

Civil Air Patrol Oral History Interview

WNHC 30.86-1

MR. WILLIAM M. GANTT



NATIONAL HISTORICAL COMMITTEE
Headquarters CAP

CIVIL AIR PATROL
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interview

of

Mr. William M. Gantt

by

Col. Lester E. Hopper, CAP

Date: 22 January 1986

Location: Sea Island, Georgia

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS:

That I, William M. Gantt, have this day participated in an oral-magnetic-taped interview with Col. L. E. Hopper, covering my best recollections of evnnts 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 Historical 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 M. Gantt DONOR

Dated 1/22/86

Accepted on behalf of the Civil Air Patrol by D. L. Hopper
COL CAP

Dated 1/22/86

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 principal 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 the transcript of an oral history interview recorded on magnetic tape. Since only minor emendations have been made, the reader should consistently bear in mind that he is reading a transcript of the spoken rather than the written word. Additionally, no attempt to confirm the historical accuracy of the statements 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 CAP historians are enclosed in brackets. If feasible, first names, ranks, 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 M. Gantt recounts his experiences while serving as an observer with the Civil Air Patrol Coastal Patrol Base 16 at Manteo, North Carolina. Starting with his early flight training in CAP, he goes on to describe the day to day operations of the base. His evaluations of living conditions, activities, and the command structure, augmented by his own feelings, provide valuable insight into the lives and missions of World War II active-duty Civil Air Patrol personnel.

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Date of Interview: 22 January 1986
Location: Sea Island, Georgia
Conducted by: Col. Lester E. Hopper, CAP

H: Bill, just to get things started and in proper perspective, how about giving us a little introduction into how you got into aviation in general?

G: I guess at age six, I ran outdoors when an airplane flew over. I wanted to fly all my life. I found out about Civil Air Patrol when the war started. I went up from my home in Albemarle, North Carolina, to Concord and joined Civil Air Patrol and learned to fly, at \$50 for the first eight hours. That was in 1942, spring or summer of '42. I wanted to go to-- well, I had a little more background than that. I went and joined the Army Air Corps, I don't know when, probably in the fall of '42 or the summer of '43. They told me they would call me, but they wouldn't swear me in. So I went back to the draft board and said I have joined the Army Air Corps. They said, show us you were sworn in. I wasn't sworn in. They said that makes no difference with us. You're not going to the Army Air Corps, you're going to the Army, unless you can do something. Then I found out that if I went with the Civil Air Patrol, they'd leave me alone until I got called. I went to apply to go to CAP at Manteo, Base 16. They had no

openings for anybody to fly, but they would take me down there as a guard. I went down there originally in December of '43--

H: It would be '42.

G: December of '42, yes, and stayed on with them as a guard until somebody quit and went home, for one reason or another. I got to start flying along about April.

H: That would be April '43.

G: O.K. I flew right seat. I was not a pilot, I was called a Flight Officer. I stayed there until she closed. They still hadn't called me when she closed. I went home and went to the draft board and said I'm back, and they said, well, we'll get you. But within a week I got my notice in September--October 9th I was sworn in to Army Air Corps and away I went, so I did miss the infantry and I got to fly.

H: You got to fly! Let's regress a little bit and talk a little about Base 16 at Manteo. How big a place was that?

G: The base? We were on, I'm going to guess the south side of the Navy base there at Manteo. We had, probably in the flying troops, twenty to twenty-five of us, and we probably had a dozen airplanes, including--the basic airplane was the Stinson S-10A, but we also had a Curtiss Robin, Martin

Bernstein from Greensboro had a Curtiss Robin. I made several flights with him on patrol, and scared to death of that thing. We had a Rearwin Cloudster. I got in it a couple of times. We had a cabin Waco, and then Allen Watkins had his Fleet or Fleetwing, whatever that was called.

H: Fleet Travelaire, I think.

G: It might have been the Fleet Travelaire, but that was his airplane. That didn't fly on patrol.

H: Nobody flew that except him.

G: Right.

H: He still owns it, by the way.

G: Oh, great. We had a maintenance section. I remember the maintenance chief was Blackie.

H: Remember Blackie's last name?

