

CIVIL AIR PATROL ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WNHC 34.91-2

MR. EDMOND I. EDWARDS



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

CIVIL AIR PATROL
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interview
of
Mr. Edmond I. Edwards
by
Colonel Lester E. Hopper, CAP

Date: 14 September 19912
Location: Rehoboth, Delaware

ACCESS AGREEMENT

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS: .

That I, *EDMOND I. EDWARDS* have this day participated in an oral-magnetic-taped interview with 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 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

Edmond Edwards

DONOR

Dated

14 September 1991

Accepted on behalf of the Civil Air Patrol by

Dated

Lester E. Mopper
LESTER E. MOPPER
COL CAP
14 SEPTEMBER 1991

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 emendations 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

Mr. Edwards starts this oral history interview with personal background information, his early experience in aviation and progresses to his joining C.A.P. in order to fly at the Civil Air Patrol Coastal Patrol Base 2 in Rehoboth, Delaware. His description of his activities while at Rehoboth provides interesting information on the operations at that location. He covers in detail his part of the daring rescue of a base aircrew which had crashed at sea. This action resulted in his being awarded the Air Medal by President Franklin D. Roosevelt personally. Additionally he recalls several incidents which occurred during his tenure at Rehoboth. His evaluation of base effectiveness and overall operations provides valuable material in these areas.

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Conducted by: Col. Lester E. Hopper, CAP

Q: Eddie, if I may, let's start with just a little discussion of your family background, where you came from, when you were born and how you got interested in aviation.

E: I was born in Spartan, North Carolina, July the twenty-third, 1913, and in 1928 my father and mother moved to Delaware, which I lived here in Delaware, mostly ever since. I just got interested in airplanes by seeing them fly over. So, I don't know, just one thing to another, I'm interested in airplanes since I was a kid.

Q: Well, you say when you were a kid, what, ten, teenager?

E: Oh, when I was fourteen years old. Yes, I came to Delaware when I was fourteen years old. Of course, down in Carolina you rarely ever saw an airplane. I think I only saw one or two before I came to Delaware. And seeing these airplanes flying across, why I became

fascinated with them, you know, started reading magazines and anything I could find about it. Of course my father, he thought that was a good way to the graveyard, but the more he was against it, the more I was for it. (Laughter.) So then, I got my first flight instruction about 1932 or '33 in a C-3 Aeronca at Patco Field at Coatesville, Pennsylvania--not Coatesville, right next to Valley Forge, I remember we flew over Valley Forge.

H: That was one of those great big forty-five horsepower engines?

E: Well, this had thirty-six horsepower.

H: It wasn't even a big one! (Laughter.)

E: So then a year or so after that a friend of mine bought a Waco primary glider, which he sold me half interest in, and I flew it a few flights, maybe fifty flights, and then by taking some, a little instruction, when I could scrape up enough money to get a little flying time, and finally in 1937 I bought an airplane, which was an experimental job. It had been built by a fellow that worked for Bellanca, fellow by the name of Carigliano. It was called the SC-1, and the identification on it was 775W. I bought the airplane for seventy-five dollars. It didn't have any engine in it, so I

bought a run-out engine and a wrecked engine for twenty-five dollars. And on the way down, I stopped by Freddie Shallcross's and got a prop, and I said that looks like an OH-5 prop. He said, it is. I said, do you want to sell it. Yes, I'll sell it. What do you want for it. I want ten dollars. I said, I'll take it. He said, now wait a minute, it's got a crack in it, a longitudinal crack, which was about so long and didn't bother the strength, so I bought a prop for ten dollars. So I built up one engine out of the two engines, and put my ten dollar prop on it and put it in my hundred and ten dollar airplane and I've been flying ever since. (Laughter.)

H: When did you get your license?

E: I believe in 1940. My number is C-551-40.

H: 551, that's kind of early. I know you're proud of it. Okay. How about your first interest in Civil Air Patrol. Where did you find out about it?

E: Well, you know the war came along there, and flying was very restricted, but if you belonged to Civil Air Patrol, why you could fly, so I joined up, so as to be able to fly some anyway.

H: Okay, that was where?

E: At Wilmington.

H: And that was with Holger Hoiriis, no doubt.

E: Holger Hoiriis was the C. O. at that time.

H: Then you came down to Rehoboth?

