airplane?

B: Yes, sir. And they stayed with them until he run out of gas and had to land on the beach. The Coast Guard, their boat down there was inland or something and they couldn't get the Coast Guard out there, it was pretty rough. I was on the dawn patrol the next morning when we searched for them. We give a good search for them the next morning. We covered everything we had

to fly by. We went in pairs and we covered it. But Watkins, he went out there over them in his ship before he come back and sent anybody else out there, flew around over them and seen them out there. You know that wasn't helping them any.

H: How far off shore were they?

B: They was off shore--well, I don't know, really, I'd say they was off shore four or five miles, somewheres in that neighborhood off of the beach. That ain't far out there. I've had a lot of new men would come down here and I don't know, for some reason they'd send them out there with me a good bit of the time for their first flight, and we'd go off shore on patrol and come back in and I'd say: How far do you think it is to the beach? And they'd say: Oh, it's about five miles. I'd just drop the subject and forget about it. About ten minutes later I'd say: How far did you say it was to the beach? And that just give them an idea what you was looking at. You get up a couple of thousand feet and a sand beach up there, it makes a pretty good mark. You can see it a long ways on a pretty day, you know.

H: Okay, you say Watkins went out there and he circled over them. What was that, getting toward dark, or something?

B: Yes. Dark was coming on and he was out there flying. I think he dropped a couple of flares or something out of his personal airplane. It wasn't a plane--I don't think--maybe it was assigned to the base.

H: But you couldn't get any help from the Coast Guard to get out there and get them or anything?

B: No, the Coast Guard was--what they said that their main boat, the ship they go out and rescue them with out in the ocean, and they said them fellows down there at the Coast Guard, they throwed one of their boats, they said they'd throw it out on that

beach, and it would throw it right back at them, that's how rough it was at that time. But their main big boat wasn't down there at that time, that's what I've understood. Now that could not be authentic. I'm not sure about that, but I know we lost two men and it was just a sad story. One of the girls that works in the office when we was down here at the reunion, she was talking about that and she feels just like I do about it, she worked right in there and knows what happened. Al Alston knows all about what happened, because he was in operations. But some of them might not tell you that.

H: Well, you know, that's a decision that the man made. It may have been a good one or it may have been a bad one. It's Monday morning.

B: Well, just like I say, I'm a good friend of his, and we made up some. He knew I was talking about him before I left the base. I was really down on the man for a while, but you have to forgive and forget and allow a lot, because we are all human beings and we all make a lot of mistakes in life, you know.

H: Tell me a little bit more about your normal flying. I gather you didn't pick up and convoy ships, then. Did you fly around the convoys, or what?

B: Yes. That's what happened later. In the beginning we just went out there looking for whatever we could find.

H: That first submarine you think you spotted, what was that in November? September?

B: No, that was in July or the first of August. It was the second patrol I was ever on.

H: Real early then.

B: Yes, because that's when they was really down here. See, later in the game they left, we didn't see any submarines. We didn't see any oil slicks. Now see, I'd done left the base at this time, but just before the base quit patroling out here, they saw a submarine out there, and saw it go down--sat there and watched it. They thought it was a fishing boat to start with. Then they saw the submarine go down off shore. They come back, and the boy that was the observer in there told me, he said: I was sitting there looking right at it and I thought it was a fishing boat until it started going under the water. It was surfaced. But I didn't see that.

H: Tell me about one of those convoy patrols. What did you do? You picked it up at a point?

B: They started the convoy patrols after I left the base.

H: Okay. When did you leave the base, by the way, Paul?

B: In January.

H: Well, you flew an awful lot then, those first six months, because, you know, you got the Air Medal.

B: Yes, I flew a good many hours. What happened, one of the reasons I left the base, I went in and asked Capt. Watkins, I believe he was a captain at that time, he got to be a major, I think, but anyhow, I told him that I was in business, automobile parts business back home, and I needed to go home to get my tax off the first of the year. There was a lot of these boys down here--I had my wife and my family was down here with me, and I says now I'll fly during the holidays and all, but the first of the year I need a week off to go home and get my taxes and all in my business straightened out. So I went, waited one Saturday. There was a fellow, Carl Mercer, was going to Rocky Mount, and flew with him to Rocky Mount and then rode the bus on in. But he

