Frank Valentini was born 11 June 1919 in the Iron Range town of Chisholm, St. Louis County, Minnesota. One of eleven children of Italian immigrant parents, he grew up in Chisholm and graduated from high school there in 1937. Following high school Frank worked at a Civilian Conservation Corps camp in northern Minnesota (1937-39) and spent time as a steelworker in the Detroit suburb of Wyandotte, Michigan (1939-42).

With the entry of the US into the war, Frank was drafted in July 1942 into the US Army Air Corps. After Basic Training, he received advanced schooling at Camp Crowder, Missouri, as a ground radio operator. In 1943 Frank was posted to the 14th Air Force and dispatched to a remote duty station near Kunming, in southwest China. Operating with a small group of Air Corps personnel, the unit’s mission was to direct Allied aircraft towards enemy targets. Frank remained here until the end of the Pacific war in August 1945; in October of that year he returned to the US and was discharged with the rank of sergeant.

Back in civilian life, Frank got married in 1947 (wife Patricia), and used GI Bill benefits to obtain a degree from St. Cloud Teachers College (1949). He taught school in Deer River, Minnesota, (1949-53) and Tower-Soudan, Minnesota, (1953-59) before returning to Chisholm in 1959. He then taught at Chisholm High School until his retirement in 1988. He was interviewed at his home in Chisholm.

Bronze Star recipient, 1945.

Interview contains many details of living and fighting in rural China, 1943-45.
Interview Key:
T = Thomas Saylor
F = Frank Valentini
[text] = words added by editor, either for clarification or explanation
(***) = words or phrase unclear
NOTE: interview has been edited for clarity

Tape 1, Side A. Counter begins at 000.

T: Today is 27 September 2002, and this is the interview with Frank Valentini here in Chisholm, for the Oral History Project of the World War II Years. First, Frank, on the record, thanks very much for taking time today to speak with me. Thanks very much.

F: My pleasure.

T: In speaking with you I’ve learned a couple things, and just to recap: You were born here in Chisholm on 11 June 1919. You were the tenth of eleven children of Italian immigrant parents who came to this country before World War I. You went to Chisholm schools and graduated from Chisholm High School in 1937. After high school you were in a CC Camp [Civilian Conservation Corps] for a number of years and then took a long trek to the Midwest and worked in a steel mill in Michigan for a little over two years until you were drafted into the US Army in 1942.

You did Basic Training at Camp Crowder, Missouri, and then shipped overseas. After service you, with the GI Bill helping you, went to St. Cloud Teachers’ College, graduated in 1949, and then were a teacher in Deer River, Minnesota, [and] Tower-Soudan, [Minnesota,] before coming to Chisholm in 1959. You retired as a teacher in 1988. You’ve been married to your wife Patricia since 1947 and you have one son. Everything right so far?

F: Correct.

T: In 1941 you were working in a steel mill in Michigan when the US did get involved in the war. The Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 and I’m wondering if you remember what you were doing when you first heard that news?

F: I remember very vividly. I was sitting in a tavern Sunday afternoon, about two o’clock in the afternoon, visiting with a friend, a close friend, who was already in the service. The law at the time had been passed in 1940, the peacetime draft law was passed in 1940, and anyone between the ages of twenty-one and, if I’m correct, twenty-eight, maybe twenty-six, twenty-eight was subject to military service for a year. This was the first peacetime draft law in the history of our country, if I remember correctly. Due to the fact that I had a very high number I wasn’t approached yet, but this friend of mine had been approached early. He had about
seven months already of service. He was stationed in what we call Camp Kellogg, close to Detroit, Michigan, and he’d come to visit on weekends.

We were visiting that Sunday afternoon when we heard the report on the radio. The friend said, “I have to get back to camp right away. Don't worry about it,” he said, “we’ll take care of this in about six months.” I said, since it would be my turn eventually, “I have to be called. I have to put in my time.” Then I recalled other people who had already completed a year. Hank Greenberg [of the Detroit Tigers], for example, had completed his year and Pearl Harbor materialized and he got recalled immediately. This friend of mine of whom I speak that said, “We’ll take care of it in six months,” I didn’t see him until five years later. He went through the whole European campaign.

(1, A, 70)

T: How did you react when it became clear the United States was at war? What did that mean for you personally?

F: That meant that now I had to go to war. That meant that I had to help defend my country. I already had studied some history with Hitler and Mussolini’s aggressions and the like, and the feeling was such that we would be a part of this inevitably. When I was in the CC Camp, someone came to speak to us at a lyceum in 1938 and he said, “Fellas, get ready. Hitler’s moving. Mussolini’s getting really.” He said we would be in this thing eventually. At the time I sort of realized. I felt that being single, two of my brothers of the ten of us boys, the three of us were single and I said we would go. The others were married. They would be on the home front. I never dreamed that eventually there would be eight of us serving in World War II.

T: Which I think you mentioned on one of our telephone conversations, is some kind of a record in our state?

F: Supposedly it’s a record in the state. Not nationally I understand. Somebody once told me, nationally no, there’s a nine member. I have never received any verification and I don’t much care. But the point is, I’ve been told. It’s been publicized ever since post-World War II. In our local paper and area papers and the like, that eight of us serving is a Minnesota record. I would like to go on record to say fine, I’m proud of that fact but I think speaking of records, the record should be attributed to the Iron Range because the Iron Range was composed of immigrants who had large families.

As I was growing up during the Depression the common number of a family was eight or nine kids. Eight or nine children. Whether they were male or female. We were always paired off it seemed. In other words, somebody my age was a member of the families that existed on the Iron Range. It’s something that should be mentioned. For example, Walt Mainerich’s family, there were six in uniform. I don’t know if they all saw any action at all, but six in uniform at one time. Another family that I know of had six. They lost two. Another family: five in World War II and three in Korea. Three in war. And the one that I speak of five, lost two. One in China in my theater of war. So what I’m saying is fine, I’m proud of the fact that eight of us
served, but I would say that the record belongs to the Iron Range. Over in Kinney for example, a small location on the Range, there were six and one casualty. I’m repeating it. I think if we talk about records, the Iron Range was unique in this situation.

T: Good. You were drafted in mid-1942. What was the response of your family, of your folks, when it became clear that it was your time to go?

F: I was drafted but I volunteered first. Right after Pearl Harbor the single brother and I--there were three of us that were single. One was in high school. He was a 1941 graduate. But two of us were single and immediately with Pearl Harbor we said let’s go and spend Christmas in Chisholm with my father. My mother had passed away a year before, almost to the date. December 29, 1940. Almost to the date. So she was not living, thank God. She was not living. My father, alive, living. So we said let’s go. We’ll spend the holidays with dad and the brothers that are living in Chisholm, then we’ll come back to Detroit and we’ll volunteer. And we did. And my father definitely in favor of. The Italian immigrant citizen. Italy being one of the objectives still. So then we returned to, the two of us returned, to Detroit, Michigan. Went to the Federal Building. He volunteered to join the Army Air Corps. I tried to get into the Navy. I failed the eye test.

(1, A, 141)

T: You had trouble with your eyesight even then.

F: Yes. I failed the eye test so when we came out of the building I said, “Bello,” his name was Bello. I said, “Bello, how did you do?” He said “I’m in the Air Force.” I said, “I’m not. I’m not in the Navy. They wouldn’t take me.” “What are you going to do?” I said “I’ll go back to work.” He said, “Are you going to volunteer for the Army?” I said “No. The man suggested that I go down to the third floor and the Army will take me because they need camouflage experts.” I still don’t know what they were referring to. So I said, “No. I’ll wait until I get drafted.” The Army. So all right. So it was my turn.

I was called in when I was in Wyandotte, Michigan. I asked to be referred to Chisholm. I wanted to leave in a Chisholm contingent. So they allowed me to do that. Ironically they lost track of me. I kept waiting and waiting and pretty soon another brother who was married was called and I went to the draft board with him telling whomever was there that they made a mistake that this brother was named Frello Valentini. “F,” I said, “You’re looking for “F” Valentini. You’re looking for me and not Frello.” “Oh, no. We’re looking for Frello.” Then the guy said, “We’re looking for you also. Where have you been?” I said, “I’ve been waiting.” He gave me a postcard and told me to report. I said, “You’ll have to send this through the mail.” “No, you have the card. You report for the physical.” Which I did. This Frello waited a while and eventually he was able to choose and go into the Navy. I didn’t have a choice. I had to go into the Army.
T: Where did you go for Basic Training?

F: Camp Crowder, Missouri.

T: Was that a new part of the country for you?