E: That first flight that came down. There was a bunch of us, I believe it was in March, March or April of '42, and I recall we came out of old Bellanca Field, and it had been raining a lot and the field was soft, awfully soft, and there was some question about, you know, taking off, but finally we all got off and came down without any accidents. Then we'd been here a day or so and I went out on the first flight. I think Hugh Sharp was the pilot in that stagger wing Beech he had. I just went along as observer.

H: So the first official flight out of Rehoboth Beach was Hughie Sharp and yourself, then?

E: Well, there was two airplanes. I don't recall who was flying the other one. As a matter of fact I wasn't even the co-pilot with Hughie. I was riding in the back seat, but I do remember Hughie was the pilot.

H: But that was, in effect, the first patrol.

E: The first flight, the first patrol.

H: Although you were Base Number 2, Number 1 was technically established before you all, you flew the first flights down here out of Rehoboth, not out of up there. A little bit of additional thoughts on this thing, what caused you to volunteer to come down here and fly coastal patrol.

E: So I could fly. Simple as that, so I could fly. I was married and my little daughter was, oh, about four months old, and I was working for duPont, and I said, to heck with the job, I'll go down and go fly, which I came down and stayed here for, until late in the fall. During the summer some time, Shelly Edmondson was one of the fliers here, and his brother, Woody, was fixed base operator at Lynchburg, Virginia, and he was a flight examiner. So Bernie Mulliken and I went down there and took a little time from him and took flight checks, and I got a commercial license, with the intentions of going in the Army Air Corps. And this Bernie came down one day after he'd been up to Wilmington and said, I was up at the Fourth Naval District and they're looking for pilots up there, he said, I think I'm going to go in the Navy. Why don't you go up and talk to them? So I said,

well I got a day off coming up here any day, so I'll ride up and see them. So I went up and I was in the Navy before I got out. (Laughter.)

H: Before you knew it?

E: Before I knew it, I was in the Navy. Bernie never did get in the Navy.

H: He recruited you and stayed out himself. Okay. back to your Civil Air Patrol, when you first flew down here, what did you see?

E: Oh lord, I don't know, not very much. I came down as a co-pilot, because I didn't have a great of experience, so I was happy to come down here in any capacity, so for, I don't know, for a month or so, I rode more or less as a co-pilot. I remember John Benedict, who was a fellow who had been flying around here for years, and he ran an airport north of Wilmington called Benedict's Dust Bowl, and I went out with him, and I forget who the other pilot was. I think he was a fellow by the name of Harry Bland, and he had an observer, and we were out here off Rehoboth and right east of Cape May like, and of course I always figured a tanker was a low ship, right down to the water. Looked out here, and here was, I thought it was a tanker, right low, and all at once

the darned thing started to crash dive. I figured there was something wrong there, so that was the first submarine, I think, that was sighted by any Civil Air Patrol.

H: Now when was that?

E: About April or May of '42.

H: Well, you'd been in operation..

E: First they gave us a really cranky story on that. Now I don't know how true this is, but it does make a good story. That he became stuck out there in the mud, and they went out and captured him and drug him up to Philadelphia Navy Yard.

H: That makes a good story.

E: I've heard that several times. I've heard that they did. I hope that's true, but we did sight the first submarine that the Civil Air Patrol saw.

H: But going back a little bit, before you sighted that first submarine, when you first came down here, what were the facilities like? Did you have a good runway?

E: It always was grass. It never was anything but grass, but this is sand out here, and it would dry out

real soon. It never bothered us on account of mud, but we did have a B-17 come in there one time. Of course, it's heavy, you know, and it sank. You know, it went down so deep we had to wait until the ground got firmer, but we had no problem with the field. At that time we had four runways.

H: Dedicated runways, so you didn't have any cross wind problems.

E: Oh, you could land into the wind always. Because there was this one, that one, one went this way and another went way down in back of the woods.

H: But you didn't have any permanent hangars or anything?

E: Yes, there were hangars there. There was somebody, I think Cap. Wenyon, over here, which ended up flying some with us, had been flying out of there, running the airport. There was one or two hangars, I believe there were two. Of course they had fuel, too, you know.

H: Okay, so basically you volunteered for active duty because you wanted to fly airplanes.

E: That's it. That's the bottom line.

H: You were here, like you say, from the beginning to about when did you go in the Navy?

