

# **CIVIL AIR PATROL ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW**

WNHC 33 91-1

MR. W. LOGAN GRIER



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

CIVIL AIR PATROL  
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interview  
of  
Mr. W. Logan Grier  
by  
Colonel Lester E. Hopper, CAP

Date: 14 September 19912  
Location: Milford, Delaware

ACCESS AGREEMENT

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS:

That I, LOGAN GRIER 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:

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Logan Grier DONOR

DATED 14 SEPTEMBER 1991

ACCEPTED ON BEHALF OF THE CIVIL AIR PATROL BY

DATED Leester E. Hopper

LESTER E. HOPPER  
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. Grier starts this oral history interview with his early experience with 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 his crash at sea and subsequent rescue. His evaluation of base effectiveness, management and overall operations provides valuable material in these areas.

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H: Logan, if I may, let's start off with a little bit of your personal background, and how you got interested in flying and how you got interested in C. A. P., you know, just a little bit about Logan.

G: Well, it's kind of funny how I got interested in flying. I'll try to make it short. I was up in a plane one time when I was going to college, one of those dollar hops, you know, in an open cockpit, another fellow and I in the front, and we asked him to do something other than flying, and he did wing-overs, and we didn't have any safety belts. We were hanging on by our hands, and scared the hell out of me, and I swore I'd never get in a plane again, and finally I was asked to join a club too, and I said, No, I'm going to see if I can do it. That's the only reason I learned to fly, to try to get over being scared of it. As far as joining the C. A. P., in World War II, I was not married, and I guess I figured you couldn't make out without me, so I tried to join something, preferably in the Air Force, but I was 4F, and I had a chance to go to Rehoboth.

H: Were you in C. A. P. prior to the time that you went to Rehoboth, or you went in just to go?

G: In fact in order to go, I had to buy an airplane. I borrowed money at the bank to buy an airplane. I bought an airplane so I could get in.

H: Okay. Do you recall what type of airplane that was?

G: Fairchild 24.

H: You bought a big one then.

G: Nice airplane.

H: You sure did. Did you fly your Fairchild when you were at Rehoboth?

G: Well, we just put them in a pool. We flew whatever..When I was first there I was only an observer for about two months, because I only had about two hundred hours. Later I got to be a pilot.

H: Okay, was there some criteria about how much flying time you had before you were a pilot?

G: There were some pretty good pilots, and they didn't let the kids like me take over until we knew more.

H: How old were you at the time?

G: Thirty-three.

H: Thirty-three. A kid!

G: Yeah. I was a kid in flying.

H: As far as flying was concerned. What did you do before you got into C. A. P., for a living?

G: I was half owner of a lumber yard here in town.

H: Oh, I see, you were in the lumber business. So actually you had to put a pretty significant business in

Grier

the background to volunteer to go fly with C. A. P. Your motivation for that was what?

G: Pride.

H: Pride and patriotism.

G: Maybe more pride, I don't know. I didn't like somebody telling me I couldn't do something.

H: Okay. So you proved to them and you that you could do what you wanted to do.

G: Proved to me.

H: Yes. That's the most important thing. Okay, you mentioned that while you were a college student...where did you go to school and what did you study?

G: University of Delaware.

H: University of Delaware, and you studied forestry, or something related.

G: No, economics.

H: Economics, pretty much related to owning a lumber yard. You've got to make money if you've got a lumber yard. So you were assigned to Rehoboth, about when was that, Logan?

G: The first of April in forty-two.

H: Okay, that was within thirty days of the base opening up.

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G: Yes.

H: So you were one of the earlier ones to get there. Okay, now when you reported to Rehoboth, what did you do?

G: Well, for a while I just stood around. Then I flew in the back seat some, flew up in the right hand seat, and finally, after about two months, I was flying the airplanes.

H: You mentioned something unusual, there, you flew in the back seat. How long did they keep to their practice of flying three people?

G: Only a very short time.

H: Because I think they found out they had an accident or something, didn't they..

G: I think I only did it twice.

H: After a while it became a prohibition for three to be in there at the same time. How long were you at Rehoboth? Did you stay?