give me my pass to go home, and I never looked at the pass, and he give it to me for three days, and I thought it was a week. But I got to Rocky Mount and went in Carl Mercer's hotel room and happened to look at that pass and it was just for three days. Well, I went right on home to Shelby, and I called Colonel Frank Dawson, and I said what can he do with me if I don't go back. I asked him for a week. I've got to get my tax off. He said he can't do nothing. I come back. Captain Watkins went up in the same airplane that I was talking about and he'd put on a show. He liked to put on a show for these fellows. But he said this before he went up, he said, Paul, I want to see you when I come back. I says all right, sir. So when he come back down, I went in his office, and I said now you want me to talk to you as officer to officer or man to man. He said man to man. I said I got a boy down here that's twelve years old, and if he can't run this base better than you do I'd beat his fanny. That's what I told him. And that's one of the reasons, I says I want my release from this base. Can I get it? He says you can but he still made me stay right here until the twenty-seventh of January, and that was right after Christmas.

H: Well, you flew during that period of time, though?

B: I'm not sure whether I did or not. I think I did, but I'm not sure. A little bit more of that story. Maybe I oughtn't to tell you all this, but its facts.

H: Facts is what we are after.

B: As I was going home, and I went out there in full dress uniform to the base, which we didn't go out there in full dress uniform when we was flying, but I was going back to Shelby. He made me stay there on that base and wouldn't let me and Mercer take off in the airplane to go to Rocky Mount until four o'clock, and I was out there from lunch time on, when I could have went from lunch time on. I mean it didn't make that much difference,

I wasn't going to do anything out there, but he was just the type man that-- Well, to show you the type commander he was, the Navy was on the other side of the field over there and they'd got baseball teams, both Civil Air Patrol and the Navy over there, and they was going to have a ball game. You know what he done? He called the Navy and said is officers going to play officers or who is going to play. And they said we don't care who it is, whether it's enlisted men or officers or what, all we want is a ball game. But he wanted to be, I guess you'd say, a little too strict for the book.

H: Did he have some kind of military background or anything?

B: I don't think so, I don't know. I don't believe-- He married one of the Adams girls up there in Greensboro, and they's pretty well-to-do people, I think. Course Allen, he's, just like I say, I've made friends with him, and I wasn't mad at him then, in a way. But you can understand how, if you got that kind of treatment, sort of how you'd feel.

H: Tell me--(Tape Change).

B: Let's see, where were we?

H: You were talking about how many times a day you flew.

B: Oh, yes. Sometimes we'd make two patrols a day. I believe most of the time now, just like the time when some of the boys went home for the holidays at Christmas, that didn't have their family down here, we'd fly, I have flew, I think as much as six hours a day out there. We'd have about three hour patrols, and I have flew as much as six hours a day out there.

H: What did you flY mostly down here?

B: Mostly it was Stinson 105's. They had two twenty gallon

tanks, one on each wing. They was pretty slow, but whatever else flew down here, we had a Waco and a big Stinson, a gull- wing, and, I don't know, one or two Fairchilds, but we all had to stay with the Stinsons, you know, you had to sort of stay together when they flew out there. The biggest part of the thing is we flew is Stinsons, 105's.

H: When they armed the airplanes, were you here when they put the bombs on?

B: I believe I was here, but I never flew one with a bomb on it. They done that just about the first of '43, about the time time I left down here.

H: Well you flew sometimes six hours a day.

B: Some days, not-- Usually one patrol a day was as much as we'd have. As well as I remember it was about a three hour patrol.

H: Was that seven days a week, five days a week?

B: Well, no I guess five days a week--six days a week, I guess. Well, I believe we did fly maybe on Sunday, too, but now I'm not sure about that. I know one time, I remember well the day, and I think I've got some pictures of it, maybe in an old newspaper clipping or something. When we come from Skycoe, when we was flying down there, when we was sawing this lumber and moving over here, and we come over here working on the base, building the base and all, and of course we'd just more or less, maybe we wasn't active, but we was marching, just like we was marching with guns, but with shovels and working tools and stuff, but anyhow we come over here and built our own base out of the lumber we'd sawed, you see, and that was on a Sunday, I remember that well, because there was a Dr. Hutton from Hickory was down here. He said he didn't work for hisself on Sunday, and he wouldn't come, but yet he went home and polished his--or stayed down there

on the field and polished his airplane, that day. He worked just the same, but he didn't want to do that, you know. There's some people like that. I hadn't thought about him in years. I don't know whether he's living or not.

H: Was he a flight surgeon on the base?