F: Oh, definitely. I had never been much beyond, well, Detroit, where I was working in the steel mill. I had been in Detroit. But that was the extent of my traveling other than to get to Minneapolis occasionally, that was a big venture.

T: What was that part of the country like from your perspective? The people or...

F: It was certainly different. The people were certainly different in comparison. Here in my little town we had definite differences in ethnic background, but our culture was the same. We had people that spoke... every one of my friends were bilingual. If they were Italian they spoke Italian and English. If they were Finnish they spoke Finnish and English. If they were Serbian they spoke Serbian and English. Croatian and English. But once we got beyond the kindergarten level and into the grade school we learned the English language. The Italian language was spoken in my home. I was thankful that my older brothers were there because they had to contend with learning the English language on their own more or less, but I learned much from them. I was bilingual. I spoke the English language fluently because they were there already. The first two or three had a difficult time.

T: How did this differ from being down in Missouri?

F: Hillbillies. It wasn’t the same immigrant group that I was raised with. They had been in the country. Their ancestors, their people had been in the country longer than mine. We, those of us that had come from this area, are not too derogatory. We were careful as to what we said. But they were hillbillies.

T: Did people tend to stick together in certain kind of groups in Basic Training? Sort of little cliques or things like this?

F: Yes. But different. There was a Minnesota contingent when I was there, and we were together more or less. We learned to associate with others. It was intriguing, really. Different state, different location. Interesting where you were from. I’m from Oklahoma. I’m from Missouri. I’m from this location, wherever it was. It was interesting to me to associate with people that weren’t from my state or my area. In fact, we used to compare. Also, I said I’ve really got a real good education when I compare with a couple of these guys that I’m associating with. There were some who—I hope I’m saying the right thing here—they couldn’t even write a letter to home. You had to help them write a letter home. I received a very good education.

T: In Chisholm schools.
F: The mining companies did it for us. They had to keep the immigrants here to do the common labor in the underground mining and they furnished homes. They built the school. We had swimming pools here. We had a beautiful auditorium. Go over to Hibbing and see the beautiful school. Mining company. All the supplies that we used in our classes were given to us by the mining companies. Pencils, paper, books, everything.

T: What you're saying here is that this really contrasted with the level of education that, it appears, a lot of these people perhaps from the south had received.

F: Definitely. Definitely.

T: Was there discrimination between northerners and southerners or differences that caused people to have friction between these groups?

F: I didn’t notice too much of it. There seemed to be a difference in regard to feeling different. They were different than the others. I didn’t notice anything too negative really. I seemed to get along with them. One of my closest friends, not in Basic but eventually, was a Hawaiian native.

T: You went overseas in mid-1943. So after Basic Training did you have some additional training to learn the particular job that you had as a radio operator?

F: Oh, yes. From the Basic we were trained in Camp Crowder, Missouri.

T: You did Basic and your radio operator all at Camp Crowder.

F: Definitely.

T: What exactly did that training entail? What do you do to become a radio operator?

F: I don’t know. Some people say, some veterans say, that these aptitude tests didn’t mean anything. The aptitude test we took in Fort Snelling. From here we went to Fort Snelling and got sworn in and uniformed and all that. Then we took aptitude tests. When I spoke to some, they said that it didn’t mean much. I beg to differ. I had visions of infantry. I thought the only thing that existed in this military would be infantry. I had visions of World War I. Over the top and all that old stuff. I thought, am I going to be fighting hand to hand and all that? I had visions of that when I went into the service. They shipped me from Fort Snelling to Camp Crowder. What's this? Somebody mentioned noncombat. That's where noncombat people are. You're going to be trained. You're going to have some combat training but we're not going to be situated in combat. You're a trained radio operator. Then from the Basic Training I went right there. This was a signal corps camp. In fact the braid on my overseas cap was orange, which signified I was signal corps. If I’m right, I think the infantry was blue. I’m not sure. See they have a braid to identify
what branch of the Army you're in. Mine was orange. I was a signal corpsman. So I was taught. In fact I still have a booklet with the code, the dots. I have never forgotten. I couldn’t forget it because I used it. My training was such. All day we would listen to the dots and dashes. Listen. Then we’d try to read and record what we heard eventually. Then we were taught with sending the key. We learned the alphabet which I haven’t forgotten.

T: Morse code.

F: Morse code. There you are. I say I haven’t forgotten, because I used it all the time. Then the procedure. I also was able to attend, they called it a fixed-station course, school. There we had the teletype and they had a different type of key. We had a bug. It was a bug. More rapidly. The key was a slow thing. *(taps out call letters)* Those are my call letters. I haven’t forgotten my call letters. “Roger Baker Eight.” I was eight man George. *(taps again)*

**(1, A, 264)**

T: Never forgot that.

F: Never forgot.

T: You used it for a long time.


T: In Basic Training and during your training to be a radio operator, did you notice other racial groups in your camp or in your classes? Blacks, American Indians, Hispanics?

F: No. There was a black contingent, a black group in my camp. They were segregated. The reason I know is when we went to town we bumped into them. In uniform. When I went to... Joplin was the big town and Neosho was a small one.

T: The off limits area was close to Camp Crowder.

F: Yes. Neosho was smaller and closer. It was a town like my hometown. Small town. Joplin was more like Hibbing to me. Bigger.

T: In your observation, how would describe the relations between blacks and whites at Camp Crowder?

F: I didn’t notice any relationship. I recall on a Saturday night I met a couple. I would exchange greetings and they would say, “Hi, Brother. How are you?”

T: In town or in the camp.
F: Out of camp. Never met them in camp. Then some, there were some with me that wouldn’t associate at all. I don’t what I’m trying to say here is, but we were raised different. Different ethnic groups that we learned to accept. Religion for example here is hot, the Orthodox faith compared to the Catholic faith and the Lutherans whoever they are. The other denominations. I learned and we learned that that’s accepted. We’d argue, growing up we’d argue, naturally. And then with education realize, what a stupid argument.

I, for example, I accepted whomever I spoke to. If I saw a black fella in uniform I would exchange greetings. Wouldn’t associate with them. There was no association at all. It was real segregated. I did become accustomed to blacks in Detroit but never any friends or any closeness.

T: In town, in Joplin for example, when you were off base, white and blacks could have associated with each other. It wasn’t segregated. Is that right?

F: I don’t think it was. The places that I frequented I never saw any blacks. I think it was real segregated.

T: That’s Missouri after all, right?

F: Yes.

T: In your classes at Camp Crowder then there was a segregated black unit or an area for the blacks?

F: Definitely. Yes. And I think there was a contingent of WACS there too, if I’m right. Yes.

T: Did you have any contact or interaction with the women in uniform on base?

F: No.

T: The Army kept things pretty...

F: Oh, definitely. Yes.

**(1, A, 301)**

T: In town did you see women in uniform or interact with them there?

F: Very seldom but they were there. The WACS were there.

T: What was your feeling then towards women in uniform?
F: I wish there were more of them *(laughs)*. They should send some over to where I was in China.

T: They didn’t, did they?

F: No. There were some women nurses. The Red Cross workers came through one time. Two women came to where I was in China. But the corpsmen were male. I spent some time in a mobile hospital and the corpsmen were not women.

T: It was all men.

F: And the doctors were. It was mainly for the Chinese casualties. For example, I met one of the doctors there in China. He told me he was getting a wealth of experience with what was going on. And the value of life was so low, so cheap that… When he told me this, this doctor, he wasn’t telling me that he wasn’t trying to save lives, but if he lost them, there wasn’t the same feeling as would be with losing an American soldier. The value. There were so many. It was terrible.

T: I want to ask you more about that. When did it become clear to you, Frank, that you were headed for China, the China-Burma-India theater?

F: *(laughs)* It came clear to me when I was in an air base. The air base was called Charbau on the far end of India. I ended up eventually in Karachi. We were in Karachi about three weeks doing some more or less maneuvers.

T: When were you first made aware that you were going to be shipping over in that part of the world? Did that become clear to you at Camp Crowder or were you sent somewhere else?

F: No. No. When we were crossing the equator.

T: You shipped out from the West Coast?

F: The East Coast. From New York.

T: When you went to New York you didn’t know where you were going really?

F: No. Definitely not. We went to a camp of embarkation. Camp Kilmer, New Jersey. I was there for four or five weeks. I was a casual. They called me a casual. Fill in. No outfit. With a regular outfit. Whoever was with me were casual. Today this guy would be gone, somebody would be gone.

T: Were you just kind of hanging out?