G: No, I sure don't. Names are hard to remember. I remember the base commander was Watkins. He was a captain when I got there, and got promoted to major shortly thereafter. Then we had a guy named Beeson, Raymond Beeson was his adjutant. I've got a lot of these names somewhere.

H: Well, if you could round them up, that would be fine. How about your food and lodging and things of that nature?

G: No food on the base, out where we were. We were in tar paper shacks, that the wind could blow through, and you brought your food with you. You'd go to the drug store and bring food out there in paper sacks for your meals. I know what I learned in the winter time is that--you know what a fifty-gallon drum stove is, you put wood in. You can take a pimiento cheese sandwich and wax paper. If you lay that wax paper on top of that red hot stove with a cheese sandwich on it, it'll toast and it won't burn, but the minute you pick that sandwich up the paper catches on fire. So you've got to move paper and sandwich off at the same time, turn it over, put it back on and it'll toast that sandwich.

H: Toast the other side. (Laughter). You might need that some day. Where did you live during that period of time?

G: I lived in Manteo itself. Various people took in boarders, and I lived in the home of Mrs. Theodore Meekins, one of the oldest residents there. She had a three story house. I lived up on the top, top floor. It had two bedrooms in it, and out front was a Captain's Walk, where you could overlook the ocean. And you got back and forth the best way you could. There were some cars among the crowd and you would

hitch a ride back and forth.

H: Now who else lived there? Did some others live there?

G: Yes. There were three bedrooms of us - four bedrooms, with two to a bedroom, so we had eight in that house, that were all CAP.

H: Now, were you paid or anything during that period?

G: (Laughter). Spasmodically!

H: Spasmodically!

G: We were to get \$8 a day, and the pay checks came about--well, when they got ready to come, no regular pay. When the word got out the pay checks were here, everybody scrambled for them. The month's pay check could come any time during the next month, up to the last day, but there was not a regular pay day.

H: Let's go to the operations side. What was a normal day for you? What-- you got up in the morning, and, like you say, you hitch-hiked or got out to the base the best way you could.

G: We had a kitchen--we had a dining room, hooked on to that screened in porch, day-room type thing, where they had coffee

and drinks. And if you'd get out there in the morning--I'll never forget, that's the first time I ever saw anybody eating a can of figs for breakfast. Allen Watkins was eating a can of figs for breakfast, and I always wanted some. He offered me some, but I wouldn't take them. He was that kind of guy. He saw me looking at it. I ate figs for breakfast twenty years later and didn't like them. But you'd bring your breakfast, and you'd get out there before daylight if you had that dawn patrol, and you took off before daylight. And you would try to get to whoever you were escorting right at dawn. We used the old Mark VII Computer. You put the wind in. Well, we didn't know the wind, so we had a road on the beach that we knew the heading for that road. You'd go and fly that road and see what you had to hold on the compass to stay on that road, and then you'd put your stuff in backwards.

H: That was your correction.

G: Yes, and then you'd end up with your wind. And you had your wind down on your computer, and this was the job of the right seat guy.

H: That's the observer.

G: So you'd then have a wind to work with. You had to call in your position of course, every half hour, maybe hour, anyhow. You couldn't hear each other. There was no

conversation between the airplanes. We couldn't hear each other.

H: You're talking about--you always flew in groups of two.

G: Yes. We flew in groups of two. That explains a lot. I couldn't hear the other airplane, and so you'd each back your own wind in. There was no coordination between us as to what you found when you flew up that road. And many a time the radio operator would call back and tell us our reports were fifty miles apart, did we see each other. But we could bust those buoys, you know you hit buoys out there, so you'd go from buoy to buoy, and we'd hit them a lot of times, but I always thought we made a lot of mistakes. I never was a good clean navigator.

H: What was your total patrol time, not total over the water, but a given patrol lasted how long?

G: Well, we had an extra gas tank in the Stinsons, and I think we had a range of a little better than four hours, so normally we had, I think, a four hour patrol. That was normal, especially if you had to go all the way down to Cape Hatteras to pick them up. We patrolled from Cape Henry, Virginia, to Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, that was our area.

H: Basically, you were doing patrol work and just looking for

submarines?