B: No, no. He was just a doctor and he'd volunteered to come down here and was flying.

H: How many other pilots did they have down here, do you recall?

B: No, I don't.

H: A bunch? Twenty? Forty?

B: I'd say thirty, anyhow. I'd say there was thirty, at least.

H: How many airplanes? About that number, or less?

B: No, there was less airplanes than that. I don't believe they had over twenty airplanes down here. I'm guessing, now, I could be off, but I'm guessing.

H: Now you say you brought your own Waco down here later on.

B: Yes.

H: Did you fly it very much?

B: Some. I flew it some. It sat on the line for the commanding officer to use it when he wanted, and me flying one of the Stinsons part of the time, which didn't look right to me, but that's the way it worked, you know. When a man's the commanding officer, you have to do what he says to do.

H: You say your radios were pretty fair. Do you remember what kind they were, Lear?

B: No, I really don't. Just radios.

H: Now you say one time you think you spotted a submarine, on your second patrol. Did you spot any other things out there when you were flying, Paul? Survivors?

B: Oh yes. There was one morning, I was on the early dawn patrol, and I expect that could have been another time when the base maybe made a mistake. We was on the dawn patrol going south toward Hatteras, and not too far from Oregon Inlet, which Oregon Inlet is only twelve or fifteen miles down here, when we got down to the beach, we seen--we didn't know what it was, it was tires, it was balls of stuff just strewn all along the beach. We made the patrol and we reported what we seen, probably reported it while we seen it, five gallon cans of gas, just throwed all up and down the beach. And we come back in and reported it, and as well as I remember it, I'm not sure whether the base reported it to the Coast Guard, or I don't know what was reported. We reported back to the base. But we found out the next day it was a Swedish ship that run aground out there in the sand, and the ship had broke up, and all this stuff had come off the ship, and I believe there was eleven men lost their lives out there in that.

H: But it had run aground. It hadn't gotten torpedoed or anything.

B: No, no. It hadn't got torpedoed or anything. It had just run aground.

H: Did you see any torpedoings out there or anything of that nature, ships on fire?

B: No, sir.

H: Did you hear any stories about any?

B: Well, I don't recall any stories of seeing any ships on fire. Not too long after we was down here we seen a ship-- we've seen ships off shore there, and then they quit going. You know they used to run pretty regular until the war came along and them submarines got out there, and then they quit running it. I can't recall any. I didn't see one anyway, in trouble.

H: How about any of your friends, did any of them get involved in any sinkings, bombings--Do you know of any bombs that were dropped from Manteo?

B: No, I don't, really. I mean, I could in fact have heared of it or something but I really don't know.

H: Okay. You mentioned down at Skycoe you all didn't have it made too well, and that you operated out of somebody's private house, you know, as far as your operations were concerned. Where did everybody live when you all were down there?

B: Well, they had an officers' club, down at Skycoe. Now where the operations office is down there, you go in and go on down to the water. There's a big old building down there that they used during the Civil War. There's some remains of it yet, and there's an old ice plant down there, or where they stored ice. I don't know whether they made ice or not, and that's the building. When Jim Hamilton was commander of the base down there, and we was talking about C. Y. Nanny, he was the flunky down there. He run around and done everything that was to do about, and they stayed down at Skycoe. Other than that the most of them, just like where a man had his family or something, we rented a place over here on the sound. Well, we rented a place a couple of months up on the beach, and then we come back here on the island. They had an old hotel over there, I forget the name of it, but some of those fellows went in together and just rented the whole

thing, I think. It was maybe closed or something. I believe it's tore down now, but there was a bunch of them stayed in that.

H: Just any place they could.

B: Just any place they could.

H: How did they eat? Did you all eat in a central place or catch as catch can?

B: Catch as catch can. Yes, I'll tell you a good story on that to show you about what the town was like when we come down here. George Washburn and myself went in a cafe one morning, we was running a little bit late to get to the base. We were supposed to be on the base at seven o'clock down at Skycoe. We went in to the counter and we put in the order, we were just going to eat some ham and eggs, right quick, see, and didn't sit down at a table, went up on a stool. We waited and waited and we mentioned to the waitress, and she said you know we've been all over town and we can't find a egg in Manteo. In other the words people had come down here and there was so many more people down here they just wasn't
prepared for us. So that's about what happened, you see.

H: More CAPers than natives.

B: That's right.

H: Well, what was Manteo like then? Just a vacation territory?