F: Definitely. It was an amusing situation because we got to be like the MASH outfit. We had a commanding officer that would change every week. A second lieutenant.
And he would be shipped off. For example, I remember distinctly. I wasn't feeling well and I wouldn't get out of bed. I was in bed until ten o'clock or noon. I wouldn't get up. Finally one of my friends called an officer and he said, "I'll order you to report to the hospital." And I did. I don't know. I had contracted some kind of a fever of a sort. I was sick with the flu or something. I was hospitalized for over a week, almost two weeks. Then friends of mine left. When I came back to this barracks they were gone. We had no semblance of Army discipline at all.

T: What a strange situation.

F: Then one of those guys said we should start drilling a bit. For a while there we didn't have any discipline, any leadership, any anything.

T: No purpose either.

F: No. No.

T: Did you know that you were essentially just waiting until something came along for you to do?

F: Yes. We were told. When we left Camp Crowder it took us five days to Kilmer. Sideways, this way, past Washington D.C. Where the heck are we going? We were in our ODs [term for uniforms] and it was terrible. It was hot. Slept on the train. The troop train. No regular bunks. Five days on that train. Terrible. Then we got to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, a port of embarkation. From there we had to go overseas. When we got on the ship finally, I remember we were out a day or so and we were inquiring as to where is the convoy? Who is going to help us? Where is the escort? They said the ship we were on was the third largest in the world. The name was SS West Point. It had been the SS America.

T: So it was an ocean liner.

F: Ocean liner. Beautiful. So they said we didn't need any. Then about the sixth or seventh day you're buddy, buddy. When the hell are we getting to Europe? We're not going to Europe. [Where] we thought we were going. We were out eight, nine days. Then pretty soon we're crossing the equator. We're told we're crossing the equator. I got a card showing, proving I crossed the equator. King Neptune.

T: Oh, that's the home of the shellbacks...

F: There you go.

T: Oh, my gosh. Somebody else told me. Shellbacks and...

F: I got the green card. They were going to initiate. We had ten thousand troops on board. Word goes around they're going to initiate. Oh, come on. That was out.
Okay. Fine. The commander of the ship realized it was crazy, but they initiated the rookies. They knocked the hell out of them. They cut their hair. What we didn’t like: they were breaking eggs over their heads and they’re feeding us powdered eggs. We said, “What the hell are they doing?” They shouldn’t be doing that. So we crossed the equator and we got down to Rio and we docked at Rio for supplies.

T: Rio de Janeiro.

F: That was Brazil and they were neutral.

T: They finally came in on our side later.

F: Did they? I didn’t know that. So then the compartment commander, a second lieutenant, said dig down deep in your D bags and put on your suntans. We’re going to have shore leave and do the night ashore. I thought, wow! He came back two hours later and he said we can’t do it. We have black troops on board. I knew we had black troops on board because they were in the chow line feeding us. Whatever they were doing. They were in a different compartment. I don’t know how many we had on board but the port authorities wouldn’t allow them, the blacks, to disembark so we couldn’t go. The only ones that got off were the officers, the Red Cross workers and the nurses.

T: So there were blacks on board the ship. Were they ship’s personnel? Was that what they were?

F: No. They were troops. I never bumped into them because I didn’t know where they were.

T: But they were obviously on board the ship somewhere.

F: They were on the ship because they were given KP duty. Some of them. Also I remember we were located in compartments and pretty soon someone said we had to move to another. We were going down, down, down. Pretty soon we found we were moved from one compartment to another, and one of the guys that was with me said we were now below the waterline. Another individual said, what’s the waterline? The other line responded: “If we get hit by a torpedo you’ll know.” Then I don’t know definitely, but someone said that the blacks were complaining. They didn’t want to go below the waterline. I don’t know if that’s true. Somebody said the blacks were getting above the waterline.

T: This is one of the pieces of scuttlebutt making its way around the ship.

F: Yes. Just the scuttlebutt.

T: You were on the ship for a long time. How did you kill time on a ship like this? You had a lot of time to kill.
End of Tape 1, Side A. Side B begins at 382.

F: They had some, not too much entertainment. They had a boxing show one time. I don’t know how they did that. Coming back I even participated in boxing. But not going over.

T: Are you a card player or a reader?

F: I was a reader. Whatever I had to read. Not much really. I quit playing cards when I was fourteen years old. I had a bad experience and I never gambled. I haven’t gambled since. Any type of gambling. No card player. But oh, they were playing cards. Especially on the way back with the money, the loot that they had.

T: The back pay and stuff.

F: The loot they had coming back. Because where could we spend money in China?

T: From Rio de Janeiro did you make port in Africa as well?

F: Yes. We came over to Cape Town and then there they said, don’t even ask to get off because we had the blacks and apartheid or whatever you call it. So from Cape Town we went to Bombay.

T: So you had not been off the ship since it left the States?

F: About thirty-eight days. Then we’d have our abandon ship drill every day with the Mae West and all that. Go to the side of the ship and look over, and I looked down and I told my buddy, "I'm not ever jumping off this thing. It's too high!"

T: It must have been really high up.

F: Oh, yes. It’s a big ship. I said I wasn’t going to jump off this thing if we have to abandon ship. We used to have that drill every day. Abandon ship.

T: What was it like crossing the Atlantic on this ship?

F: Going over we were going south. So I didn’t notice too much. It wasn’t too bad. Crossing the equator and then going up and around. But when I came home crossing the Atlantic was rough. I remember that. I was on a smaller Coast Guard ship. I forget the name of the ship. About two, three thousand of us. Compared to ten thousand going over. Coming back we flew from Kunming, which was our headquarters in China, to Calcutta. We stayed there for two weeks in Calcutta waiting.

I remember we got off the airplane, the C-54, and got a chit which entitled us to a case of beer because everything had to be flown into China and we didn’t get
much of the luxuries at all. The border of China was controlled by Japan. We flew from Kunming to Calcutta and then it took two weeks time before we got a ship to come home. My outfit was one of the first. We were there the longest. The time element and so on. There were a couple of young guys that joined us six months later and they only had six months and they were lucky because they were in my outfit and got a chance to go home.

\textbf{(1, B, 443)}

T: So it took you a while to get over and a while to get back.

F: Twenty-eight days. Thirty-eight days going over and twenty-eight days coming back. Then coming back we had a different route. We went down to Ceylon.

T: Which is now Sri Lanka.

F: Colombo is a port there.

T: Yes.

F: We docked at Colombo. Then we went around the Indian Ocean. Where’s the Mediterranean?

T: You have to go up through the Suez Canal.

F: We went through the Suez Canal. Big Ditch as they call it. The vendors would climb on the ship as we were going through.

T: Trying to sell things.

F: Yes. Then we’d see ships that had been blown up. They were removed from blocking the passage, but ships that had been sunk and damaged because of the war. Then it’s the Mediterranean. Then from there we got past the Azores.

T: Through Gibraltar and past the Azores.

F: Then you asked me about the Atlantic. Oh, it was rough. It was cold. It was winter. I don’t know the time of the year. I forget now.

T: It was October of 1945 it looks like.

F: Yes, okay. It took twenty-eight days to get back. I used to go up--you weren’t supposed to, but I used to roam the ship. I used to go way up as far as I could get and look out into the night. Especially at night. The wind would blow. It would be raining at times. Precipitation in my face. I’m going home. I just couldn’t believe
I'm going home. I'd sneak away by myself and I'd find a spot up there and I'd look out there into the ocean at night. Especially at night.

(1, B, 477)

T: Were you one of these people who did, or did not, get seasick?

F: Going over not at all. Coming back slightly. Slightly. And we had, let's see was it coming back? We had a close friend of mine oh, he got real sick. Real sick. He was in his bunk for a couple days. Then I thought it was humorous and I would tell him we had pork chops. He said, “Shorty, get the hell away from me. I'm serious,” he said. “If I get up I'm going to hurt you.” Then I said to myself no more joking. We used to revel that who's got that, who's sick.

For example, I'm Italian and Italians are supposed to be, depending on where they come, what part of Italy, dark. And one of my friends one day said, "Boy, you're the whitest Italian I've seen in a long time." I said, "I do feel kind of woozy." Only a couple days though. I never threw up or anything or sick. But some of my friends were violently. They wouldn't get out of the bunk.

T: That must be terrible.

F: Coming back. Going overseas on the big ship I didn't notice anyone getting seasick.

T: In Bombay you got off the ship. Did you stay in Bombay for a while?

F: No. I marched from Bombay to another ship. The name of the ship was City of London. It was a hammock type of thing. Hammocks. They had a table, eat on a table like, and you stepped on a table and you had a hammock right above where you would sleep. I had a hell of a time with the hammock. And they had Indian crew. Run by British. They had nice short outfits.