G: Escort. Escort. Well, on the teletype that night, would come in, the freighter Santa Anna will be in your area at 0800 tomorrow morning, approximately twenty miles off Cape Henry. So that's where we were, and we'd find that freighter, and we'd circle it, and we'd circle it until we knew we had enough gas to go back home, and about that time the next bunch would come out, the next two airplanes would come out.

H: You were really doing escort.

G: Escort. You were more a deterrent than you were anything else, because if a submarine saw you, he didn't know what you could do to him. We knew we couldn't do nothing to him, but he didn't know that.

H: You knew you could drop a bomb in the same ocean.

G: In the same ocean--that's about it.

H: Did you make one flight a day, or two flights a day?

G: You know I don't remember the schedule. We were on so many days and off so many days. If you were off you had nowhere to go anyhow. You'd go out there and hang around. You'd make one a day, but I don't know what the days on were.

But I know they took all of us on the windiest day you could find and soloed all of us in those Stinsons, to make sure all of us guys, who had soloed, in the right seat--to make sure all of us guys could land that particular airplane. We had to have private pilot's licenses, to get the job, and they did that to us while I was down there as a guard. They had a school and they got a guy to come down and give us a test, and we all passed our private written, and then I went back home to Charlotte and got my private license there and came back. When the opening came I had to have a license. But I don't remember how many days we flew in a row.

H: Did you stay in the right seat the whole time you were there?

G: Yes. I never went over to the left seat the whole time I was there.

H: Who did you fly with more frequently than anybody else?

G: O. K. There was a guy named Hank Fenner, and you know, I ran into him after the war. I got on a bus and he was the bus driver.

H: Still driving!

G: Still driving. (Laughter). Hank Fenner, and Thompson, and

I don't know his first name, 'cause all Thompsons are called Tommy--Tommy Thompson, and Hank Fenner and Martin Bernstein, who was a young fellow, who owned a chain of jewelry stores called the Jewel Box, in Greensboro. I think that's the main ones, except Milton Arnett was another one. These are the guys, the main ones I think I flew with. I was pretty much of a nosey kid. I was young, and I know I made the mistake a lot of youth does. I asked too many questions, and I talked when I should have been listening. I realized this as I got older, but I got on good with these guys. I just imagine that I was sort of abrasive to some of them, because they asked for who they wanted, and the same guys usually asked for me.

H: While you were flying these patrols, did you get involved in any significant things--see any sinkings, chase any submarines?

G: No, the only thing I really saw, we came upon a good ocean full of wreckage, floating wreckage. Crates, boxes, pieces of ship. Nothing that we could pinpoint. We reported that.

H: Do you recall when and where?

G: No. I know it was in the northern half of the territory, so it was between Manteo and Cape Henry. I know that. That's all I can remember.

H: Now, to put things in perspective, timewise, I think earlier, before we started, you mentioned that you actually got to fly when a vacancy was created in December of '42?

G: No. I think it was along about April. I stayed there, waiting, as a guard, going in at night and sitting there all night.

H: You mentioned that there'd been a crash or something.

G: Yes, but we had that before I got there, somebody had gone in, in the wintertime, and drowned, two people in an airplane.

H: Do you recall the names?

G: I don't, and I don't have any place I could get their names.

H: That would have been in December?

G: November. Could have been November, could have been December. I was on guard duty one night. That's how I remember this teletype came in. "We have found two bodies off of the South Carolina coast, on a South Carolina beach, and no heads, but they're wearing life jackets with your numbers on them, and the numbers are so-and-so and so-and-so." [These would have been the bodies of Lieutenants Frank M. Cook and

Julian L. Cooper, who crashed at sea on December 21, 1942.] So I immediately got a hold of whoever my officer was on that night, and he got a hold of Watkins and they checked their logs, and sure enough it was the two guys that had gone in. Right after that happened everybody started carrying Bowie knives with them to cut your way out of the top of that airplane. These guys couldn't get out of the airplane. It sank too quick, for some reason. The attitude they hit or something, they couldn't get out of it. So everybody started carrying a Bowie knife. There was a big sale on Bowie knives. Somebody went to Norfolk and bought the store out. It's a fabric airplane, and they taught us where you could just cut that fabric and come right out of the top. Then we had another one go down, and I know that J. C.--I don't know whether it was J. C. Gwynn or J. C. Ford, but I know Gwynn, last name Gwynn, went in, in the summertime, and they got them out.

