

Civil Air Patrol Oral History Interview

WNHC 14.83-17

COL LOUISA SPRUANCE MORSE



NATIONAL HISTORICAL COMMITTEE
Headquarters CAP

CIVIL AIR PATROL
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interview

of

Colonel Louisa Spruance Morse, CAP

by

Lt. Col. Lester E. Hopper, CAP

Date: 16 October 1983

Location: Wilmington, Delaware

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 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 she 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 Colonel Louisa Spruance Morse, CAP, speaks openly and candidly of her forty plus years of dedicated service to Civil Air Patrol.

The interview begins with her early contacts with the military establishment which provided knowledge useful to her as she rose within the ranks of Civil Air Patrol. Her views on CAP operations at the squadron level during World War II provide valuable information on that period. Based on her experiences as a Wing Commander, a Region Commander, and as the National Controller, she gives unusual insight into the working of the organization at all levels.

Colonel Morse concludes her interview with a timely analysis of the status of Civil Air Patrol in the early 1980's.

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H: Louisa, if you will, why don't you start off with a little background on your family and education, and any interest you had early in the game in aviation and how you came to join CAP - just kind of general background.

M: Well, my father having been in the military in World War I, I lived in Washington for the better part of a year in the thick of World War I, although I was quite small, I grew up on military, and then when it came time for my younger brother to go to college, he was in ROTC in Princeton and he was on active duty when he got through college - that was well before the war - so I was quite familiar with the military end of it, and I had interest in many different things. I don't know how I got started on it, but at any rate I started an interest in navigation, meteorology and civil air regulations. I studied in Philadelphia, those subjects, at the Air-Mar Navigation School, and at the same time I was active with the Red Cross, teaching First Aid, and I was the chairman of the First Aid

Committee for the Delaware Chapter of the Red Cross. The morning after Pearl Harbor, Monday morning, I went down to the office and the paid secretary had quit the night before, hung up her uniform and hadn't told anybody she was quitting, so I was the only person in the Red Cross office the morning after Pearl Harbor in First Aid and you can imagine how the telephone rang off the hook. We had quite an interesting time trying to train enough instructors to meet the demand for people who wanted to study First Aid. But when that push calmed down a bit, I was still interested in navigation, and I was going to teach navigation, meteorology, and civil air regulations for the Civilian Pilot Training Program, which at that point was an effort to train young people and interest them in aviation and train them as pilots.

H: Was that here in Wilmington?

M: That was here in Wilmington at the duPont Field. I had already interviewed the man who ran the program, and I was scheduled to start the ground school teaching, although I was not a pilot, and just about that time, when I was about to start to teach, they closed up all the flying in this area because of the defense zone of the coast, and they moved all the flying students further west to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and since I was doing this as a volunteer, I wasn't about to move to Lancaster, Pennsylvania for the sake of teaching as a volunteer.

H: In other words, you were going to be a volunteer ground instructor - not a paid instructor.

M: I was going to be a volunteer instructor. So here I was with a brand new CAA, in those days it was, Civil Aeronautics Administration, ground instructor rating and nothing to do with it. So I happened to read in the paper one night that the Civil Air Patrol needed instructors for just such subjects, so I went down and it didn't take them very long to put me to work. In those days, unless you were on Coast Patrol or some active duty mission lots of people just didn't bother to sign any application blanks. Since I wasn't a pilot, I couldn't fly anyway, so I just went ahead and taught for them.

H: About when was that, Louisa?