E: I think I was sworn in in November. I actually signed up in July, but I was waiting for an opening down at Corpus Christi, and I believe it was November..

H: November of forty-two.

E: Yes, forty-two.

H: Who were your special buddies down there?

E: Oh, I had some buddies, I had Ed Smith, whom we all knew real well.

H: Now, who was Ed Smith, just for the record?

E: He was the mechanic out there. He was in charge of the maintenance, awfully nice man. Then a fellow by the name of Buzz Thompson, I'd known for quite a while. He was quite a pilot, and as a matter of fact he and some guy got a bet on here one time. Buzz wanted to jump out of the airplane over Rehoboth Bay without a parachute, five dollar bet, but the condition was that I fly the airplane. Well, I said, Buzz, I'm not about to do it because, you damn fool, you get out there, you can fly

it about sixty-five miles an hour, but just as soon as you open that door, you and I and the airplane and all is going in Rehoboth Bay.

H: Besides that they'd take your license away for killing somebody.

E: You might kill yourself too.

H: Just as a rehash, what were your specific duties when you got down here?

E: Well, to fly patrol planes, go out and observe and see what can you find, sight any enemy action, and there was a..we never saw any survivors out there, but we did see some bodies that had been machine gunned in life boats.

H: You did actually see some?

E: We actually saw those. They were off of, let's see, they were about off, not as far down as Ocean City, but say Indian River Inlet, out about ten or fifteen, twenty miles.

H: Were they Americans or English?

E: I don't know. They were just, a life boat down there, well, you could see they were dead. And then a destroyer went to them: They had torpedoed the ship that they were on and then they got in the life boats and the submarine had torpedoed the survivors.

H: What was your flying schedule? Did you fly once a day, twice a day, how long?

E: Twice a day.

H: How'd you fly? You took off and what, flew a route?

E: Oh yes, we had definite routes that we went. There was a couple of them. One went out to, well, out from Cape May, out that way, and another went down to Winter Quarter Shoals off of Ocean City, so we put in, as I recall about two hours duration, the flights were.

H: And you flew in pairs all the time?

E: Always in pairs.

H: What altitude did you fly?

E: Oh, five hundred feet, four to five hundred feet. Say a five hundred foot altitude.

H: And you'd come in and rest between your morning flights and evening flights, or what? What did you do in your spare time?

E: Well, we played poker, for one thing.

H: Good as any.

E: Well, usually there were some collateral duties, you know, you have to help out the maintenance or something. You'd keep busy.

H: Well, then you flew for five or six months or so here, roughly twice a day. What kind of airplanes were you flying?

E: Well, we started out we had Stinson Voyagers, and if you're not familiar, the Voyager is a little Stinson, three place job, and some of them had seventy-five horsepower Continentals, but the better ones had a ninety horsepower Franklin in them. The little Continental kind of beat itself to death, supposed to be a sixty-five horsepower and they revved it up to be a seventy-five horsepower. And then we had some Fairchild 24's, which were probably the nicest airplanes we had, and they had, most of them had 145 Warners in them, and some of them had Rangers in them, 145 to 175. But those

were our nicest airplanes. Then we had that old duck, you know that Sikorsky amphibian. And then we had a couple of others, we had a Monocoupe for a while until somebody tore, went into the woods out there with it and that ended it. But mostly Fairchild 24's.

H: Okay, well the Fairchild 24 was the workhorse.

E: That was the nicest airplane we had, nice comfortable airplane, and easy to fly.

H: You didn't have any of the big Stinsons or the Cessnas or anything.

E: Well, occasionally we had a..we had two Cessna Air Masters, which I dearly loved to fly. It's a nice airplane, particularly the smaller one, the one that had a 145 Warner in it, and it was a beautiful airplane to fly. The other one had, it was a fancier one, cost a lot more money, but it didn't fly near as nice, and then one fellow, Howard Turpin, came down here, he had a Staggerwing Beech, and some other guy came up from down in Texas, he had a Waco straight wing with a J-5 engine in it. I think after I left here they did get a Waco Cabin in here, but that was after I was gone.

H: It's interesting to hear you relate that the major airplane was the Waco..

E: Fairchild.

H: Fairchild.

E: That was an awfully nice airplane, not particularly fast but comfortable and easy to fly.

H: Now, were you here when they armed them?