H: That would have been the summer of '43?

G: Yes, I'd say June. They got those boys out. It could have been earlier than that. It was warm weather. That could have been one of the vacancies, because he went on back home. He didn't stay.

H: That was Gwynn and Shields?

G: Shields. Shields is the one. I don't know if Gwynn went in or not. Shields went in. They were together. They came in together and they left together. [Subsequent research indicates that although 1/Lt G. H. Shields crashed at sea, the mentioned Gwynn did not.]

H: But that's kind of what discouraged them, after they went swimming they went home?

G: Yes. I don't know if he had other things to do or not. I never heard of him again.

H: Well, that's a matter of record. I just wanted your version.

G: Somebody landed on, at Buxton, down close to Diamond Shoals, Cape Hatteras. Somebody landed at Buxton, with a forced landing, and the Waco, and left the airplane on the beach, and the next day the wing was on the beach, the wheels had washed plum down under that thing. I remember that. Sometimes I'll remember things.

H: Well, that's good. So your routine was more of escort duty than it was actual searching. You recall anybody reporting submarine sightings or anything of that nature?

G: I recall nobody at the time I was there, I recall nobody

sighting a sub. It's so hard to spot stuff in the water. We really weren't looking, other than for the shape of a submarine under the water, that you could see. We weren't looking for a periscope.

H: How about survivors, or anything like that? Were you all involved in spotting any of them?

G: Never spotted any survivors, but one morning there was a dozen bodies washed up on the beach.

H: At Manteo?

G: Well the beach was over at Kitty Hawk. And there were several bodies washed up. I went over to look, and I looked from a distance. But some of the guys got some money off of them, coins as souvenirs. I don't know if they were Dutch or what, it was a foreign coin.

H: That was found on the beach, not by somebody flying over.

G: No. I don't know of any bodies that were found by while flying.

H: Talking about flying over the water and things like that, what kind of safety equipment did you all have?

G: We had an inflatable life raft, that was in a case, and you had a strap on it and you hooked that to your belt, so that if you crawled out of the airplane, it was going to come with you. You had a Mae West, and we had a red light that would float that you'd twist and the battery comes on, and we had a dye marker. They told us it was shark repellent, and we believed it, too. It wouldn't repel a shark. That's what it was, and I don't know, I made this statement to the CAP meeting I went to over in Brunswick, we were too young to know that it was dangerous.

H: That's a good point. Did you all do any special projects, like providing tracking for any boats, or anything like that? Tow targets?

G: No. I don't know that we had any requests for it.

H: Well, basically, in your flying training, you got quite a bit of help, then, from the CAP, is what you said.

G: Yes, I did. I wouldn't take anything for it, and I wish we had a more--I wish I had a camera. I wish I'd have made pictures, and I'm encouraging my boy today to make pictures of his life as he goes on. There was a lot CAP did for us. It taught me military courtesy, it taught me things that when I did go in the Army Air Corps, the only people that were ahead of me were the guys that had gone to the Citadel. Now they

really had it. I was somewhere well above the average clod-hopper and slightly below the Citadel guy, because I had some knowledge and the CAP gave it to me.

H: Just off the top of your head. Why did you join CAP?

G: Because I wanted to fly. If you remember back then, you had to register every flight at the local airport. You had to file a flight plan with the FBO, because every flight had to be documented. The war scare was on, and I felt like I could fly more if I had the CAP membership.

H: Earlier, I think you mentioned that during the time you were at Manteo, you flew about a hundred hours.

G: Yes. I looked that up. I flew a hundred hours and fifty-two minutes as signed off by Allen Watkins.

H: You still have your log book?

G: Yes.

H: I wouldn't mind a copy of some of the pages, primarily, or a list of the NC numbers you flew.

G: I'll do that. I'll send that to you.

H: Let me ask you something. We talked about survival equipment, and you briefly touched on radios. I take it from what you said radios were not real reliable at that time.