M: That was in 1942 in March, and it was October of 1942 before I got around to signing an application for membership, so my service doesn't date back as far as I really served CAP. But at any rate, because I was a ground instructor, I was given the rank of Staff Sergeant - that's what I started out as in CAP. They wanted me to become a Staff Sergeant right away when I joined, and I said "No way. I'm going to learn to drill first, because I'm not going to get out there on the drill field and have somebody tell me that I'm a sergeant, drill the troops, when I don't know how to do it." So until I learned

how to drill I refused to take any rank, so then I got the Staff Sergeant's rank, and it was only a matter of maybe four months until I was promoted to Warrant Officer, and then I didn't miss anything from that on up, all the grades. Being a female, it went rather slowly for a while, but I served in just about every capacity in Wilmington Squadron and Delaware Wing, I was training, personnel, administration, supply, finance, almost any job, and I put in many, many hours. I got the blue service ribbon, which required two thousand hours in two years, and I probably put in four thousand hours in two years.

H: Dwelling a little bit on the war-time period in a squadron, that, I am sure, was feeding volunteers for Coastal Patrol and having people drafted out, how did you keep the squadron going? How big a squadron was it here in Wilmington?

M: Well, in the early days, we didn't even have any cadets. The classes were seniors only. You wouldn't believe the way people got their licenses in those days. There were people who had pilot's licenses for whom somebody else had taken the written test. They couldn't draw a straight line, let alone navigate. And when war-time restrictions came along, you had to know a little bit more than that, so I had students in my classes who had private pilot's licenses who literally couldn't draw a straight line. In those days you didn't have computers, everything was done with a wind triangle, and you had to draw it, with a compass and a ruler, and everything was measured.

That was my job -- to teach these people to navigate, and teach them meteorology. They looked up at the weather and if it looked all right to them, they would take off. The fact that there was a thundercloud just coming in didn't bother them. It was a safety matter, and many of them were older people, who had had a license and been flying for years, but had not had this type of experience.

H: What kept the squadron going? What was the interest in the squadron?

M: Well, the flying, of course. The reason these people were in it was to fly. Very early in the game, all civil aircraft were grounded unless they were kept under guard twenty-four hours a day. In other words, there was grave danger of somebody going out and taking an airplane and sabotaging the war industry, just by dropping a bomb from a light airplane. The field that we flew out of was Biggs Field at New Castle, and it was owned by a woman and her brother, and they were there in the daytime, but at night they went to bed. So the Civil Air Patrol provided guards, who were armed and deputized by the county sheriff's department, to guard the field from five o'clock at night, when the Biggses went off duty, until eight o'clock the next morning. In exchange for that the planes were kept there and they were able to be flown. We had all our operations out of that field. We had all our training sessions, bivouacs, and what not. If you wanted to land, you

had to buzz the field first and chase the cows away, and when you drilled you stepped carefully. That was just par for the course. But I think it was the flying that kept the people going, because they knew that if they were not in Civil Air Patrol they couldn't get in an airplane. The great majority of the members in the early days and, before the war was very far along, all of them were either too old or too young for military service or had physical handicaps, and they wanted to do something - everybody wanted to contribute to the war effort and they couldn't get in the military, so CAP was a golden opportunity to do their bit, and utilize their knowledge as aviators.

H: Did they perform some services, courier service, or carry cargo - anything of that nature?

M: Well, in 1944 or 5, I don't recall exactly which it was - I could check my log book - but sometime along then, I know it was after the cut-off date for getting the Courier Ribbon, I served as navigator for a man who had his own plane, and he used to ferry critical small parts for one of the war industries back and forth from Wilmington to Dayton, Ohio. There was a great deal of that. Of course, the search missions were carried on. But we fed people into Coast Patrol and the active duty, but we knew very little about it, because Coast Patrol was a well-kept secret, and those of us who were not on Coast Patrol didn't even know what was going on. I suppose the

Wing Commander knew, because he was involved in recruiting the people, but I had no knowledge of what was going on in Coast Patrol at that time, because nobody talked about it.

H: So your squadron just did whatever came up that would help the war effort.