T: The white shorts.

F: Beautiful outfits. Beautiful shorts and beautiful outfits. Pip, pip, Old Boy and all that stuff. Run by the English. The crew was Indian and they would squat. They had big open firepots on the deck. Someone had said that ship was sunk during World War I. I for one said, I didn't know why they... They should have left it there. I got sick to the point where I lost my appetite. We were supposed to eat twice a day. In the morning, I don't know why, there was a sort of a brown bread and I said, to me things are moving and I can't eat this. I couldn't eat. One of my friends discovered tangerines. I had never seen a tangerine in my life up until then. Then another said if we go up to the British deck we can get soft drinks.

T: So you were kept on separate decks.
F: Yes. Separate decks. There were just our American troops, but the British they were in command of the ship. They had a sort of a PX type of thing and they said you could go up and buy soft drinks or ginger beer. I tasted it. They called it Vinto or something or other. I tasted it and said they were trying to kill me. I'll never make it. Then we got to Karachi. Then things got bad there too because we had, instead of toilet paper we had (***) that rough paper. Oh, it was terrible.

(1, B, 527)

T: Did you stay in Karachi for...?

F: Three weeks. We did some maneuvering there and some practicing with the radio and whatever we had. They gave us weapons. We didn't have any weapons. I went overseas without any weapons. I got to Karachi and they were all going to ship out. They were going to such and such, a troop train. They gave me a submachine gun and I had never seen one.

T: This was to be your weapon?

F: Yes. I said, "What is this?" They said, "Remove the kosmoline." Being ignorant I said, "What? Where do I remove the kosmoline?" That's the grease!

T: It's packed in grease, right?

F: Yes. So I had to remove the grease. Then another fella had a submachine gun. Another one had a carbine. A nice small one. Another guy got an 03 [carbine rifle]. Another guy got an M1 [rifle]--most of the guys.

T: Were you taught how to use these weapons or just given them?

F: No. No. Just given. My weapon was the submachine gun. I have a picture. I'll show you a picture. I shouldn't laugh, but someone else had a submachine gun and we started to strip it. I learned not to strip it too diligently, just field strip it. The fella that stripped it couldn't get it together *(laughs)*. It took us fourteen days to get from Karachi to Chabau. It took him thirteen days. I said we gotta call in ordnance to get that. He said, "Val," he called me Val, "don't touch my weapon."

T: He couldn't get it back together.

F: Would you believe right down to the trigger assembly. Would you believe I carried a nail throughout the war. A nail so that whenever I cleaned my, the only time I shot it was for practice or whatever. Not at anyone. And my friend wanted to shoot it because it was fun. The only time I shot it was just for practice. To clean it you had to move back, you didn't have a nail or something to hold that, you had trouble. I had this nail in my pocket all through the war. I had that nail through the war. Put the nail in there and make sure I got it. I learned that from the friend of
mine who couldn’t put it together. Fourteen days. Sometimes we say, how the hell did we win the war? (laughs)

T: It makes you wonder. You were in Karachi for some time there. Did you have contact with local populations?

F: Yes, but very little. Prostitution was prevalent. The little kids would come up and solicit. I think I was in there in Karachi, in the town, not more than two hours. The first time I went there we thought, big deal. Filthy, dirty, and the like, what we saw. Let’s get out of here. When I had supper I thought, the hell with it, let’s go back to camp. I think I spent not more than six hours in town, because it wasn’t worth it.

And the little kids would follow. They’d beg. Beggars. Then we would see individual cripples that were maimed, and we heard that in many cases these people were maimed by their parents early in childhood so that they would be professional beggars. The claim was such that if you didn’t give them something, you’d be cursed. They were Hinduism. India.

T: So it was a place that made an impression on you, but not a very positive one.

F: No. No. Calcutta seemed to be a bit, when I was in Calcutta, a little bit cleaner. In Calcutta also when we got there we went, I went once only to town. As I say from town to the camp. I was so fearful of doing anything wrong. I imbibed in China. We did. When we got the Calcutta a friend said let’s go have a drink. I said, “I’m not touching any liquor until I get to Chisholm, Minnesota. I can’t get home. I just can’t get home. Nothing’s going to jeopardize my getting home.”

(1, B, 585)

T: You were in Calcutta on the way back to the States.

F: There we would see the cattle roaming the streets and we would see cadavers on the street. Bodies. Dead bodies.

T: The local civilian population. Did you feel safe in places like Karachi and Calcutta?

F: I felt safe because I never went alone.

T: Were you in uniform?

F: I was in uniform. Yes. We were in uniform from the time I went to Crowder. In fact, if I recall, if we had civilian clothes from Snelling, we sent civilian clothes home.

T: And that was it for civilian clothes. You wore uniforms of some kind for years.

F: Oh, definitely.
T: From Karachi, how long was it before you were actually at your duty station in China?

F: Got into Kunming. We were in Kunming for a week. That’s in China. It’s the Yuanan Province. That was the 14th Air Force Headquarters.

T: This is in Hunan Province.

F: In the Yuanan.

T: And what’s the name of the city or town?

F: Kunming. That was the Headquarters of the 14th Air Force. I think I was there a week. In fact, ironically, I met a friend there. The only friend I met. He wasn’t from Minnesota anymore. This friend of mine left Chisholm when I was in the ninth grade. His father was a mining captain. Died. The family moved from here. There I am in Kunming. I’m in the barracks waiting for whatever assignment and this master sergeant comes toward me. He had stripes all the way. He’s looking for Valentini. I said I was Valentini. He said, “Don’t you know me?” I looked at him. He was bald. He was a young guy. He was about twenty-three years old. He was bald. I said, “Humphrey Jones! You’re Humphrey Jones.” He said yes. I hadn’t seen him since 1934-35.

T: So high school days.

F: High school. His dad died and his family moved. I hadn’t seen him since that time, so he didn’t graduate with me. Humphrey Jones. I saw the stripes. So then he kind of wined and dined me. Then I shipped out.

T: You shipped out to where? Where was your duty station exactly? In China. From Kunming where did you actually go?

F: I’m trying to think. The airfield. I don’t know.

T: Was it a small place?

F: Small. It was an airfield. Kweling? I don’t know the spelling of it even.

T: What part of China was this?

F: Everything was in the southwestern part. The unoccupied part. We always claimed that the Japanese didn’t want that part. Our smart comments. Southwestern part.

T: Was that where you were stationed then for the vast majority of the time you were in China?
F: Yes. We’d ship out from there out into the--my contribution was out in the field. Air ground support. We were out in the field in groups of six.

T: And you were all Army Air Corps guys.

F: Yes. I was told I’m no longer signal corps. I’m now in the Air Corps. There were two officers, two code men, and two radio operators.

T: You were one of those radio operators.

F: Yes.

T: And what did your job actually entail? What was the purpose of the mission?

(1, B, 638)

F: To support the Chinese infantry through the air. We would call for sorties and bombing. The Chinese officers would get the coordinates and where they were going to bomb.

T: You then would radio in air strikes by American planes?

F: We would receive on a continuous wave. A code. It was in code. The decoders would have a decoding machine. It would come in groups of five. Then give the message to the decoder and he would decode it. Sometimes it would be garbled. It wouldn’t be exact but we would get enough. Because of the lack of getting the letters. Sometimes the speed or they interrupt. The static. The interference. And sometimes to the untrained you couldn’t hear. Someone in Kunming would be standing by. (makes transmission noises) You have to catch it. With a trained ear we would catch it. Then we’d hope to give the message to the decoder.

T: Did any of the six of you need to speak or understand Chinese?

F: No. But we did have with us an identification that I carried with me.

T: It is written in Chinese.

F: Yes.

T: Did you have, the six of you stationed here, did you have contact with the local population? With the Chinese people?

F: No conversation. We couldn’t converse. Ding how. How pu how. How up how in Chinese means, how are you? Ding how, very good. Ba how, not very good.
T: Did they provide any kind of food or services for the six of you?

F: No. No. We lived off the land. And with the Chinese troops. They would drop rice to the troops, and we would partake of it. The officer I was with said that we... C rations. When you dropped C rations to us. Cases of it. Our contingent. And whoever was responsible for the Chinese would drop bags of rice. Unhusked. Not the polished rice that we have. My officer, the major, Don McKay, he said, they eat twice, we eat twice. The only advantage we got is we got some C rations to go with. The C rations would be a sort of a hash type of a thing and a bean type of thing. Dysentery was prevalent. A lot of dysentery and stomach problems. I didn’t get normal until I hit the States.

T: What did you do for medical problems out there? You didn’t have a doctor or any kind of medical...