G: Well, it was like the old movies, the old flying movies, you repeated, you say it again, without being asked to say it again. It was low frequency, and we had a trailing wire, copper wire with a leather cover, that you unreeled a hundred feet of wire, and then you were talking with low frequency with the home base. I know we were called WXDD, that was the call symbol, WXDD. Now, the airplanes were called DD, DD8. Well, that got to be Dirty Dog 8, so they changed it to XD, so aircraft call--WXDD, this is XD8. Well, we didn't ever have any formal training in radio work, so we didn't call it that way. We'd call in: XD8 calling WXDD, and Carl Swaim would come back on the radio and say: Slow it down, Bill, I can't keep up with you. The radios were affected by atmospheric conditions, and sometimes you had a real hard time, but we had a grid that would go over the map, that they gave us a grid every day. The left side would be numbers and the top lines would be alphabet, and that's how you'd call in your position report. Sometimes you just couldn't get it all to them, or they couldn't understand you. The phonetic alphabet needed some work done on it, and you can see it was done. Then you had to reel in this hundred feet of wire. And for a little skinny guy, who's right-handed, using his left hand to reel in a hundred feet of wire, that would get me winded sometimes,

and the pilot would take over and finish it up.

H: Kind of hard to pull in that wire, especially with the drag of that little cone.

G: Yes. That cup would go out easy, but, boy, it didn't want to come back in.

H: You talked about the two crashes at sea. Were there any others there that you recall?

G: Not while I was there. I don't recall any other CAP crashes. The only other crash was a Corsair right in front of Headquarters.

H: Coming in to land at the Naval Station?

G: Pulling a carrier type landing, and he hit the edge of the runway, and blew both tires and started walking and then flipped over and burned, and he had ammunition on board, a fifty caliber started popping. It was quite an affair.

H: Quite interesting.

G: But I know of no other CAP--

H: We talked about your housing and food. How about

recreation. What did you all do in your spare time?

G: Played softball. I'm telling you, we were really hot.
'Cause that's all we had to do.

H: How about drill and military, and things like that?

G: They didn't do it there. We had it at the CAP meetings at home, but as best I can remember we had absolutely no military drill type training at the base.

H: Your job was to fly airplanes, not to play foot soldier.

G: I guess that's the way they felt, although I learned later in life that there's no substitute for military drill. It's important.

H: How about your professional training for navigation and pilotage. Did they hold classes for you?

G: The only classes they had was when they ran through, when we wanted to get our private written. And then they offered the commercial written, and then they offered the instrument written, so this was the limit on the training. Really when you were off duty, you either played softball or you crawled in on one of those cots and slept.

H: When you finished your tour, you know when the base closed down, what did you do?

G: Well, I went back home, and the Air Corps called me within a week, and away I went to Aviation Cadets. I've always thought about the CAP. I wanted to get back active in it here, but I never have.

H: You ought to. Apparently, you dropped out of CAP, then you just never did come back to it after the war.

G: Never did come back. I saw several of the old crowd from time to time, but I never got back into it.

H: Let's do a little evaluation, just to collect your opinion. As far as the base itself, how well equipped do you think it was? Considering the fact that it was a civilian operation doing a military job, you know, with whatever they had.

G: Well, let's start with what I know, firsthand, would be the headquarters building. We had a leaky building, an air leaky building, because when the wind blew the dust came inside. We had teletype, telephones, and the teletype was constantly in use with ship movements. The guards all brought their own 38 pistols, but they didn't know how to shoot them and there was no arrangement made for target practice or

shooting practice or anything of that nature. They had several of the old townspeople that were working there too, filling in. One of them was the guy who sent the telegram that the Wright Brothers had flown. Later he was on a TV show about the Wright Brothers in the '50s.

[Note: Tape change occurred during this sentence. Content confirmed with Mr. Gantt by phone on January 25th.]

H: Some townspeople just came in and volunteered to help?

G: I guess they did. I don't know if they were on the payroll or volunteers, but there were two or three of those people out there. This guy was retired Coast Guard, and the Coast Guard gave him a truck. He had a pick-up truck he drove around in.

H: How about your aircraft, were they in pretty good shape?