G: Until August 31st of forty-three, when they closed the base.

H: So you stayed for the whole closure and everything else. I'm running ahead a little bit, but where did you go to when you finished up at the base?

G: I went up to get a job with Eastern Aircraft in Trenton, New Jersey. I didn't like the job that they were giving me. I got the flu and I came home to see the doctor and I didn't go back. Then I went with L. D.

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Caulk Company here in Milford as purchasing agent for the rest of the war.

H: Was that the end of your C. A. P. career, or did you become associated with it later on?

G: That was the end of it.

H: When you were out at Rehoboth, did you have any special friends that you hung around with more than everybody else?

G: Yes. There were several that I became very close to.

H: Would you mind telling me who they were?

G: Well, one was a...the two fellows I lived with were Tom Sanschagrín, he was a French Canadian, bush pilot, and Tom O'Day, who now lives in Alabama.

H: Did Sanschagrín by any chance go down to Manteo from here, or did he stay here with you all the time?

G: He stayed here until the end. He was going to go to Suffolk, but he stayed.

H: Were there that many Canadians involved in Coastal Patrol?

G: He's the only one I knew. I say Canadian, he came from New Hampshire. He was a Frenchman, he spoke more French than he did English.

H: Well, the reason I ask is I'm tracing down a story of a Canadian pilot who was at Manteo, North Carolina, who had an accident at sea, and had to land on an aircraft

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carrier, which is a very unique tale. Okay, how much did you fly? Did you fly twice a day, or once a day?

G: Usually once, three hours a day. Once in a while, twice, but most of the time, once.

H: Give me a rough idea of your day. What happened?

G: Well, of course we had two shifts. You'd either go on at about four in the morning, depending on when the sun rose, or at noon, and you worked the first half day or the second half. You'd get up and you'd get a cup of coffee and go out and--in the winter when the air was rough it could be a little mean, because we had no way of...you weren't allowed to take anything along to urinate in. We'd kneel up on the seat, open the door on a crack, aim for the crack, which was kind of unhandy. Anyway, it wasn't too bad. It got pretty rough some times.

H: You took off, and then what did you do, once you got airborne?

G: Well, usually we'd patrol. We'd either go on the north end, we'd go out to Fog Island Light Buoy, off Wildwood, New Jersey, and then head on down to Chincoteague, or we would go down the inside to Chincoteague and head back up. In other words, we had one flight of two going down this way and across.

H: In other words you were patrolling an area.

G: Yes, or we would go out and convoy ships, if there were any there. We'd pick them up down off Chincoteague, they'd always be going north. There'd be nothing going south.

Grier

H: Okay, so you'd pick them up at, what's that location?

G: Chincoteague, Virginia.

H: So you followed the convoy. Did you fly right on top of it, off to the side?

G: We'd fly out away from it, ahead. I don't know if we were right, but we'd fly to the outside or in front.

H: At what kind of altitude?

G: We started at around a hundred feet, and later we were flying at around four or five hundred feet.

H: Any reason for your flying high, would your visibility be better.

G: Well, somebody got the idea that we should change it.

H: One of those "That's the way it's going to be."

G: Yes. Probably better, I don't know.

H: So you said that was usually about a three hour flight at any given time. Then you'd come back in. When you were doing your flying, did you see anything unusual out there.

G: Yes. I saw two submarines. Of course we saw a lot of marine life, but that's beside the point. One time we saw a tug that was blown up by a mine, and about a week later...

H: Excuse me, can you tell me about when and where that

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was?

G: Right out off of Delaware Bay, right off the breakwater, and then later found a body. But another time we found a mine, and we held the position on the mine until a minesweeper could get to it.

H: Do you have any opinion as to whether or not it was a German mine or one of ours that had broken loose?

G: Oh, it had to be German.

H: It had been laid by one of the subs.

G: Yes, they'd come in at night.

H: Now you say you spotted two subs?

G: Yes.

H: Again, about when and where?

G: Well, one was about the early summer of forty-two, and the other one was early forty-three.

H: Let's talk a moment about the one of early forty-two. Where was it?