F: No. I never did meet any. They said there was a MASH [Mobile Army Surgical Hospital] outfit. The MASH outfit wasn’t moving, but it was close by. For the Chinese. I had a surgery one time. I got hit. It was nothing for a Purple Heart, I got hit in the testicles sliding down. I was in the mountains, the Himalaya Mountains, and I had a pain for three, four days. It went away. But then when we took our, when we got to a stream or any body of water, we had to take a bath. It was compulsory. Officers said everybody shaves when they can and take a bath when you can. He noticed that one of the testicles was enlarged.  

So then what are we going to do about it? I said I was okay. He said, “We’ll check. There’s a MASH unit six miles back down the road.” So I went there. The guy looked at me. The doctor was a doctor from Cleveland. Dr. Catalone. Of Italian extraction. We’re paisane. He said, “You’re one of us. We can drain this but it will come back, or we can perform surgery.” I said, “Wait a minute. What’s with the surgery?” He said there was nothing to it. “Don’t worry. You’ll be a man.” So I said okay. So I went back to the officer and he said the guys would take care of the radio for how long? A week’s time. I was gone about two weeks.  

(1, B, 695)

T: So you stayed with this Mobile Army Surgical Hospital unit?

F: Yes.

T: What did they have to do to you?

F: He performed a slight surgery to eliminate the fluid. A drainage type of thing. He said the surgery would make it permanent. He said we could withdraw it but it would keep rebuilding the fluid. The fluid would come back.

T: Was there infection of some kind?
F: A hydroseal. That’s what he called it. He said there’s nothing to it. I said okay. So he performed the surgery. Two weeks it took me and I was able to rejoin my outfit.

T: Do you remember that time with the hospital?

F: When I was at this hospital I got to know this doctor real well. He had a big pagoda. I never forgot that. They put me on morphine. I was kind of leery. I was there the day before and so they gave me a morphine shot the night before, no the morning prior to going into the surgery. I had never had any surgery ever. So I thought, what are they going to do to me? They said don’t worry about it. A Chinese corpsman came in, shaved me, and was laughing and I asked the interpreter what’s this guy laughing at and why. He said he had never seen so much hair on a human body. The Chinese body hair is not prevalent. I said if he makes any mistakes with that razor you tell him he’ll know it.

T: He was shaving a little close to home there.

F: I remember they gave me the morphine shot and, wow! Was I in my glory with that morphine shot. I had never had one before.

T: How did it make you feel?

F: Like Saturday night. Beautiful. Then they put me on a gurney, with big wheels. I was nude and they wrapped me in a GI blanket up to this pagoda and onto the table. Then they put a blanket on a hoop. I couldn’t see beyond my chest down. And while they were working--I had gotten to know this doctor pretty well. I said, “Doctor, Doctor, take your time.” He said to the other surgeon, “We got a good one here.”

T: So you were conscious the whole time then?

F: I was conscious when they were working on me. I was out of it with the morphine, but I was conscious. It took me not long to recuperate. A good week. He’d come to visit me every day, the captain. He would tell me about his experiences and this Chinese got syphilis. What? This one here got shot up. I’d look at him and half his face would be gone. No nose. This other one. He said, “What experience I’m getting here.” He said, “You know the value of life in China.” I said, yes. He said if we lose them we don’t have to worry like American life. It was wonderful experience.

(1, B, 727)

T: Were there a number of Chinese working at that facility?

F: We had some American corpsmen working there. The guy that attended me was American. There was a woman nurse that was an American GI. Codeine. It was a painkiller. He’d give me one every four hours and pretty soon I called him, “Hey,
corpsman, come here. I want one of those pills.” He said, “You’ve had your limit.” I said, “I need it now.” He said, “You’ve had your limit.” I didn’t take any more codeine.

T: The unit you were in, there were only six guys. Was there turnover in that unit or did you stay...

F: The unit that I was in with that six man composite wing when we got back to headquarters. We would take about six months out in the field, then maybe a month on the big air base. When we were in the big air base we would do the fixed station operating. Headquarters would be requesting sorties from me.

T: That’s at Kunming?

F: No. Kueling at the airbase. They moved us around. We weren’t always at the same air base. They took from the air base and we’d be in this air base. What I’m saying is that they would reverse us. Six months in the field and a month in fixed station.

T: So people were calling in to you instead of you calling in to them.

F: Yes. When you had the fixed station we’d be on duty twenty-four hours. Like maybe I’d have the day shift this week, or this couple days, for about a month and they’d ship us out again. With our same group. We always worked together. The same group.

T: The same six guys.

F: And the same call letters.

T: You must have gotten to know those guys very well.

F: Very well. One of the guys, Frenchie. This Frenchie for example was thirty-three years old and I was about twenty-three. What are you doing here at thirty-three? He was from Williston, Maine. French brogue, oh, he had a French brogue on him. He was my size, but big head. Poor Frenchie. He called himself the original sad sack. Everything he did was wrong. His name was Michaud and he said, when he got through with his Basic Training--he was in a different outfit than I was--he said he shipped out. They were out in the company street, got into the trucks and they all left and there he was with his barracks bag. He went into the guardroom and he said, “Sergeant, nobody came to pick me up.” And the sergeant says, “What’s your name?” He said, “Michaud.” “Michaud, Michaud, Michaud. How do you spell it?” “M-I-C-H-A-U-D. After that I was always Michaud.”

T: He learned.
F: And he’d write to his mother in Williston, Maine. In French. And always get the letters back. Everything was censored.

T: Because he was supposed to write in English.

F: He could write in English but his mother couldn’t read English. Only French.

**End of Tape 1. Tape 2, Side A begins at counter 000.**

T: You were part of the war effort against the Japanese. You never saw them though.

F: No. One time. We saw a contingent of captured women.

T: Japanese women?

F: Yes. The women were with them. This area one time and somebody said those women are Japanese. They’re captured. I said, where are the men? I don’t know where they sent the men. But the women were captured. One time. I was surprised at whoever mentioned that as we were passing through an area.

T: How did you perceive the “enemy”? The Japanese. What kind of people were they for you?

F: I never had any actual closeness to them. I always got the impression from what, it had to be hearsay because I never saw any of course, that they were cruel and they were dedicated to their cause, to their Emperor and the life of the Empire. Their belief in the fight to the death. I had never... you see, I was noncombat. The feeling would be that the only way I could do anything about getting at them was through the air. Because I wasn’t... I was asked if I saw any action. I said I saw a lot of it to the point where I was on the observation. We were watching. There was no actual combat for me. [What] I was susceptible with was artillery. Air raid attacks.

T: Aerial attacks.

F: Yes. It had to be aerial attacks or artillery. Artillery closeness. Sometimes. Like this Frenchie I was with. We could never go anywhere from our camp, from our radio, unless we went with somebody. If we had to slip down to the latrine or whatever, we’d always have to go with somebody. If we had a bath in the crick close by we’d have to go with somebody. For example, one instance I’ll never forget, this river that we were close to, Frenchie and I were taking a bath and all of a sudden the whistling and the like, and the artillery came up.

Then maybe about fifty feet up the river from us we heard a big splash. There was no explosion. And there were Chinese troops up above and they came. They gathered around whatever had hit. So we went up to see what. To me it looked like it didn’t go off. A dud. Frenchie said, “Let’s get out of here.” I said, “Stick around. Let’s see.” He said, “No!” He said, “If you don’t come back to camp with me
now I’m going to leave you and I’m not supposed to.” I never forgot that. And we wondered what had would have happened if that artillery shell had exploded. That would be one of the closest. Not the closest.

There was another incident where we were located, and we were asked to move. We were in the big air base and we had a Japanese air raid. These guys were overhead. Japanese planes were overhead, and I wouldn’t leave the radio. The guys said, “Come on, let’s go.” Frenchie said, “Let’s go.” I said, “I’m trying to get some communication here and see what’s going on.” Finally one guy said, “You’ve got to come. We’re all leaving.” And I left. We got back to that tent and it was all shattered. If we would have stayed there, I would have gotten killed. It was an air raid. A big air raid.

T: So you could see the Japanese planes?

(2, A, 81)

F: Yes. Silver like. They were silver ones. Beautiful when I looked up. Then I remember another of those air raids. There were several. One time we had what they call slit trenches on the edge of the field. I dashed to this slit trench and somebody else got there the same time I did. I jostled and jostled and I got below this guy. When the air raid was over I looked and he was an eagle colonel.

T: He was on top of you.

F: He was on top of me because I pushed him out of the way. I said, “Colonel, sir, I’m sorry.” He said, “Soldier, don’t ever be sorry. You did the right thing.”