G: I think this guy Blackie was a good mechanic, because we never--the only problem we had out of the whole time was those two airplanes that went down with engine trouble, and the dirt blew in those things all the time. Man, you'd take off with the sand blowing. That's a terrible problem. The equipment wasn't the greatest, and it had a lot of hours on it, and they must have done a good job, because they always--they worked long hours, I remember that.

H: How well do you think it was managed--command? I guess we're saying, how good a job did Watkins do?

G: I think he did a great job. He delegated a lot of responsibility. He himself was a gentleman. The lowest guy there had his ear. Because at one time I was the lowest guy there, and he would talk to me, any time. I'll always remember what a nice guy he was. Some of the people under him weren't that great, in my estimation at that time, but I still didn't understand discipline like I do now. That judgment came later.

H: Well--quick background. Things had smoothed over after he got there. There was some turmoil at Manteo before he came down there.

G: When I came, he was there. So, I didn't know about that.

H: I heard there was.

G: I had a buddy that was there before, at the old place, and he indicated that it had some problems.

H: How about operations? Do you feel like they were effective and carried off on schedule, and all that good stuff. You met most of your schedules?

G: Yes. We met our schedules. Weather didn't stop us much. It really had to be IFR to stop us. High winds, dirt blowing, anything like that, we kept going and the airplanes got off on time. I think operations did real good. I don't know how effective we were. There was no way to tell.

H: What's your personal opinion of the overall effectiveness? What good were you doing with a little old single engine airplane out there against a submarine?

G: I think psychologically we did a lot of good. We kept them under the water during that period of time that we didn't have people in the regular Navy and Air Force to do it. If you keep them below the water, they don't have but so many torpedoes and they'd love to get on the top and shell a defenseless ship. They can handle that, so I think if we just kept them under the water, we did our job. They didn't know what we could do.

H: Your aircraft were armed at the time you were flying?

G: After I got there, but they weren't armed in the beginning. They armed them sometime, I don't know, three or four months after I got there. They sent two Army guys in. One of them had a BAR--automatic rifle, that's their weapon, and they did the bomb bit. They put them on and took them off.

H: Who operated that god-awful bombsight, the right-hand seat or the left-hand seat?

G: The right-hand seat. But we never had a real bombsight. We had a home-made thing.

H: Well, that was what it was--a hand-made prism.

G: Everybody made their own.

H: Oh, they did?

G: Yes, I made my own. I still couldn't hit a bull in the rear. Well you had an arming pin. You had a propeller on the nose of that bomb, that when she dropped, that would spin that propeller, and it would fall off and then she was ready to explode, and you had a cotter key sticking in it, and you had a wire with that cotter key coming into the cockpit. Well, if you accidentally dropped that bomb, the wire all went, and so she never armed herself. But if you were going to drop it in anger, you grabbed a hold of the wire and looped it around a stub on the right hand side of the airplane, so that when the bomb fell it pulled that cotter key out and the spinner spun off and she was ready to go.

H: You actually released the bomb with another rope inside

the aircraft.

G: Right. We had another trigger to release the bomb.

H: Do you recall whether or not anybody ever wrote a base history or anything like that?

G: No. Never thought about it. If anybody would have, the two girls that worked there would have. They probably had more sense than the rest of us as far as common sense is concerned. Nobody ever thought about history. Tomorrow would never come. Remember the song?

H: Yes. That's why we're working so hard today.

G: That's right.

H: How about base insignia. Did you have any special insignia? Like a crazy duck?

G: No. And if I'd known then what I know now, it would have been nice. We had a guy that was an artist, I mean a commercial artist, this guy was a sign painter artist. And he painted anything we wanted on our sheathes that we carried our knives or on the handle. We could have had this guy painting something on the airplanes, but we never had any of that kind of stuff.

H: One of the special features we are looking for--there is in existence a thing called the CAP Guard Patch, which is roughly a blue circle with a pair of crossed infantry rifles and the letters CAPG around it. Did you ever see or wear anything like that?

G: No.

H: O. K. It's the Civil Air Patrol Guard, was what it was. It was allegedly used by the guards at the bases, and since you were a guard--?