M: That was in the earliest days. Then, of course, the cadet program was organized in October 1942 and that was when we really got busy, because we were charged with the responsibility of recruiting aviation cadets. The story with those was that they were allowed to enlist before they were eighteen, or sign up, and they were not called to active duty until within six months after their eighteenth birthday. But the seventeen-year-olds were encouraged to get into CAP and get their basic training. We had many interesting experiences with these young people who did a fantastic job once they got in the service, because they were two steps up the ladder before they went in. We had one story of a young lad who went to Rutgers in the Army Specialized Training Reserve Program. He went to Rutgers and the first day he got there he was put in uniform, and for some reason he was told to report to the commanding officer. When he went in the officer's office, the man was talking on the phone. He waited until the officer got through talking on the phone, and then he snapped to attention and saluted and said: "Sir, Private Dwyer reports as ordered." The officer returned the salute and carried on whatever

conversation he had with him and said that that was all. The boy gave another snappy salute, did an about face and took off for the door. All of a sudden the officer realized that the lad had been there for less than twenty-four hours, how did he learn all this. The officer said: "Wait a minute. Where did you learn all this?" "Sir, I was a Civil Air Patrol Cadet for two years." "Very good. Carry on." The next day, he was in charge of the whole gang. So it paid off. They were well trained and they got over the first humps of how to wear a uniform and how to behave in uniform. We had the responsibility of recruiting these people and then Civil Air Patrol also gave the preliminary examinations to find out whether they were qualified to go in as aviation cadets. As the war progressed, and even after the war, we had a variety of assignments. After the war, one of our assignments was to check on all the reserves who had gone off active duty. They just did not have adequate records of where they were, so they gave us a list and said to check these people out and see whether they are still at these addresses, and if not, see if you can find out where they've gone.

H: They also got into some kind of "Find a Job for Veterans" program.

M: Yes, jobs for veterans. There were many, many jobs that we were given. In the post-war days we had air shows. We were trying to interest people in aviation, because aviation was

still new enough that, for instance, the parents of potential aviation cadets, in many cases, were extremely hesitant to have their sons go into the air arm. They just figured they were safer on the ground. We had a public relations job to prove to them that aviation was not as hazardous or as new as it had been in World War I.

H: You're doing fine. That's the kind of material we're looking for. But back to a little bit about yourself. You started talking about your movement through the CAP ladder and what you did in the squadron. I believe we left you as a supply officer.

M: Well, I had a number of different assignments, and then, of course, I was married in 1947. I had expected to go overseas. I married a man who was in the service. I expected to go to Japan, which did not materialize - we were not sorry about that. But at any rate, I was on leave from CAP for a while. We moved around the country quite a bit, and I never tied up to any of the CAP units where we lived, because we weren't any place long enough, really.

H: Now this "on leave from CAP." Is this where this rumor comes about a CAP Reserve?

M: No. There was a CAP Reserve at one point, but all I did was I just asked to be put on temporary inactive status, and I

was. Then it wasn't very long before I was back active again. In 1950 my husband got out of the service and we came back here to Wilmington to live. He joined CAP and I went back on active status, and it was 1953 that I was made acting Wing Commander. I served as an acting Wing Commander for longer than anybody else had up to that point. I was a year instead of six months, and I believe it was because I was a female.

H: It probably was.

M: I'm quite sure it was, because the powers that were, at that point, didn't approve of women Wing Commanders. There had not been a woman Wing Commander, except for a very brief time during wartime. Nancy Tier had been commander of the Connecticut Wing. But other than that there had never been a woman Wing Commander. Well, finally, General Beau did approve the appointment to full colonel, so I served for a year as a lieutenant colonel, and then in 1954 I was a full colonel, and I had a total of twenty-two and a half years as Wing Commander and a little over three years as Middle East Region Commander, so I had about twenty-six years of command service.

H: Tell us a little bit about what a female Wing Commander does in 1953 to get a wing going, or was it already a real going outfit, or was it the best in the east?