E: Yes, yes, I was here when they armed them.

H: How were they armed?

E: I forget what the weight of that bomb was, a hundred and twenty-five, a hundred and fifty pounds, but we carried one bomb.

H: One bomb, a hundred pounds. And did they rig any depth charges on any of the aircraft?

E: Seems like later on I did hear that they did put some depth charges, two hundred and fifty pound depth charges on, but most of them was a hundred pound demolition bombs, all purpose bombs.

H: A hundred pound GP-Mark 1, huh? How did an airplane

fly when you hung two people in it and a hundred pound bomb that didn't have much clearance?

E: Well, the Fairchild 24 flew fairly good, but the little Voyager, it had its work cut out for it. It wasn't too fast to start out with, but the 24's, they did pretty good.

H: Now, when you jumped in the airplane and took off and flew out there, how far out in the ocean did you fly, by the way?

E: Normally about the farthest out you'd get would be twenty-five or thirty miles. You'd go out and then fly down parallel to the coast to Winter Quarter Shoals, and I don't know, Winter Quarter Shoals is about twenty or twenty-five miles off, something like that.

H: Did you fly that pattern all the time, or did you pick up convoys and follow them.

E: No, we flew that pattern all the time, it was a regular pattern laid out.

H: Okay, you didn't follow convoys, you just watched the area.

E: No, we just watched for any submarines.

H: Regressing just a little bit, when you got in the airplane, how were you dressed and equipped? Did you have any special protection?

E: Just your normal clothes, but you had a life jacket on.

H: Just a regular old Mae West?

E: A regular old Mae West.

H: The so-called Zoot Suits, and special equipment..

E: They came later, after I left here. Of course it started coming on cold weather, you know, and then they got the exposure suits, but when I was here you just dressed regular, normally, and with the life jackets.

H: Of course, you had the inevitable red epaulets and nobody liked them.

E: Nobody liked them is right.

H: That's the story I get anyway. We talked a little bit about the unusual, and I call it unusual incident of spotting a submarine. You said it was on the surface?

E: It was on the surface and it was almost due east of Rehoboth. If you go out from Rehoboth and come out from Cape May, out there maybe say fifteen miles, ten, fifteen miles each way, that's where it was. It was right up on the surface.

H: Did you drop down on him?

E: No, this Benedict was flying the airplane. Poor John, he's dead and gone now, but he never was real sharp with the radio. Of course, most airplanes didn't have radios at that time, and didn't have that trailing antenna, you know, that you'd tear off over the fence if you forgot about it. And John, the only thing he could ever learn to do was switch from trail to fixed antenna, and he couldn't ever communicate with anybody, so he finally said, you'll have to run back to the base and tell them about this.

H: You were flying the right seat then?

E: I was flying the right seat.

H: That's all you did, was come back to the base. You really don't know anything other.. Did you see him actually run aground?

E: You couldn't tell that. The only thing, we saw him

go out of sight in the water.

H: Because there's been a story about one of them near Cape May that they saw stick in the mud.

E: Well, you couldn't see anything sticking out of the water. If he got stuck in the mud, he was down under the water, down in the water some place.

H: Then you continued to fly with the routine. Of course one of the most interesting things, Eddie, if you will, and I'd really like to get your version of the day of the crash, your activities with Hugh Sharp, that ended up in the award of the Air Medal. So just speak all you'd like.

E: Well, as I recall it, and my memory is pretty vivid on that, it was roughly the middle of the afternoon some time, we got this call that one of the airplanes..

H: That was in July?

E: July, I guess--the middle of the summer, it was nice and warm, beautiful weather, that one of our aircraft was down off of Ocean City, Maryland. The other airplane was circling. So Hugh said to me, he said to get the equipment all ready, whatever you think we need

there, and I want you to go with me on this rescue flight. Some of the boys around there had made up some markers to throw out like if you spot something. It's real easy to miss it, if you ever did anything like that. You see it, and then you don't see it. So they made up something, I forgot what it was made of, they got it from the duPont Company, they put it in paper bags, about a four or six pound paper bag, and when it hit the water it would spread out and make a big marker so you could mark things. So they had a bunch of those bags and I got. I don't know how many now, six or eight. Then you always needed rope, that's another thing I know, so I looked over and there was a coil of rope, so I got this coil of rope and put it in there. So that was the main things I did. So then we took off and headed down there and we found the other airplane right away, he was circling the fellows in the water.