B: No, sir. Well, some. It was a fishing town, pretty well. There's a lot of fish caught down here in the sound. Nag's Head, over on the beach, now that's a vacation town, but there was an old wooden bridge betwixt here and the beach. You crossed that thing in the morning and them planks would yackety, yackety, yackety, you know, and I've seen, I don't know, there's two or

three of these two wheeled carts down here with oxen, and they stayed down here until maybe ten years ago until they finally disappeared. But there was several teams of them around here at that time. But these natives down here, they're clannish type people, but one time they know you, begin to like you, you've got a friend for life. We've got some of the best friends down here we've got
anywhere in the world.

H: In other words, what you are saying is, when you all came down here it was pretty much just an isolated little community.

B: That's exactly right. It was.

H: Did they have electricity down here at the time or not?

B: Yes, sir. The ferrying is on the electric company, and you had power part of the time, and part of the time you didn't. When they'd come a storm or the wind blew and you might be out for two or three days, and finally Vepco took over and come in here and we've got fairly good service since
then, that time.

H: But back during the war, it was just when you had it you had it.

B: You had it and you didn't have it part time.

H: What about the base, did you have your own generators there?

B: I don't think so. And of course, maybe you want that on tape, but they run with their lights off, too.

H: Yes.

B: In other words, when you hit the island, when you crossed the bridge up yonder, you put it on your park, lights, and you drove around here, if you done any driving at night, you drove with your parking lights on.

H: That was for security reasons.

B: For security reasons, because they said that a submarine could see a silhouette if you had a light, betwixt you and the light, they could see what was going on.

H: Now, you all moved up from Skycoe, and I take it it was a little bit better facility up at the Naval Air Station.

B: Yes, yes, we had a lot better facility.

H: Well, tell me a little bit about how it was arranged.

B: Well, from my understanding, I don't know, but my understanding, the commanding officer didn't want to move up there. He wanted to stay at Skycoe, where we was operating. But Washington come in with orders and give him so many days to be there by a certain time, and we had to move, whether he wanted to move or not, and we moved over a weekend, as well as I remember.

H: And that was the early part of December of '42.

B: That's right.

H: What did you see when you came up to the Manteo Naval Air Station? Buildings, did you have buildings?

B: We had the buildings that we had built, that we'd sawed the lumber and built.

H: You built them up here or did you carry them up from Skycoe?

B: Part of them we carried them up--no we built 'em all up here, I guess. I guess we built 'em all up here.

H: Okay. And how many buildings did you have?

B: I believe about three small buildings.

H: Did you have a hangar and an administrative--

B: Well, the only hangar I think we had was just something to work on the airplanes. We didn't have any hangar to store the airplanes that we flew, they was just tied down out in the open. In other words you might call it a shop. It wasn't really a hangar, just a shop. You had to get 'em in out of the weather, you know, to work on 'em sometimes.

H: What runways did you use? Did you use the runways that the Navy used, too?

B: Yes.

H: What were they flying in here at the time?

B: Well, they had them, I believe they called 'em Wildcats, at one time.

H: FM-2s.

B: Yes. And I remember well this fellow Stradley we was talking about a while ago there, and you see there was four men come here out of the Army, ordnance men to handle that ammunition and the stuff, and we'd been up to the airport where we was at this morning, and went across there to the ammunition dump. And that Wildcat come in short, and he poured the coal on her, and right out here, right the other side of where the store is out there now, them pines was up big as your legs or bigger, and he just

cut the tops out of all of them, just flew right into them woods, you know, just mushed in. He couldn't get on out again. And of course, we was the first ones there. Me and Stradley and somebody and this ordnance man, we was the first ones that got there. We run out through the woods, out there to where he cut all these trees down, airplane tore all up there, and he was standing out there in front of it and he says: Hey, have you got a cigarette? Trying to bum a cigarette. There wasn't a scratch on the man. It throwed him out of the plane and there wasn't a scratch on him. And he was flying one of them Wildcats.

H: How did that make for a mix between your Stinsons and your Wildcats, when you were coming in for landings?

B: Well, I don't ever remember any problems.

H: Did you land by lights or did you land by radio?

B: We landed by radio. --Well, we just landed by visual, mostly. Well, we just flew in daylight.

H: Yes, but I mean did you get a green light from the tower to land, or did you just come on in?

B: Yes, I believe the Navy had the green light and they'd give that as well. I told you I couldn't remember, and I'm not too positive on that, because there wasn't too many towers back then like there is now, you know.