T: Were these couple incidents you describe serious enough to cause you to be scared?

F: Oh, I was scared. Oh, oh! The ground was shaking. The whole thing was shaking. The deal with Frenchie in the river I wasn’t scared. I was ignorant. Let’s stick around. No, no he says. I said they’re whistling. They’re going by. No, no he said. This one hit the river and he said let’s get out of here. The Chinese are monkeying with it. It’s liable to go off. They were curious. The Chinese soldiers. Then we left. But as far as scared, oh, geez, that time. The whole… the dirt started to fall. I said, “We’ll get buried alive.”

T: Many long periods of time when there was no action, then there’s brief moments where there was real fear?


T: Out there in the field for months at a time. How did you pass time when you weren’t on duty?
F: You could get music from Tokyo Rose on the radio. Tokyo Rose.

T: So you could listen to the radio.

F: She would tell us to go home. Where’s your wife tonight? Where’s your girlfriend tonight? She played my music. My beautiful music. Glenn Miller and the like.

T: She knew her audience.

F: Yes. Other than that there was nothing. We had nothing.

T: No recreation activities.

F: No. We lived in a tent. We had individual tents. Air Corps had better than the infantry. Infantry had what you call a shelter-half that I was familiar with in Basic. There would be two to a tent. But we were elite compared to the infantry. We had nice stuff. Nice plastic type of tent that the infantry didn’t have.

T: So you had better quarters.

F: Yes. Better quarters. But as far as activity there was none. We just got around and reminisced and talked and the radio. We listened to the radio.

T: Was it boring?

F: Yes, it was. But the thing was, we kept on the move a lot so that eliminated the boredom. When we were in the Himalaya Mountains we had pack animals that would carry my radio and the C rations. We were different than infantry. Infantry had their regular backpack with their shelter-half. But we had a heavier type of thing. We had what they called a Mussette bag to carry our belongings. The Air Corps were elite. We were on the ground, but they fixed us up so we were elite. It wasn’t as heavy. It wasn’t as big. To carry my personal type of things.

(2, B, 139)

T: You mentioned officers a moment ago when we were talking off tape. From your perspective, how would you describe the relationship between officers and enlisted men during your time in China?

F: Very good. Not too formal. Very good. The fella that was in charge of my six was very informal. Everybody called me Val. Everybody except my Hawaiian friend. He called me Shorty. The only time he would call me sergeant, or if I was a corporal at the time, whatever it was, I knew something was wrong. Corporal or sergeant. I got to be a sergeant. Major Don McKay. I forget the other guy’s name. He was a captain. Very informal. They were fliers. Most of them were fliers. There were some ground
people. Naturally. The higher ups, the colonels and so on, the formality was there. But out in the field very informal. First name basis or identification basis.

T: Really?

F: I always called him Major or Captain. But he called us by our... he called Frenchie. Frenchie’s name was Azire Michaud. We called him Frenchie. He said Frenchie this, Frenchie that.

T: So it was very informal.

F: Very.

T: Good working relationship. Being so far away from stateside, how did you, or were you able, to stay in touch with family and loved ones back home?

F: Sure. Correspondence was good.

T: Did you get regular mail deliveries?

F: No. Weeks at a time. Depending where we were. When we were back on the big base it was pretty good, but out in the field we had to wait until we got back.

T: Did you write regularly yourself?

F: I tried to, but I... I wrote home. I had one sister and she was eleven years older; I and she corresponded. My father didn’t write. He couldn’t write. My sister would write a form letter to her eight brothers. A personal paragraph to each one.

T: So the form letter would give you basic information to keep you up to date and then...

F: And then personally she’d write. She wrote diligently to each one. A personal comment to each one of us. There were eight of us.

T: That was her contribution.

F: Yes. She did a good job. A very good job.

T: Did she live here in Chisholm too?

F: She lived at the time in Deal. She had been a school teacher and in those days when you became married you couldn’t teach any more. There was a rule.

T: There was a rule for many years.
F: So then she did the corresponding for my dad.

T: Has she passed away, Frank?

F: Oh, yes. I just have one brother left. I’ve got a brother that lives here in town. Never left this town. Eighty-six years old. The rest are dead.

T: The Valentini Supper Club [restaurant in Chisholm, Minnesota], is that related to your family somehow?

F: No relation. Same name. Same part of Italy actually. The dialect. The lady that was responsible for creating the supper club, we knew her and when I spoke to her in Italian she spoke Italian too. But she was well-versed in English. The dialect was the same as mine. I’m sure the family came from my area. We’re from Veron, the Romano area. I think eighty miles to the east on the Adriatic side was the location of my father’s town.

T: How important was getting mail from home?

(2, A, 200)

F: Very important. V Mail was the popular thing.

T: You said you got mail somewhat regularly but not always.

F: No.

T: Do you remember mail calls, actually letters arriving from home?

F: We didn’t have the mail call like I see on “MASH” or anything like that. Somebody came and brought it personally to me. We didn’t gather out. I don’t know who was responsible for it, but instead of having a big gathering and call out the names, somebody brought it to me personally.

T: Someone would give you your letter or letters or whatever packages came from home.

F: Yes. Packages. We’d tried to get packages. What I tried to do was write to girlfriends because they would send packages. Whatever it would be, cookies or something like that. Cake. For some reason or other I liked to smoke cigars at the time and she would send me them. The one would send me cigars. Whatever. Somebody always got some food stuff. Somehow through the mail. They would send personal. Then we would share.

T: That’s good. So you lived in close quarters with these guys.
F: Yes. That's right. We would share.

T: These guys that you were with there overseas, did you stay in contact with them after the war was over?

F: For a while. I have a close friend. A Hawaiian native. His name is Arthur Camara. We corresponded for a year or so. He kept encouraging me to come to Hawaii to live. I had ideas, in spite of the fact that my first objective was education with this GI Bill. But I had some ideas. Then I met my wife and I said, I'm not leaving this area. This is the area where I want to end up as a teacher. For me, this area would be the best place for me to teach. It turned out to be the better place. So I lost contact until two years ago, in 1999. My son was a junior at Gustavus.

T: Your grandson.

F: My grandson was a sophomore at Gustavus, and his team was there in Hawaii and he said, “Why don’t you and Dad come over and spend ten days with me?” So we went and I looked in the directory and I saw my friend’s name. In fact, two names. I kept calling, and then we left Oahu for Kauai. That’s where they were training. I spent most of the time there. When I got back to Honolulu I said I better call again. I couldn’t get in contact with him to begin with.

Finally I got somebody and the somebody was a woman and I asked if she knew Arthur Camara who had served in World War II. She said that was her father-in-law. I should call the other Arthur Camara. So I called and I finally got a hold of him. I said, “Did you serve in World War II?” He said, “Yes.” I said, “Did you serve in China by any chance?” He said, “Yes, I served in China.” I said, “Do you know anything about Minnesota?” He said, “Yes, I know all about the ten thousand lakes.” Because I always used to brag about ten thousand lakes. So then I said, “Do you recall anyone by the name of Valentini?” “Shorty! Where the hell are you?” That’s exactly what he said. I said, “I’m here in Honolulu.” “Oh, geez!” he said, “I’ve got to see you.”

T: You hadn’t seen him since the war ended, is that right?

F: That’s right. Fifty-five years.

(2, A, 252)

T: What was it like when you finally saw him again?

F: You should have seen. He said, “I can’t drive but I’ll have a friend drive me over.” The guy drove up in a big Mercedes. Then I slid into the passenger side. My son was there and my son’s lady friend was with us. First thing, he pulls in the driveway at this hotel. I’m waiting there. We looked at each other and we recognized each other. As far as change, no change. Heavier, loss of hair, but very little. He gets out of the automobile and we hugged each other. “Shorty, how are you?” “Art, how are
“You doing?” And my son, he said he had never seen an incident like that. He said it was wonderful and the girl said what a deal. Then I said, “This is my son, my son Pat, and this is his lady friend.” Then he looks at me and says to me and he says “Shorty, how come he’s so tall?” No, first he said, “He’s good looking,” insinuating that I homely. I said, “God dang, you haven’t changed a bit.”

T: Did you spend the evening with him then?

F: Did we ever. Then we’d get together and we’d reminisce. My son would say, “My dad was telling me about…” this time and that time. Then he’d say no. I said you forgot. Yes, I remember that. Oh, that’s the time we almost got killed. I said, yes. We laughed back and forth. And then we drank. We were drinking. We had a nice meal that he insisted on paying for. And we drank some wine. He said, “What would you like?” I said, “We aren’t much drinkers anymore.” We used to drink rice wine in China. He said, “This is better wine, Shorty, better wine than in China.” And we reminisced and reminisced. Then I saw him again the next day. And then I left the next day but I returned again last February and I spent four days with him in his home. He lives up in the mountains outside of Honolulu.