H: Who was it that was in the water?

E: Henry Cross. It was Henry Cross and a fellow by the name of Shelfus was with him as co-pilot. Incidentally, we never did find Shelfus. But anyway we flew around there a couple of times and pretty soon we spotted the body, so I thought we'd make a marker, so I threw one of these things out and there wasn't a damn thing, there wasn't any mark. I threw another one out and there wasn't any mark. After I'd thrown about three of them

out I looked and all I had was bags of sand. (Laughter.) We could see the water was kind of rough down there and Hugh said, well, you know, prepare to land. This old Sikorsky was like a boat, if you know what it looks like, you can see from the pictures, it's just like a boat underneath the wing. But when you get down in it the hatch involves two doors, something like this, and had a bar like you see on some old cellar doors, that had a bar that locked it, and it had this bar, an aluminum bar about so long, and I said, Hughie, do you think I ought to get that bar, because sometimes it kind of sticks, because it was rough as the dickens. Do you think I better get that danged latch undone? He said, yes, I think you better do that, so I get the thing, and about the time I get it, it stuck a little bit, Hugh hit the water, and I went down in the deck, right down on the floor. He gave it the power and went up again, and about the time I got her, boy, he downed me again. So the after the third time he stuck to the water. Then I got the hatch open, and the waves were rather high, and I couldn't see anything, so I climbed out up there and I'd stand on the fuselage, the cabin part there, and hold on to the top of the wing and look around, and finally I spotted this fellow in the water, so I was hollering instructions down through to Hugh about steering him over there, so then we got close to the fellow, and then I started in to get my rope, you know, to get a

rope to throw him a rope. I pulled it out and I had a piece of rope about eight or ten feet long. I thought, that's funny, and all I'd gotten was a bunch of tie-down ropes that Smitty had cut all up in these pieces for tie-downs. That's all I had, these pieces of rope. Well, that was a lost cause, so Hugh got fairly close to him, and I climbed out on this outrigger wing float, which you had one on each side, and reached down and grabbed him by the arm. When I did he let out a yell that you wouldn't believe, because the salt from the salt water and the gasoline had burned the skin. he wasn't tanned, you know, he let out this god-awful yell, so then I got squared away and I got him by the hand and pulled him over and finally I got him in the airplane.

H: And that was who?

E: That was Cross, Henry Cross. So we got him in there, and he was delirious, half-way delirious, and raving and ranting and carrying on, and said he was freezing, so I pulled off my shirt and wrapped the shirt around him for whatever good that did, and then in a few minutes Hugh said to me, he said, you know I damaged that left wing float when I landed. He said, we're taking on water, this thing's going to capsize. I said, well I can take care of that. So I climbed out on the other one and sat there to keep the airplane right side up. Of course, I've had people say what an ordeal I

went through. I didn't have anything to what Hugh had. He was in that cabin with this delirious man carrying on and he was trapped, and I was sitting out on the strut. I could hear him some, but not like Hughie could. So I felt pretty bad about that, because Hughie had quite an ordeal. And so we started to taxi in a westerly direction, and we taxied for about two hours, as I recall, and we met, the Coast Guard came out.

H: Why didn't you just take off and come back to shore?

E: Oh, you couldn't take off. Oh, hell, you couldn't take off, oh, that water, oh, those waves, good God. Good gosh, when I was down there sometimes, the damn waves were higher than the airplane. I don't know how high they were running, but they were high as this danged ceiling.

H: So you had eight or ten foot seas.

E: There was no way under the sun you could ever think about taking off.

H: You didn't know that before you landed.

E: Well, we knew it was pretty rough, but that fellow needed picking up, so we landed.

H: Now, still back-tracking. You said when you flew over, when you spotted them, you only saw the one, you didn't see Shelfus?

E: Never saw the other one. Nobody's ever seen anything of the other one. He went down with the ship. I understand, I believe Shelly Edmondson was flying the other airplane, and he said that he evidently did a high speed stall, spun over the top, and made about a turn and a half and hit the water right square on the nose. He said he went down and then came back up, somehow Henry got out, but the other fellow didn't.

H: The story is it was a high speed stall.