H: Well, you didn't have any real problems flying in tight with the Navy then.

B: No, no.

H: You didn't get in each others way, in other words.

B: We had the bunch down here that, what do you call them, was it a Wildcat or something that made that record over in the other country, that was so wild--one of the boys was from my home town there, that was in that, and he told me that they was that wild down here, he said they was flying down here one morning and one of 'em said to the other, says, wonder what's on down at the show. They had a little theatre right down in Manteo there. He said: I don't know. Let's go down and see. They come right down Main Street with their Wildcat to see what was on at the show down there. Oh, they was rough!

H: Had to read the marquee?

B: Yes, sir.

H: Well, when you got your base set up up here at the main base, how well was it equipped, do you think you had all the tools? Did the Army bring you the tools, or did everybody bring their own with them, you know, your mechanics as an example?

B: The mechanics brought their own tools, mostly I think, yes, sir. can tell you another pretty good story on Colonel Frank Dawson. He wrote in, he went over the heads for something that they needed pretty bad at the base, and he was on the telephone, and they told him what all, let's see, I don't remember just how that went, but I believe Johnson was the commanding officer up there at that time, Earle Johnson, and he heard the man talking to him on the telephone, and maybe that's when he'd mailed out them letters, I told you about that, didn't I? But anyhow he was mailing out letters, government letters, where you shouldn't supposed to be, and they said you can't do that, and he says I done done that. But when he wanted this equipment, something that he went over their heads, Johnson spoke up and says: Give that man what they want, that's the kind of man we need down there, need in this war. And that's about right, you know. In

other words what he was doing was cutting a bunch of red tape and got what he wanted. But I don't remember offhand what it was.

H: That's one of the reasons CAP was effective during the war. They knew how to cut red tape.

B: Yes. Did you know Colonel Dawson?

H: No, I sure didn't. I've of course read about him and heard of him.

B: Well, he was one of the finest men I've ever known. I love to say that about anybody, in other words I love my enemies today, but somebody that's really been a good friend to you, you like to say things about him that's true, you know.

H: Well, at the risk of summarizing, how do you feel your operation was down here? Do you feel like it was pretty effective?

B: Yes, sir. I do.

H: From what viewpoint?

B: I'd say, if nothing else, morale. If you'll just think a little bit. This bridge up here, Wright Memorial Bridge, all the other side had to do was come over here and drop a bomb, cut communications, they all come across the bridge, cut communications, and put on the newspapers we are on American soil, and they'd have been on American soil, they's no way in the world you could have got to them, here on this island. They could have took this thing over any time they wanted, and that'd have been right smart for this country. The morale of it. I think we stopped that. They's plenty of these old timers, most of them are dead down here now, would tell you, if the CAP hadn't of come down here, they'd have been over here. And I don't know if they would, but they could. Now when we went on the beach, we stayed

over there on the beach, lived with my family for about, I guess two months after we first got down here. And, oh, it was cold and windy them nights, they was awful. The Coast Guard had five men, two stationed at each place and a man that walked--- no there'd be one man at each station and two go in pairs and they'd leave this man and go till they meet, then they'd go back to the man standing there, and they'd patrol that way every night all along, looking for, if a submarine come ashore. You know that was about the time some of these submarines landed down in Florida and they'd captured some of them or something. And this was an ideal spot for them to land when they wanted to, because even these banks out here ain't nothing but sand bars, and they can take a submarine and go out there and let her right down on that sand and set there until they get ready to move, you know. But it is an ideal spot for them to come in, and I certainly think it was effective.

H: Well, did the shipping losses stop after you all started flying, or--you say you didn't see a lot of sinkings.

B: I think there was a lot of shipping stopped, because they'd sunk so many of them up there, but then it wasn't too long until they was running again, and I think it did--I think the shipping losses--I'm proud to be a part of it, really. I'm just a country boy with no education, and I didn't give any other part of my life to service, and I'm proud that I did give that much part of it to my country.

H: Well, you all certainly accomplished a lot, you know, I won't get into the statistics, I'll probably cover them tonight for you a little bit. So you feel like your base, then, was pretty well organized, pretty well operated, and that you were overall pretty effective, and you flew most of the missions. You flew every day, good weather, bad weather,
it didn't make any difference, huh?