G: It was unusual. He was on the surface about five miles off of Bethany Beach. Why he was there, I don't know. We dove and he dove. Actually, he could have sat on his deck and shot us down with a shotgun, but anyway he dove. He hit the bottom, stirred the sand up. I saw him going out, but our radio went out, and we couldn't get a call through.



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H: Now that was before you had bombs on the aircraft.

G: Yes. We had nothing.

H: You had nothing. There was no question about it being a German submarine.

G: Oh, no doubt.

H: And you could not get any help. Now how about the second situation?

G: Well, I just saw a periscope, it was down about right off Ocean City, Maryland. He was headed south, and we reported the position, and later somebody else reported it, and they pretty much plotted where he was. I don't think they got him.

H: You saw a periscope. That's a pretty small thing in the water, but it was making a wake, or something? Could you see the outline of the boat down there?

G: No, only the scope. It looked sort of like the end of a broomstick.

H: You had to be looking close.

G: I guess so.

H: Did you say you spotted some survivors or bodies or something?

G: Some of the boys did. All I found was a body.

H: Where was the body, just floating around out there?

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G: It was out off Delaware Bay.

H: You didn't hear any rumors about where it came from.

G: Oh, yes, from a Navy tug that hit a mine and blew up.

H: Okay, that body came off the tug that you talked about. And that was a Navy tug, not a commercial tug. Go ahead. If there was anything else unusual.

G: Well, I don't know really. I don't think of anything unusual. Well, it was unusual one day. We had a heavy fog, we never missed a day of flying, fog or whatever, I think we were wrong, but we flew them all. But one time the fog had backed ships up in Delaware Bay and when they came out, the convoy had to be at least three to four hours long, and you'd see all the blimps and the, well not destroyers, but smaller ships, our planes, really had them convoyed.

H: You just watched it steam on out.

G: Well, we sort of convoyed them out.

H: Oh, you followed them out, that was coming out of Delaware Bay, you said.

G: Yes, going north.

H: Going north. You mentioned earlier you saw that tug sink. You didn't see any big ships sunk or anything like that with any permanence. Sunken ships that you used as sighting points or anything?

G: Well, we knew that several were sunk before I got there, none after I was there, not that I had anything to

do with it.

H: Well, I certainly think that the operations had something to do with it.

G: I think we scared them.

H: I think we scared them off. Submarines don't like airplanes, even if they don't have any bombs. Incidentally, the same kind of operations you put on here, the British did earlier in 1939, and they actually called theirs the Scarecrow Patrol.

G: I didn't know that.

H: Of course the biggy that I should know ahead of time, in which you were involved, I think you had a little trouble with an airplane out over the ocean one day, didn't you?

G: Yes, one quit on me.

H: Tell us a little bit about that.

G: Well, we were convoying a British ship down off the Maryland coast, and it just quit. We were about five hundred feet, which gives us one minute. Of course, I pushed the starter, and nothing worked, so then I have to land it. But it was a day that we were in a fog, so there was no horizon, a dead calm, not a breath of air, so we've got no head wind. When we got down close to the water I realized you couldn't tell where the water was, you broke down into it, and I had to keep holding it off and holding it off and holding it off. Fortunately, I dragged the tail wheel, and that slowed us down a little bit. We must have hit, well, we hit at sixty or whatever

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and of course you know that as soon as you hit you stop. We didn't get hurt. I had a pretty good black and blue mark where the belt was, and a Navy plane picked us up about two hours later.

H: Well, who was with you at the time?

G: Walter Fullerton.

H: So it was you and Fullerton. Fullerton was your observer.

G: Yes.

H: How long into your flight did this occur that the engine died?

G: Oh, I'd say an hour and a half, maybe.

H: Did you have time to get radio information back to the base? Is that how they knew you were going down?

G: You see we always had two planes. Fullerton started to call in and I told him to forget the radio and get his survival gear and get ready, and the other plane called it in, except they called it in twelve miles wrong. In the fog it took a while to find us.

H: Who was in the other aircraft, do you recall?

G: A new pilot named Harmon from New York, and I forget who the observer was, but he'd had a bad night and he was sleeping and he didn't know where they were. Anyway, they found us, the French Canadian found us.