M: No, it wasn't a going outfit, and many of the wings were

having problems. As you know, any command job takes a lot of time, and a Wing Commander's job takes a lot more time than a Squadron Commander's job, or even a Region Commander's job. But the big problem is that Delaware is a small state, and there are just as many slots to fill on Wing Staff in Delaware as there are in California, but there aren't as many people to draw on. Granted we had fewer squadrons and we did not have any groups, but the fact remains that if you have twenty slots on your staff and you take twenty people and you only have fifty or sixty really efficient officers in the state, it doesn't leave very many to run the squadrons. My feeling always was that without strong squadrons, there was no need for a wing. So, in many cases people wore two hats, or we got along without, because there were some jobs we just didn't have filled. There wasn't much we could do about it. You weren't allowed to hold a job at wing and also at squadron, but the fact that I didn't have a job and I had the time and was able to spend an awful lot of time on it was really the thing that made as big a success. My husband was a tremendous help, because he, having been in the military, started out as a lieutenant colonel in CAP and he was Civil Defense Coordinator first, and then he was Director of Operations. He used to drive up and down the state every day - ninety miles the length of the state and back. He carried a lot of the load for the down-state squadrons, and he knew everybody in the state, in the southern part. I had a pretty good staff. I had some efficient people, a few that were really good. Because of the

fact that I made a full-time job out of it, I think that's what made it go. I was criticized on many occasions for doing too much myself, but if there is nobody else to do it, I was a firm believer in the fact that if the job had to be done, and you couldn't get anybody else to do it you had to do it yourself. That's the way it got done. There were a lot of things that I did that I shouldn't have done, but either I did it or it didn't get done. The wing certainly was at the top - had a much better record than any other wing in the country during the period that I was Wing Commander and there were National Evaluations. After I went up to Region, they still had a real good going wing. They had some unfortunate experiences, because Colonel Everett, who was the one that followed me, was in extremely poor health, and he finally had to give up, but at that point I was Region Commander. Of course, I said then that, since I was no longer the Wing Commander, I wasn't going to run the wing. I was going to keep my fingers off of it and let the people who were running the wing run it.

H: You mentioned the big problem in running the wing in a small state like Delaware was trying to get qualified people. Other than that, what is the biggest challenge to keeping a wing going?

H: Well, for one thing, Delaware did not have any state appropriation until the last couple of years. Many, many wings had large state appropriations. I think one of the reasons

that many of the states get appropriations is that they have the opportunity to provide emergency service. Some of the western states have the Rocky Mountains and they have a lot of search missions and the CAP does a fantastic job. Some of the coastwise ones have hurricanes and they do a fantastic job radio-wise, and they are put before the public and they are known. Now, as far as Delaware is concerned, for search and rescue there are very, very few missions in Delaware. There are more now that we have ELTs, but in the early days, if anybody came down in Delaware, they were almost in somebody's back yard, because there is not much wild country in Delaware, where you could come down and nobody hear you. So we weren't in the forefront for emergency services. We didn't have very many hurricanes or floods. We don't have that kind of terrain. We did have Hurricane Hazel, and we provided generators to help people run their milking machines and their pumps and what not, but that was a one shot deal. If you don't have the exposure to the public, so that they know what you are doing, you have a harder job. You have to be prepared, but you don't have the opportunity to use your knowledge. The lack of money, of course, was a disadvantage. Another thing is that, as far as the cadet program is concerned--

H: Excuse me, Louisa, but how did you offset that lack of state appropriation?

M: We went out and asked for contributions. I got two or

three people who were instrumental in the community -- a banker and a broker and a man who was interested in aviation. I gave them each a list and I asked them to pick about twenty-five people to write letters to and ask them to support the CAP. We had about a hundred people that were giving us contributions every year, and that's what we lived on, just contributions and our own dues of our members. Then the difficulty with the cadet program was -- in Wilmington, you did not have so much problem, because that's a city area and people could get around easily, but in your more rural places, where they go by bus to school, and they get to school in the morning and they go home on the bus, and they can't get back to a central location to have a meeting. So if you couldn't get the program in the school, as part of the school, you had no opportunity to bring those kids back together again. You were dependent upon their parents to transport them ten or fifteen miles to get to a meeting, and what were the parents going to do while the kids were in the meeting. So unless you could enlist the parents along with the kids, you had a hard time of it. We did have a pretty rough time, but we compensated largely through the active squadrons in Wilmington. We had a big one in Dover and a big one in Newark and several in Wilmington, but the smaller communities had almost nothing.