B: That's right, pretty well. Of course we didn't fly instruments, but we flew in weather that we shouldn't have flew in, really. But most of the time we flew. Yes, I'd say it was as well run, and turned out as well as they could under the circumstances and is as humanly possible, because, you know, even with the very best, we make mistakes, and I think it was carried out about as good as it could have been.

H: Well, you took a band of disorganized civilians and turned it into a pretty good military organization.

B: That's right. It puts me in mind a whole lot of the Battle of King's Mountain, with them sharpshooters coming up there on top of the mountain, you know, you could sort of compare it with that, I'd say.

H: Okay. A couple of miscellaneous specific things, and these are mostly to gather some information I need. Nobody wrote a base history of Base 16.

B: That's the sad part. Base 21, that's the book that he showed you, Colonel Dawson give me autographed, they had pictures of everybody on the base. They's nobody on this base that done that, which, I'd have been mighty proud to have had one of them.

H: Well, I hope to make up for that shortage some day. It may be only a chapter, but it'll be more than they have now. Base insignia--you don't recall, you said earlier, that they had anything special like a bumblebee on the airplane or a ghost or a witch or a goblin or anything painted on the airplane that would signify it came from Base 16.

B: I don't. They could have been after I left the base, you see, and they could have been when I was down here, but I don't remember it.

H: Now you left the base, you said, what, in January, the tail end of January of '43, and what was your involvement in CAP after that, you pretty much dropped out, or what?

B: Yes. I pretty well dropped out. Now my friend, George Washburn, he was my observer then, a little older gentleman than I am, he was active in the CAP back in our home base, he was a colonel. He worked with Frank Dawson very well. In fact he was a better friend of Frank Dawson than I was. I met Frank Dawson through George Washburn, and he worked with the CAP--

H: George Washburn passed away not too long ago.

B: Yes. I don't know. It's been several years now, four or five years or something. He was a very good friend of mine.

H: Okay. Your involvement then in CAP since your service at the base has been none. You just haven't had any.

B: That's right.

H: Okay. You think of anything else of a general nature that occurred during that period that you--

B: Well, really I don't. They's a lot of things occurred in that period. I tell you, I don't think I've got it down here, there's a book a friend of mine, Stanley Green, I'd like for you to write him and get one of his books. He published a book on--he'd teach school down here at Avon, and being a teacher about the time that all this was going on, maybe this was before that, but this was in the same war that we was a-fightin' and they took him and he went to Norfolk and he was a-teaching what they needed to do in the Coast Guard there, and didn't know a thing about Army service, they just picked him up as a school teacher and he went in the service for that. You'd be interested in that.

H: What kind of books did he write?

B: Well, MY ADVENTURES AT KITTY KEY OR AVON, that's a little town on the outer banks below here, below Oregon Inlet.

H: That didn't relate to CAP though, did it?

B: No, that was just a little bit earlier than CAP, really, just before CAP come down here, I believe. But it was all on the outer banks of North Carolina and the protection and safety of North Carolina, what the Coast Guard done and all, you know.

H: Probably more about lifesaving and things like that than antisubmarine patrol.

B: It'd tie in pretty good with it, I believe.

H: Yes, some of that advance information sometimes is real timely, Paul.

B: Well, I didn't know him, you see, because he was ahead of my day, but some of his college friends played a joke on him. They wrote to the Dare County Board of Education. He's a little fellow, skinny little fellow, and they was having trouble down there in their school. This big rough outer bank people and they couldn't control their children, some of them grown maybe, and they was having trouble in the school and they was advertising for a big husky man to control the school. And he was just a skinny little man, and they sent his application in for him, and they accepted him, and he didn't know when he come down here what he come into. Now you can picture the man in that kind of position, but he made good out of it.

H: It's not always your size that does it for you.

B: No, sir. It's your attitude and how you handle things. You can handle--well if you handle him right, you can handle the meanest man in the world just as easy as with kid gloves, if you handle him right.

H: Sometimes it's easy to handle the big ones. The big ones are sometimes easier than the little ones.

B: That's right.

H: The fact of the matter, my observation, sometimes the little ones are too hard to handle. Okay, let's just close out the tape and say that I appreciate the opportunity to interview you. Let me give you my summary of what you did, Paul, if I may. I'm one of the ones that greatly admire the real American spirit of people like you who gave up an obviously prospering business and moved your family, lock, stock and barrel, down here to protect your country at a time when it was in real bad need of it, and I for one certainly appreciate the opportunity to get your thoughts on what you did down here. That's generally the purpose of what we are trying to do.