E: Yes, just a high speed stall. He didn't know how to fly. Pure and simple, he didn't know how to fly, and there was a lot of us down here didn't know how to fly either. He wasn't the only one. That's the God's truth, it was never told. Of course, everybody's learned a lot about flying since then, but anyhow they took us in tow.

H: How long did you taxi before?

E: I'd say about two hours, as I recall.

H: Was it dark by then?

E: No, still daylight. And then they took us in tow, and by the time we got in to the Coast Guard Station, as I recall, it was around one to two o'clock in the morning, we'll say one-thirty.

H: And it was dark then for sure.

E: Oh, it had been pitch black for a long time, because I recall, after it got dark, I dragged my feet in the water, and the marine life, phosphorescence, the light.

H: You were playing.

E: That's when my hands got frozen to the struts.

H: You know it's a good idea to go on record with your comments about hands freezing to the struts. What are your comments about that?

E: I wonder who they are talking about. It was summer time, nice and warm, and I was dragging my feet in the water. (Laughter.)

H: Well, let's say they had poetic license and your hands were cramped. Instead of that you were out there

playing, dragging your feet in the water, having a good old time. Okay, what was the condition of Cross when they got him back on land?

E: He was in pretty sad shape. As I said, he was half delirious, raving and ranting and carrying on all the way in.

H: Obviously in shock, but what was the physical injury?

E: Well, he had his back was broken, and from the burns he got from this gasoline and salt water, he got phlebitis in his legs after that, and he was hospitalized for a good long while.

H: Where was he hospitalized, a civilian hospital or the military?

E: I think over here to Beebe Hospital in Lewes, they have a good hospital over here.

H: Okay, that was military?

E: No, no.

H: Civilian. Coast Guard just took him directly to the civilian hospital.

E: I'm sure that's right, because we went to see him a couple of times.

H: Just to set the record straight, was he paying his own hospital bills?

E: This I don't know.

H: I know you all were paying your own way on everything else, but I just thought I'd get that little bit of information. Okay, so you then came back, and I'm sure you flew some more after that, after that particular rescue attempt.

E: Oh, I flew on there until I went in the Navy.

H: Okay, and again, when was it you went in the Navy?

E: As I recall, I was sworn in in December, November, the latter part of November of forty-two.

H: What were the circumstances..(Tape change. Gap in interview. Question must have been about receiving the air medal.)

E: I gathered from listening to him one time, he was

asking some questions, he was applying for something, I didn't know exactly what it was. And then I was down at Corpus Christi in training, and I got orders to come to Washington to receive a decoration from the President.

H: So it really came as a surprise to you when you got the orders.

E: More or less as a surprise. It wasn't entirely out of the blue, but it was, you know, I didn't expect it.

H: So actually you were presented the award by the President himself.

E: By the President, President Roosevelt. Hugh Sharp was there, and Kene Mountain Landis, who was Secretary of Defense at that time, he was there. I remember Kene Mountain Landis, he had a lot of gravy on his tie.
(Laughter.)

H: Well, you just identified who the slightly bald-headed gentleman was in the picture with you and President Roosevelt.

E: And Hughie's wife was there, too.

H: Do you recall anything about what President Roosevelt said, or anything like that?

E: No, I don't. He impressed me, though, as being a rather outstanding man.

H: So you were probably the only man that went through pilot training with an air medal.

E: I probably was, yes.

H: You were still in pilot training at that time, right?

E: Yes, still in training.

H: Well, obviously you did a lot of flying while you were down here, because I believe you were awarded a second Air Medal.

E: No, just one.

H: Well, an oak leaf cluster.

E: Well, I might have, yes.

H: When they awarded Air Medals, everybody who had over three hundred hours got one. Yes, you and Hughie are the only two CAPers who were ever awarded the Air Medal

with an oak leaf cluster. When everybody else got the Air Medal you got an oak leaf cluster. Okay, looking back on that period that you were down here flying, are there any other little incidents, other than seeing the submarine, and the Cross rescue, that you recall?