H: But you solved your financial difficulties by direct solicitation.

M: Contributions. Direct solicitation. And we were supported for a good many years by fifty to a hundred people who gave generously, maybe as much as a hundred dollars apiece, some a little more than that, and that was all we had. Then eventually, the last few years, they got a state appropriation, but they lost that last year, so I don't know where they are going to from here.

H: Did they lose it on a budget cut, or politics?

M: No, they lost it on just a budget cut - everything's cut.

H: Did you have any really interesting anecdotes about the period when you were the Wing Commander?

M: Oh, we had them all the time. I remember one time when Peggy Chadwick and I were sitting here talking about a mission or a SAR-CAP or something that we had had during the week-end, and we were both exhausted, and the telephone rang. I went and answered it, I was the Wing Commander at that point. I came back and I said: "You won't believe this, but we have a mission." We had just finished up a SAR-CAP, so we started all over again. But many times, the way we ran our missions, I had two telephone lines here in the house, and I had the radios, and if I'd get an alert I'd call Peggy, who lived a block away, and my son was a cadet and my husband was a member, and the four of us would start at ten o'clock at night to organize

things for daylight the next day. We'd alert everybody and line up the pilots, get the people from the different squadrons, and give them assignments, and that's the way we ran our missions.

H: That's a very familiar story, Louisa.

M: Well, in the early days, before they had Civil Air Patrol mission coordinators, when the mission coordinators came out of the Air Rescue Service, we would have, usually one officer and an airman would fly in from Westover Field, Massachusetts, and they would come down to what's now Greater Wilmington and what used to be New Castle County Air Base. We had a headquarters of sorts down there, and they would come down and they would be the ones to run the mission. The airman was the admin guy and the, usually a captain, was the mission coordinator. We had to provide all the back up. Peggy Chadwick and I would go down there. She was the typist and I was the Wing Commander, of course, and the radio operator and anything else that had to be done. But while these two people would get some sleep, (we put a cot up in one of the rooms there), we'd run the office and answer all the radios and process all the reports and everything else so these poor people could get some sleep, because they'd be four and five days at it.

H: I hadn't heard that aspect of early SAR. How long did that go on, where the Air Force actually sent people in to run them

for you?

M: I don't know how long it was, but it was quite a while before the Civil Air Patrol was considered capable of doing the mission coordinating themselves, because there was a lot of training that had to be done. I remember one particular mission where an Air Force Colonel was missing. The Air Force was very much interested in that. But whichever wing was the hot spot of the mission, the Air Force officer would go to that wing, and then there would usually be three or four wings on the mission, but they'd all have to funnel their reports in to this one wing, so that's where the host wing for the Air Force officer had an awful lot of work, because they had to take in all the reports and consolidate them, and everything had to go back to the Rescue Service Center.

H: That's an interesting aspect on early SAR that I hadn't encountered before - the concept that the Air Force didn't trust CAP in the early stages to run their own missions. As it is now, it's carte blanche, in fact I've been called upon to run missions for the military.

M: Well, there was a time when a Civil Air Patrol mission coordinator had to be a pilot, and two or three of us who were not pilots but were observers had run probably more missions than most of the mission pilots in the state. When you are short of mission pilots, when you have only a certain number of

pilots, who are mission qualified, as we had here in Delaware, you couldn't afford to have a mission coordinator, an operations officer - two or three people on the ground at each of two or three bases to run a mission, because you didn't have anybody left to fly. You had to use people on the ground who were not pilots, and what we usually did was, either the mission coordinator or the operations officer was a pilot, but the other one did not have to be. When I was the mission coordinator, Col. Everett would be the operations officer - he was a pilot and I would refer all the stuff that had to be a pilot's decision to him. You can hamper your mission very severely by requiring too many mission pilots on the ground, because, in my book it's more important to get up there and look, than it is to sit on the ground and try to coordinate.