H: French Canadian flying...

G: Sanschagrin.

H: Oh, Sanschagrin found you.

G: He went up, found the ship we were convoying, followed the wake down.

H: In other words, he took off from Rehoboth to come out and look for you.

G: Yes.

H: Okay, what was he flying?

G: He was in a Fairchild sea plane.

H: Fairchild on floats. What were you flying, by the way, when you crashed?

G: Fairchild.

H: Fairchild? You don't remember what the airplane number was or anything.

G: Well, it was a Ranger motor.

H: One of the Fairchild in-lines, then.

G: Yes.

H: Okay. So you crashed the airplane. Did you have any difficulty getting out?

G: Well, I did, because it shook me up and I forgot I had the seat belt on, and I thought I was cramped in, and

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then I realized to get the belt loose, and I got out.

H: Were you under water at the time, or what?

G: Yes, I was under water, but not that far. I thought I was way down, but..

H: The airplane flipped over then when it went in?

G: It went up like that.

H: Oh, it went up like that, and the tail stuck up.

G: The tail stuck up.

H: That's right. This is the place where Smitty put in some buoyancy and the tails of your airplanes stuck up.

G: Yes, that's right. That's the only plane they were able to save.

H: What was that he put in the back end of it, to give it some buoyancy?

G: Five gallon cans, soldered them airtight and tied them in.

H: That was an interesting innovation.

G: It worked very well.

H: Now how about your personal survival gear, what were you wearing at the time? Did you have a life jacket?

G: Yes. Mae West.

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H: A standard Mae West?

G: And we each had a small one-man raft.

H: Were you able to get it out of the airplane and get in it?

G: Yes. Fullerton did that, fortunately.

H: He got both rafts out for you?

G: Yes. The two were in a package together.

H: Okay. Both rafts were together, and he got out of the airplane and you got out of the airplane and both of you managed to get in your rafts. Now you say the Navy, after Sanschagrín found you, the Navy came out and got you. That was after about how long?

G: Oh, maybe two hours.

H: About two hours.

G: This plane was over at Cape May Naval Air Station, and they came out and picked us up.

H: Okay, what was it, a PBV or something like that?

G: No, it was a Grumman personnel carrier.

H: Widgeon. That was a good workhorse.

G: Very good.

H: Well, what happened when you got back to the base, did people kid you a lot?

G: No. First of all, we went in to Cape May. Ambulance met us, we all go down the runway, siren wide open, and we got to the hospital. The doctor went out with the two pilots, and finally told the doctor we'd had a bad experience and we needed something. So he broke open a case and took out some twenty-five year old apple brandy, we each had two of them and it kind of made it all all right.

H: So they took you back to Cape May, and what did you do then?

G: They took us to Rehoboth.

H: They checked you out at the hospital and made sure you were okay.

G: Yes. We were all right.

H: Then they took you back to Rehoboth. When you got back to Rehoboth, what was the reaction there?

G: We were greeted nicely. Maybe I should tell, but the doctor in Cape May, I told him when I got back to Rehoboth I was going to tie one on. He said, Don't do it, it won't work. But I tried it, and it made me sick as a dog. That's the only effect I had, so I learned, even though I didn't think I was shook up, I guess I was.

H: Yes. We play games with ourselves. You still had a lot of time to serve after that, didn't you?

G: No, that was July thirty-first. We had one month to go.



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H: You had one month to go. Did you fly some more after that?

G: Well, our planes were so shot that we didn't fly much. Cape May did most, I mean Atlantic City did most of our flying. I think I flew three times after that.

H: You did fly though, some more.

G: Oh, yes.

H: But the problem was aircraft, not Logan?

G: Yes.

H: Now, of course there was an organization established to recognize people like yourself within the Civil Air Patrol called the Duck Club. Did they ever formally introduce you into the Duck Club?

G: No, but Hugh Sharp gave me a pin.

H: At the base?

G: He gave it to me at a reunion.

H: Oh, he didn't give it to you..

G: I just got one two or three years ago. It didn't matter, but..

H: How about Sanschagrín, did he ever get one?

G: I don't know. I believe he did. I'm pretty sure he did.