E: Well, nothing outstanding. We had one fellow by the name of Walker, that went up and bought a Fairchild 24, a beautiful airplane, 4121, he painted it chrome yellow with black trim and black letters and everything. So anyhow he came in here, and I don't know how much they got an hour, but they got so much an hour for the use of the airplane. So anyhow he said, this is the way to spend the war, right here, collecting this money and flying a flight or two a day. So there was a cold front coming in one evening, weather forecast said it was coming in. The weather was kind of bad, and I had operations duty that day, and I said to Hughie's number two man, Sykes Ewing, I said, Sykes, I think that one of us ought to go out on this flight, because this weather is kind of bad, and I am reluctant to send anybody out there. I said, now if you'll take over here I'll go out on this flight. He said, no, he said, I'll go. I said, well, I'm perfectly willing to go. He said, no, you stay here and I'll go. But anyhow he sent four airplanes, two in that direction and two in this direction. And just getting close to dark, the danged front came through, and the wind shifted better than ninety de-

grees, and they came in. They had taken off on this runway that went down kind of southeast. And they tried to land there, and one guy went down through the woods in a Stinson Voyager and between the first two trees he came to, that's where he left the wings on that one. Then I ran my car out, shined it up on the other runway, which is about three hundred degrees so as to identify that that was where we wanted them to come in. Then we called them on the radio to tell them the wind had shifted, and we got them all down but one, this one airplane. He came down and he touched down and then he'd give it the power and go out. It kept getting darker and darker, and finally got so dark you couldn't even see him when he was down. And he came around this time and did the same thing and then the power was cut. This Ralph Fidance was with him, and Ralph had had enough, so he got down on the ground and he cut the power so they'd stay on the ground, and it didn't damage the airplane, it was all right, it ran out and came on in. One thing about this Walker, though, he came down there for about four or five days, every day he'd sit there and he wouldn't say a word, just like a man in a trance. After about four or five days he said, I'm going home. (Laughter.)

H: He had had enough of this crazy stuff.

E: He had had enough.

H: That happens. Okay, you got anything else that, well, you were one of the unique ones who were able to, who went on to serve in the Navy, and obviously that put a temporary halt to your, well put a halt to your CAP career. In light of your later experiences, how do you feel that this operation down here, do you feel like it was of some value?

E: Well, I think it was some value, because, more or less, a morale, because we talked to somebody here, Hughie or somebody, or maybe it was Holger Hoiriis, the people that were on these merchant ships out there, said it looks so good to look up there and see an airplane, because the German submariners, like that submarine out there, he didn't know what we were--just an airplane. So when they would see us they would skedaddle, although we couldn't be like with a pop-gun, you know, as far as damage to them, but they didn't know that. And the merchant seamen said, it just makes us feel so good to look up there and see you guys flying. So I think that was the big thing, was morale for the Merchant Marine.

H: Do you think they were effective in running the submarines off?

E: I think it helped. Indeed I do, because they didn't

know what kind of an airplane it was up there, so they couldn't take a chance.

H: How about the base itself? Do you feel like it was pretty well run?

E: Very well run, very well run. This Hugh Sharp was a fine man, that you would ever meet in your life. I just consider it a great privilege to have known this man.

H: I had the opportunity to meet him, doing a similar thing to what we're doing. So he ran a good tight ship?

E: He ran a good tight ship, and he had enough out there to drive him crazy, too. Some of those dudes were mavericks, I'm telling you.

H: They had fun, huh?

E: Oh, lord. I remember they had a Miss Crilley, who worked there in the office, and she was a kind of a..

H: What was her name?

E: Miss Crilley.

H: Crilley?

E: Crilley, and she was a kind of a, I don't know, sedate, withdrawn, anything but extroverted. Some of the boys out there held parties, you know, they had a lot of parties held, and they had an Army captain down there in charge of the ordnance. So they were having a party there one night, and they were having this party and I guess they were having a great time, but Miss Crilley wasn't there. Naturally, she was never there, and somebody said, you know, where's Miss Crilley? Someone else said, well, she must be dead, because anybody that's not at this party has to be dead. So let's call the undertaker and have him pick up the body. So they called the damn undertaker and got him out there, and Miss Crilley, she didn't have a sense of humor like they did, and you wouldn't believe what a ruckus that caused. You know the captain ended up being a first lieutenant. (Laughter.)

H: Got him in trouble, huh? Got him in trouble. Okay, I promised I'd get you out of here in a reasonable amount of time, but I certainly don't want to cut this thing off, if there's anything else.

E: Well, that's about all I can think of that would be of any consequence.

H: I think it was a real good summary of some of the

Edwards

things that happened down here, and I appreciate your taking the time and effort to do it.