H: You don't find lost aircraft on a tabletop.

M: Well, you do get a lot of leads if you have good publicity, and we had excellent help from the newspapers and radio stations, and that was another job that you had to do - get all these leads and determine whether they were good or just somebody trying to get a little publicity. Once you did get a lead that was some good you had to have a pilot to go check it out, or a ground team. In many cases it was a ground team to go and interview the person who had called up. Then it was up to the ground team leader to determine whether it was a good solid lead or whether it was somebody who was just trying to

get their name in the paper. You had to ask them: "Do you see airplanes very often?" "Are they big ones or little ones?" "Do they fly high or low?" "What experience have you had with planes?" "Were you ever in the service?" so that you know whether they can tell whether it's a puddle-jumper or a commercial airliner. Some people really can't tell. They see an airplane go over, but they can't tell you how big it is or how high it is.

H: Well, for a long time then Delaware Wing ran on a full-time Wing Commander by the name of Louisa Morse, is what you're saying.

M: That's true - and I had excellent support from my family. When my kids were little, I had somebody to help take care of them, and they were interested. My goodness! The two of them would use anything that they could in connection with Civil Air Patrol for Halloween costumes or anything else. They were interested in it. My son became a cadet and is now a pilot. My daughter was never a cadet and was never interested in anything but horses, but they were very tolerant of Civil Air Patrol, and my husband (of course I had been in Civil Air Patrol for a long time before we were married) and he said: "If you can't beat them, join them," so he was very, very active and did an extremely good job in CAP.

H: I recall reading some testimony that you gave before the

Armed Services Committee. Was that when you were the Wing Commander or a Region Commander?

M: It was not when I was Region Commander, and I don't know whether I was Wing Commander at that point or not. I don't recall when it was done, but I was probably Wing Commander. I don't remember the date.

H: I don't recall when it was either. That testimony in itself gave a pretty good indication of how much time and effort you and your husband had put into CAP.

M: Well, we felt very strongly that - this was in connection with the compensation bill - and we felt that it was wrong for people to be asked to go out and risk their lives in searching for somebody and be paid nothing, be paid only for their gas and oil, and then if they were injured, to be expected to lose their livelihood and have to pay their own medical expenses. That's what it amounted too. And, of course, we have just now gotten that situation corrected, because the amount that was authorized in the original bill was \$135 a month for a widow and \$220 a month, I think it was, for a person who was injured, and that from the 1950s, I think it was 1955, was the Compensation Bill, I was Wing Commander from 1953, so I was probably Wing Commander at the time, but that never was changed until 1983. Now we've got it up to something over \$700, which is considerably better than \$135. It'll go a little bit

further - I won't say you can live off of it.

H: OK. Go on ahead, Louisa. Were you really the first female Wing Commander?

M: I was the first Wing Commander except for Nancy Tier, yes. And then within a few months after I was made Wing Commander, there were two more. There was Clara Livingston from Puerto Rico and Nanette Spears from New Jersey. We were the three lady Wing Commanders for several years, and then I outlasted both of them. Then some years later they had additional women Wing Commanders and they do have some now, but I was the first one to crack the barrier, so to speak.

H: How about Region, were you the first female Region Commander?

M: I was the first female Region Commander - I'm the only woman that's ever served on the National Executive Committee, as Region Commander I was a member of the National Executive Committee. Of course, as National Controller I was not. The National Controller is a national officer but is not, or was not, a member of either the National Board or the National Executive Committee. They have just recently changed the by-laws so that the National Controller is now a member of the National Board, but that took place just at the time that my term of office as National Controller ended, so I was not on

the National Board as the National Controller.

H: Just as we had talked a little bit about the trials and tribulations of a Wing Commander, how about those of a Region Commander?