T: That must be great seeing him again.

F: My son said, “You guys were pretty close.” He said we got together right from the first time we met each other. We hit it off perfectly. Some of those guys would look at him. He was darker and again this feeling of superiority or something.

(2, A, 283)

T: Where did you meet him again? He wasn’t one of the six guys was he?

F: No. He was in the infantry that was there. Doing some teaching.

T: So he was an Army guy.

F: Army infantry. We were together at intervals. Whenever I’d come back from camp from out in the field I’d spend time with him for a month at a time. We got to know each other real well. He got some kind of commendation from the Chinese infantry. He was an infantryman. He did some teaching and he said he was doing some fighting too. He said, “I was doing some fighting, too, Shorty. I don’t know what the hell. I was supposed to be teaching them. I was in the wrong place at the wrong time.” At intervals. He was Army guy.

T: So we had Army and Army Air Corps over there.

F: Yes. But we did not have Army infantry fighting.

T: Right. They were just training or...
F: Training them and helping.

T: You know, for you, in a sense the war seemed pretty far away. I mean the fighting in the Pacific or...

F: It was far away.

T: How did this sort of impact the way you saw the war? I mean in a sense, you were part of the war, but it was so far away.

F: I'll tell you. I was waiting for that. We were, we said what the hell are we doing here? I know the Air Force needed air power but it seemed like we weren't winning. And then there was the struggle between [Chinese leader] Chang Kai Shek and [American General] Chennault with [American General] Vinegar Joe Stillwell as to method and as to what we were going to do. I think you're familiar with them.

T: Yes, all three of those people.

(2, A, 301)

F: Eventually Stillwell lost out and Chennault became the top dog and I was thinking when in the hell are we going to do something? I was waiting, I'll be honest, whether it's selfish or not, when are they gonna fight in Europe? When are the Russians going to come into this conflict? I said, what are we doing? I felt like we were treading water.

T: In China there?

F: In China. We were treading. You know, we'd advance a little bit. Then we'd retreat. What are we accomplishing? It looked to me like we weren't accomplishing anything. And it got to be where when is this going to end? How is this going to end? What are we going to do? Are we going to do something? Then finally, I'll never forget the day, June 6, 1944. Very seldom did we have voice communication with the net control station. Here I'm communicating and pretty soon the guy says, “Roger Baker Eight.” “This is Roger Baker Eight.” “Eight Nine George. How do you read?” He said the big show has started. And he meant that Normandy invasion. We knew then. Then the next I was waiting for the Russians to come in which they did.

T: Lately.

F: It was a nice time for them to do it.
T: What about the wars? The war in the Pacific and most of the war in Europe. Were you able to keep abreast of developments? Did you feel yourself informed as far as the progress of the war elsewhere?

F: No. Not too much. We did know that the European invasion had started. Like I say, the guy told me when, in his fashion. And we knew that there was fighting in the Pacific. We did know that there was the B-29 [Superfortress 4-engine bomber] because one time it landed in one of our airfields. Lucky they got out because it was too small. A guy said there was a B-29 going down there. They're going to look for it. I said that’s too far away.

T: The question I wanted to ask was: you talked about moving around, advancing and then retreating. You must have seen a good bit of the Chinese countryside.

F: Oh, yes.

T: How would you describe the countryside and people that you saw?

F: Very, very backward. Small villages. Nani, SuYung, these were two villages. Small villages, real backward, cobblestone streets, no lighting. Dark, in the nighttime dark. The Chinese were dressed in denims mostly. The women also dressed in denims. The women also working in the field. They had the common chinpole, like they call it. Would carry their whatever, they would carry with. The women would do most of the difficult work. The men would follow. What else can I say? Very, very difficult. We had outhouses most of the time wherever we were, at these bases. I have to talk about outhouses. The Chinese would use human waste for fertilizer and things like that. We saw women, some women with the small type of feet that the culture had made.

T: The bound feet.

F: But my generation wasn’t. In other words the women my age weren’t. They had the regular size.

T: People in their twenties. It was the older women at that point.

F: We’d see those women with the bound feet and older women. I don’t know housewives didn’t seem to be healthy. I’d look at some of those women. Watery eyed, goiters, a lot of goiters. I would see. The men. Everybody seemed to smoke. They liked to smoke. And they liked American cigarettes. Once in a while we were dined by the Chinese officers. The general would have us in their quarters and we were all fed there. But normally, rice was the staple. Out in the field we learned to eat the rice. My officer said, “We eat what they do, when they do. Two meals, in the morning and at night. No noon hour; we don’t stop for noon. Nothing.” I think the first week I said, I’m not eating the rice. I’ll try to use the C
rations. There’s not enough. We had a basket full of rice, and we would use C rations if we had them.

We lived off the land as much as we could. If we came across any livestock we would use it. Pigs, for example, once in a while. We came across piglets, we took the piglets with us. Three or four of them. We carried them hoping that they would grow large enough that we could have pork chops. Finally we gave up after the third week and we ate them. Chickens, once in a while we’d come across chickens. One time one of the guys was Jewish. You say Jews don’t eat pork, look at him go after the pigs. One time one of the guys he was going to shoot the water buffalo. I said, “You can’t do that. First of all, it would be too tough. Second, you’re taking a beast of burden from some poor farmer. The guy will come looking for this animal. You can’t do that.” I don’t think he was that serious about it.

T: How were you received by the local populations? Were they friendly towards Americans or suspicious or what would you say?

F: The Chinese were friendly. Magwa ding hau. We were Americans. Zerban ba hau. Japanese no good. Magwa ding hau. Magwa ding hau. Zerban ba hau. That was the expression they used.


T: What about when you had, whether it was a piglet or a chicken or whatever from these people, was this stuff paid for or just requisitioned?

F: We took it. We want it, we take it. What are they going to do about it? Just like any other invading army.

T: Did that bother you or anybody else, taking livestock?

F: Usually, whomever, would laugh about it. I feel that they felt we were doing them a favor, and we were actually.

T: Were there ever any problems or confrontations with the local Chinese populations?

F: (laughs) No. One time, I will tell you this. I was with Camara. We were camped. It was on maneuvers with the Army someway somehow...

End of Tape 2, Side A. Side B begins at counter 381.

F: On this excursion and we were by a village. Any time we were by a village we would go down to the villages and we would go to a restaurant, and that’s where I first learned to eat sweet and sour pork, for example. As long as the meals were hot,
we were entitled to eat. And water. We couldn’t drink the water. It had to be boiled. We always had cooled boiled water. (*** we called it. Never drank any water because it was detrimental. Camara and I went down and the other guys were up in the hills. We went down and found a restaurant. We climbed up the stairs, had to go upstairs. Rickety, not too clean. And in the corner were two couples. Nice, well-dressed officers and two well-dressed women. We hadn’t seen many well-dressed women.

T: These Americans or Chinese?

F: Chinese. Chinese women in the corner. Well-dressed. We went by. Camara, who could speak Chinese to some extent, said something. And boy, all hell broke loose. The officers got up and Camara said, “Run, Shorty! They’re after us! Run!” And the guy behind the counter I remember had a round cap and a long dress, a Chinese ensemble. I don’t know if you’ve ever seen. I don’t think so but way back in the ‘30s we had Fu Manchu movies. This guy reminded me of Fu Manchu. He had the round cap along with the Chinese... like in the movies I used to watch. Down we went, down the stairs. “Run, Shorty, run!”

Down we went. Camara went this way and I went that way. And I came to a dead end. Wow! I’m in mud and whatever and I think there were some pigs tethered there. It was dark and I turned around and Fu Manchu was coming after me and he’s got a club. I said to myself, I’m going to get killed. I’m not even being shot at by the enemy.

T: You don’t even know what he said, do you?

F: I know they’re going to put this in the paper at home. They’ll say I got killed doing what? He came at me and I don’t know if the club was too heavy or what, but he went to raise the club and I had some knowledge about fisticuffs. I never hit anyone so hard. I hit him right in the jaw, right in the face and I knocked him down. I found an opening and I got out of there and I got up to camp and Camara and the other guys were getting ready to come down. I said, “Art, what did you do?” “Nothing, Shorty, nothing.” “You did something! They got wild.” “Oh,” he said, “I asked that woman if I could sleep with her.” He said that and the guy got angry. I said, “Sure. He was her husband you dummy!”