G: No. I never saw that--never did. Now, I tell you what we did when we got to flying. Everybody went to Norfolk. We didn't like the wings they issued. They looked rinky-dink, so everybody would go in to Norfolk to buy their wings. They sold in a store a pair of pilot's wings for, I think an observer. It had a circle in the middle, a round hole. They sold a half of that wing, too, probably as an observer on a balloon or something, and we'd go buy those and come back and that sign painter artist would take the CAP three-bladed prop and would cut that thing out and solder it in those wings, and that's what everybody had for wings. That's the only thing we did that was sort of ingenious, was home-made wings.

H: Nobody liked those. I've always surmised that the reason

you all didn't like those wings was they looked too much like the German wings of the period.

G: Yes. That's about what it was. They just weren't attractive.

H: Well, like all good things, the field won, because those wings went out, of course, and they did develop a better looking set of wings later on.

G: Yes. This is all psychological, and that's part of preparing the troops.

H: Have you got any special anecdotes, any funny things that happened to you while you were there? You know, anything happened to you on the way to work this morning or?

G: This is hard to just dredge up. I think I told you this morning, I guess one thing that sticks in my mind more than anything is landing in those high winds, where they had to have somebody standing there to grab the wing strut.

H: Why don't you tell that tale one more time so we can get it on record. That's a good one.

G: We had no grass on the airport, so when we had these high winds, and I didn't know in those days what they were. I'm

going to guess now they must have been thirty-five knots to forty. It'd blow that sand up to a thousand feet in the air right over the airport. It'd cover the whole airport, and as far as forty miles out to sea you could see the column of sand sticking up in the air a thousand feet high, and you didn't have to navigate home, you just pointed toward that sand. Well, when you landed, they lined up eight guys, four on each side of the airplane, right at the end of the runway. You weren't going far. And whoever happened to be standing beside the airplane when she quit rolling would jump up and grab the wing strut, up next to the wing, and would just wrap his arms and legs around it and ride there on each side to keep the wind from blowing you over. And they'd stay on those wing struts until you taxied over to the tie down and got tied down and then they'd come off of it. That was quite exciting.

H: Of course, 10-A was a good old tail dragger, and they liked to weathervane anyway.

G: It had a big old tail on that thing, and a big fuselage, and the wind would really push you around. Funny things that might have happened, well, not CAP-related. Well, we were at the end of a runway, well, I'm going to guess, Manteo runways, we were probably at the end of runway 16. One day a Grumman Hellcat shot a long landing and decided to go around, and didn't, and he came past us about ten feet in the air and right down through the woods he went, this bang, crash, bang,

down into those woods on the other side of our headquarters building, and a dozen of us started running over there, just sure he was dead, and the guy meets us walking out, shaking like a leaf, wanting to know if anybody had a cigarette. His airplane was smashed up good down in the woods. But I don't know of any CAP-related happenings.

H: Let me ask you a specific, just to see if I can fill out a story. There's a story that floats around at Manteo, that, an--I'm going to call him an Englishman or a Canadian, or something, was flying Coastal Patrol with you all down there, and he lost an engine while he was either escorting or a carrier happened to be near, and the carrier had been damaged in the Pacific and was on its way back to the shipyard to be repaired, and he made an emergency landing on the carrier. Do you recall anything about that story?

G: No. No, I don't recall. But that doesn't mean it didn't happen. I just can't bring that one up.

H: Well, it's just one of those I've heard some place.

G: It's possible. It's possible to a degree, then again, those carrier people didn't like us flying around their ships in the beginning. They kept their guns on us all the time. They tracked us every time, they were either just practicing tracking or they didn't trust us.

H: Or a little of both.

G: Yes. But the word was stay away, don't mess with the carriers.

H: That may have been because this incident happened earlier, and they swore they'd shoot you down next time.

G: Well, we were short of carriers at that time too.

H: O. K. You'd mentioned that you're a little bit short of time, so let me just give you one more shot. You got anything else you'd like to add?

G: I don't even know what I've said now. I'll make an effort to find some things. You know, as you go through life, if you're smart, you just throw everything into a suitcase, so I've got to get the suitcase out, open up, and haul all that junk out.

H: We sincerely appreciate the opportunity to do the interview with you, and if you think of anything, we'll be in touch. As I say, we'll eventually give it to you and get your review on it.