M: Well, of course, the Region Commander has a certain number of wings to look after

H: And in your case, which were those?

M: I had seven wings, and I lived in the northernmost of the seven wings.

H: What seven wings were these, Louisa?

M: Delaware, Maryland, National Capital, Virginia, West Virginia, North and South Carolina. So, Delaware, being the northernmost of those states, there was a lot of territory to cover.

H: It's a long way to South Carolina.

M: The other thing is that of course I had been a Wing Commander and I had attended Region Conferences and whatnot and I knew all the Wing Commanders, but when it's necessary to change a commander, it's a big responsibility for a Region

Commander to change a Wing Commander, because you have to know what effect it's going to have upon the wing, whether the members are going to accept the new commander. You are torn between what you think is the best thing for the wing and what the people in the wing tell you, and sometimes you have two or three factions in the wing that disagree. It's a tough job. Also, on occasions, you may have somebody who has to be relieved, and that's a tough job too. It's not pleasant to relieve anybody of their job, and my theory always was that if you can persuade them to resign it's much better than firing them. But, I was pretty fortunate. I didn't have too many problems. But it's a job that requires a lot of tact and a good bit of clout.

H: It carries with it a good bit of clout.

M: Yes. You've got to be willing to take the bull by the horns. In other words, the commander who is not willing to wear the black hat and do the dirty work when it has to be done is not the most efficient commander.

H: How long did you stay as a Region Commander?

M: I was about three and a half years as Region Commander. It's normally a four year term, and I was appointed in July and it was in December, three and a half years later, that because of the change of assignments at the national level they asked

me to be National Controller, so that was a little bit short of a normal term as Region Commander.

H: When was that, Louisa?

M: I was the Wing Commander until July of 76. I was the Region Commander until December of 79 and I was National Controller from December 79 until August of 83.

H: You did a few other things in CAP, I think.

M: I served on a number of committees at one time or another. I was on a committee that we had for Probationary Membership, back in the early days, as to whether it was smart or not to have members in a probationary status for a while.

H: What was a Probationary Member?

M: That was initially, before you got to be a full fledged member, whether you should have a status period in which you weren't a full fledged member and did not have all the benefits. Then I was on the Insurance Committee for a while, and I was on the Scholarship Selection Committee, and I was chairman of the Uniform Committee for several years. While I was on the Uniform Committee, I got interested in collecting Civil Air Patrol insignia and trying to develop sets of insignia. It was my idea that if I could get three sets, one

would go to National Headquarters for display, and one would go to the National Air and Space Museum of the Smithsonian, and one would go to the Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson. I talked to Mr. Glenn Sweeting, Curator of Aeronautics at the National Air and Space Museum, one time and I showed him what I had and asked him if he would be interested, and he said they very definitely would be interested. They wouldn't promise to display it permanently, because they did not have the space, but they would definitely be interested in having a set of it, and he showed me what they had. But he said that what they needed to know from the standpoint of the museum is: "What does all of it mean?" So that got me motivated to start trying to compile a history of Civil Air Patrol insignia and uniforms. Well, to make a long story short, I got the National Commander, who was Johnnie Boyd at that point to approve the organization of a National Historical Committee for CAP, and it was put together originally just as a means of coordinating the efforts of seven people that we found had already been working on one phase or another of CAP history or insignia, uniforms, and so forth. So, like Topsy, it just sort of grew. I did that for about a year, and then I realized that there was somebody who was a lot better qualified to run the committee than I was, so Les Hopper was delegated to replace me as chairman, which suited me fine.

H: I don't necessarily agree that I'm better qualified, but I appreciate the opportunity.

M: Well, you people had been working with history for a lot longer than I had, military history and what not. What I was primarily interested in was providing the physical collection of Civil Air Patrol insignia before it was all lost and gone, and we have done pretty well on that. We have the three sets which are approaching completion. I don't think any of them will ever be absolutely complete, but they are close. With the cooperation of a lot of people we have been able to put some of it together, and then we've been digging through records and trying to establish first of all - my first project - the history of uniforms and insignia, which is now complete, although it will have to be revised as we develop more information as we did today.