Grier

H: Sometimes they were available, but your name was listed as being one of them, and we'll go into a little bit of that later on.

G: I had one anyway.

H: You mentioned a little bit about radios. What kind of radios did you all have? Were they pretty good or..?

G: Well, starting off, they were not so good, but after a while they did a good job for you.

H: And you were able to pretty much communicate when you were out at sea and everything else.

G: After the first three or four months we made out pretty well.

H: What would you say the range of those things was?

G: Well, they were well over a hundred miles.

H: Okay, did you have any unusual type airplanes down here?

G: We had a monoplane that ground-looped every time it was on the ground, and we had a Sikorsky amphibian, which was unusual. I think that's all.

H: Did you get to fly the Sikorsky?

G: I flew with the pilot one time, and he turned it over to me, craziest thing I ever saw. You'd make a left turn and fly straight, and it seemed like a minute and it would turn. You'd dip your wing, and it would stay up

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and then it would dip. It had the greatest lag I ever saw in an airplane. I didn't think I wanted to fly it.

H: It was a good straight and level airplane. Huh?

G: Yes.

H: Did you have any friends that were involved in any of these unusual incidents, that they related to you, like seeing a submarine, other than the ones you saw, or seeing any sinkings?

G: Of course, everybody was your friend. I don't really think of any.

H: How about living? How did you live when you were in Rehoboth?

G: Well, we all found our own living. I lived with Sanschagrin and O'Day, the three of us rented a house together, and some of the others did the same thing.

H: You did your own cooking, and all that good stuff?

G: Yes. We did all our own.

H: How about your pay and things like that while you were down there?

G: We got eight dollars a day per diem, and you furnished everything.

H: Okay, did you get it frequently or infrequently?

G: At first, I think for two months you didn't get any, and then it came through.

Grier

H: Then it got standardized, as the saying goes, they started making pay days.

G: Yes.

H: Some kind of general questions about base effectiveness, how well equipped do you think the base was?

G: Well, it improved. To begin we didn't even have any safety gear at all. Finally, had just a rubber belt with a cartridge in it, and then got the Mae Wests, and Ed Smith did a wonderful job. You know the Navy and the Pentagon, I think, requisitioned all of the Fairchild spare parts. Ed couldn't get them. He had to improvise. He kept us flying for nearly a year and a half without getting what he needed. He did a great job.

H: How about the rest of the base? The radios you said eventually got to being okay.

G: Yes. They worked all right.

H: How well was the base managed? How well was it commanded?

G: Hugh Sharp did a good job.

H: Okay. Were you there when Holger Hoiriis was there?

G: When I went, he was the commander, but he was terminally sick. He was never there after I got there, and soon after that Hugh took over.

H: Okay, Hugh took over, and he ran the thing pretty

well?

G: I don't know about Hoiriis but Hugh ran it very well.

H: Everybody pretty well respected him and liked him?

G: Very much.

H: Okay, how well do you feel the base was operated?

G: Oh, I think we did a good job. Of course, we cut up a little bit maybe, and didn't do everything we should, but everybody tried. Nobody sabotaged it.

H: Did they have parties at night?

G: Yes.

H: How about drill and all that foolishness, that you all had to put up with?

G: Oh, for about a couple of weeks. It didn't last long.

H: It didn't last long. In other words, you were there to fly airplanes, not to play soldier.

G: Yes.

H: What kind of a summary statement, what's your own personal overall evaluation of the worth of Coastal Patrol, the whole concept?

G: Observation of what, now?

H: How good was Coastal Patrol, did it accomplish

anything?

G: I think it did. Well, I believe we accomplished, because the submarines left. But also, everybody, oh I won't say everybody was diligent all the time, but still, they all tried, and there was very little trouble, very little difficulty.

H: Now you say the submarines left.

G: Well, pretty soon, we weren't seeing any more.

H: You weren't seeing them any more, and the reported sinkings were tapering off.

G: Yes.

H: Okay. Anything we haven't gone over, Logan, that you'd like to cover with us?

G: I don't think of anything, Colonel.

H: Well, it's been a pleasure, and we'll just stop it off there.