H: Excuse me, Louisa. That project represents the publication in three parts of some three hundred or so pages, didn't it?

M: I think it's 390 pages, now. First of all we took the chronology of Civil Air Patrol uniforms up to a point, when they were the same as Air Force uniforms. Then we cut it off because we couldn't take every change in the more recent years. But the first ten years, and the second ten years, that was '42 to '51 and '52 to '61, we had uniforms and then we had everything that pertained to insignia and ribbons. Then there was a section on illustrations, and the illustrations included the specific references to that piece of insignia, or group of

insignia, such as chevrons or rank. Then we did one on each ribbon, when it was authorized, what the criteria were for its award, and when it was phased out or changed. Then as far as the wing patches were concerned, I simply compiled illustrations of the wing patches and for those wing and region patches that had been changed, the obsolete ones. Hopefully, at some time in the future we'll be able to come up with a history of each wing patch, what it means, and who designed it, but that is very, very difficult to acquire, because in many cases the wings have no idea who designed their patch or what it meant originally. I think you, Les, have some information on that. I have a little bit, and hopefully we'll have some help with the state historians, if you get that program going, where they may be able to come up with something.

H: I guess, Louisa, in summary - I'm certainly not cutting it off if there's anything else you want to amplify - but, you've seen CAP start back in the early 40s in the boon of the war, so to speak, so far as interest in CAP is concerned, you saw it go through the doldrums of the immediate post-war period, and then some resurgence thereafter. What's your feeling about the current status of CAP in both the community and nation?

M: I think the capabilities of Civil Air Patrol are being recognized more widely than they were previously, and I think the military and the FEMA people, who are the Federal Emergency organization are finding that the job can be done by CAP in

many cases, where they just don't have the capability to get it done any other way. The discipline that has been instilled in the members of Civil Air Patrol and their willingness to do a job and to accept training, go through training so as to do the job well, I think has paid off, and I think they have been given more and more types of responsibility and it's just been proven that it doesn't take a war to find use for civilian aviators. Of course, there are a lot of people in CAP who aren't aviators, now, and there are a lot of jobs that take people on the ground. The cadets are not allowed to fly in any missions, but I defy any state to run a mission without the help of cadets, because they are radio operators, they are ground team personnel, they are runners, they serve for marshalling airplanes on the line crews, and they do a fantastic job. You don't have enough seniors in most wings to do that. It takes the cadets, and the cadets are getting valuable training and experience, and the job is getting done.

H: So you feel like we're still a good viable organization from a community service viewpoint.

M: Very definitely.

H: I agree with that, wholeheartedly, Louisa.

M: I also think that the value of the program to cadets in their lives, quite apart from aviation - of course the aviation

training is hard to beat - but the training that a cadet gets in Civil Air Patrol, I think is extremely valuable. If a youngster learns nothing more than to say: "Yes, sir" and "Yes, Ma'am" and stand up when an adult comes in the room and be neat and tidy in their clothes, their time in CAP is well spent. I had a gas station owner ask me one time if I could recommend somebody to pump gas for him, and I said: "Well, what do you want?" He said: "I can teach him to pump gas, but I can't teach him to have manners, and I want him to be polite to my customers." I said: "Well, get a CAP cadet, then."

H: That's a good point. Well, Louisa, let me say that I appreciate the opportunity to do this interview with you, because you are one of those very special people in CAP, not only to me but to a whale of a lot of other people, and I think it's important that, when we record, rather than just a written set of words, we get a record of your feelings about CAP, and that's what we tried to do tonight.

M: I appreciate the opportunity to be interviewed and to put some of the things on tape. I've been a very firm believer in the fact that before people are - or at least while they are still around to do it, we ought to get their words down on tape.

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