T: That was a close call, Frank.

F: And then we were reminiscing about that. He said that guy wasn’t a very good sport (laughs). In Hawaii when we went out to dinner, he and I and my son and whomever, he used the chopsticks.

T: Really?

F: Yes. Sure. Any time we had a dinner in Hawaii, in Honolulu. We went to a Chinese restaurant because I love Chinese. One of the times in the Chinese
restaurant in February they gave us chopsticks. I said, “What do I want with these things?” I noticed he likes to use chopsticks. He’d eat like Chinese.

T: Hold the bowl up and stuff?

F: Yes. He ordered. He wouldn’t order off the menu. He knew what he was going to order. He said, “You order, Shorty,” and my son. He had his grandson and grandson’s girlfriend. And he said, “I’ll order something when I’m ready.” And he ordered something special. I don’t even know what it was. He was definitely oriented to Chinese.

T: Have you been back to China since the war ended?

F: No. I don’t think I’ll ever get back to China. I would like to go back to see where I was. It was unoccupied and we always said it was the part that the Japanese didn’t want.

T: The southwest part.

F: When we said that, what we meant was, there was nothing. We had our airfields there but that’s about it.

[2, B, 466]

T: We’ve looked at some photos. Frank, you wanted to recount a story of a bad day.

F: In the China-Burma theater there was a rotation policy. After twenty-four months you were entitled to go back stateside. Get a leave, a furlough and then be reassigned. My twenty-first month a couple of my buddies had completed their tour of twenty-four months. They went home. They’d go home and be reassigned. My twenty-second month again, we’ll see you Val. In a couple of months we’ll see you. It’ll be your turn. My twenty-third month, fine. My twenty-fourth month three of us were selected to go home. We had our time in, and we were going to go home. Get a furlough and be reassigned. Now I’m waiting. I had never been home one day since I left. I had never gotten home while I was in uniform. Naturally I was looking forward to it and hoping.

Wouldn’t you know that soon we got orders, all leaves are cancelled. No one goes back to the States. Everything is cancelled. Reason: May 8, 1945 the war in Europe ended. V-E Day. Nobody goes home. Naturally they’re not going to send personnel from Asia home when they’re sending troops from Europe to the Pacific and Asia. The next move is the big assault on Tokyo. So I couldn’t go home. I would imagine for a week or so I wasn’t too happy. Once I got back in the groove. Then one night when the dropping of the bombs, for example, when I found out as radio operator. August 6. What had they done? Well, by the ninth we knew something. We would converse. Have they got any more? Let’s do it. August 14 they capitulated. I knew. I felt this is it. You’re going to go home. I finally got rid of my
gas mask then. I never got rid of my gas mask. I didn’t trust the Japanese at all. We carried gas masks right to the end. I did. We did. From the fourteenth to the twenty-eighth I spent time in Calcutta. On the high seas. I hit the States on October 28. I remember coming into the harbor. It was Navy day and they said we cannot dock because it’s Navy day. They’re having ceremonies and the like celebrating Navy day and I said, “Something is bound to happen. I can’t get home. They won’t let us dock.”

T: My gosh.

(2, B, 509)

F: I’ve been a pessimist ever since I was in Uncle Sam’s Army. I never do anything until I have to. We got into Camp Kilmer again. They fed us real well. Got into a troop trains and on the way to Camp McCoy, Wisconsin. We stopped at intervals. Some of the guys would get off to buy a bottle of whiskey. “Come on, Val.” “No.” I said no whiskey. I’m not getting off this train. I’m not going to miss the train. A friend of mine missed the train. He finally caught it at the next destination. He hitched a ride and caught it at the next destination. I said I’m going to be so careful. I want to get home. Then I got home. Camp McCoy. I stayed there for a week. I hit the States on a Sunday, October 28. Called home. Told the sister-in-law get my one suit ready. To the dry cleaners. I should be home soon. I don’t know when. A week or so. Two weeks. Three weeks. Be home soon. I hit the States on a Sunday. I was discharged and I was home on the following Sunday.

T: So seven days.

F: One incident in the cubicle. They tried to get you to re-up.

T: Yes.

F: And be a part of it permanently. I said I want to go home. I’ve had enough of this.

T: So you were not even thinking about staying in the military?

F: No, definitely not.

T: Why not?

F: I didn’t care for the military. I didn’t care for the military. I was there for a purpose. To win freedom for my country, continue freedom for my country. I was not there for a definite career. I didn’t like the service at all. I didn’t like the regimentation. You can’t do this, you can’t do that. You gotta be in uniform at all times. I was doing the town one night in Joplin. Somebody stole my cap. My military cap. Do you know that I had to
hide to get to the bus before an MP would pick me up? And I would be gigged for the fact that I was out of uniform.

T: Even though your hat had been stolen?

F: Even though my hat was stolen. My friend said, we’ll go down the alley, this alley. We’ll catch the bus and we’ll get back to camp safely. That was one incident. For example.

T: So the military wasn’t for you?

F: No, definitely not. I enjoyed being a part of it because I knew I was doing something for my country, but as far as the regimentation… and another thing I didn’t like was the fact that if you’re an officer you can go into this building. If you’re a noncommissioned officer, which I became eventually, I can go into that building but my friend, the private here, cannot associate with me and go into that building. I didn’t like that. I don’t like that.

T: So the military wasn’t for you.

F: Definitely not.

T: So you were ready for civilian life.

F: Definitely.

T: Did you come right back to Chisholm when you were discharged?

F: Right back to Chisholm. This factory job in Wyandotte, Michigan, was waiting for me.

T: The job in the steel mill.

F: But there was a good law, thanks to the American Legion VFW organizations and other organizations, that said post-World War II the veteran, upon returning will get their job back. Did you know that after World War I the draftee could not return to his job? It had been taken by a civilian. By someone else. They came back. My job has been taken. You can’t get your job. Did you know that?

T: I didn’t. I knew after World War II that you were entitled.

F: It was done because we had a ninety day period. For ninety days I could stay away from the steel mill. That was one of the benefits. Another was the insurance. Another was the GI loan. Another the GI Bill for education. All that thanks to our organizations. If anyone doesn’t join organization because they feel they get nothing from it it’s wrong. They can get something from it if they try for it.
T: You mentioned before we were taping, that you were looking forward to using the GI Bill benefits.

F: Definitely.

T: What plans did you have for yourself once you got back to civilian life?

F: I always wanted to become a teacher. I fell in love with my eighth grade American history teacher. She was beautiful. I thought she was beautiful. She was a good teacher. She made history interesting to me. Eighth grade I'm talking about. American History class. My sister was a teacher. And I wanted to become a teacher. Circumstances didn't prevail, so I didn't follow suit later.

But when this situation arose I said, as I told you before, I told these friends of mine then when I first heard about the GI Bill through my brother, I said, I'm going to do this. I'm going to be a teacher. I'm going to go to teachers college and I'm going to be a teacher. Art Camara remembered it. He said, “What have you done since 1946?” I said, “Art, I went to college and became a teacher.” And he said, “Shorty, that's what you said you were going to do.” And I said, “Did you remember that?” He said “Yes.”

T: So you followed through on something that you wanted to do for a long time.

F: Definitely.

T: You might not have liked the military, but you were in it for several years. What was your reaction to suddenly being a civilian again in the civilian world? How did you react to that? Was it hard to adjust?

F: I don't know why, but my eating habits weren't too good for the first week or so. I had to readjust it seemed like. Where the appetite should have been it wasn’t. I just didn’t. I don't know if it was regimentation, falling in line and things like that. For the first two weeks I... Except for the fact that friends of mine were being discharged also, with me or right after me. One close friend three weeks before me, come on let’s do the town. During the day nothing to do, but during the evening we would do the town. We had a town here that each of the establishments had music and enjoyment for whomever. I got into this. It took me about two weeks to get back into the eating habit. Even the fact that I didn’t have to answer to anybody. I wasn’t married. Mother wasn’t there which made a difference. Dad allowed me to be as free as I wanted to be. In fact, I didn't go to work for five months. I went back to Wyandotte.

T: You did go back to Michigan then.
F: I went back to Wyandotte for the New Year celebration. And the brother that was still working there, that had previously gotten me the job, said my old job was waiting for me. I said, “John, I’m not going to go to that job. I don’t want that job.” He told me to go up and report anyway. I told him I didn’t want to go back to that mill. I didn’t like it. He said to go back anyway. So I went back to the employment office. The same guy that hired me was there and he congratulated me on my contribution and he said, turn to the right, you can get your old job back. Then he gave me a wallet with a hundred dollar bill in it. He said they lost track of me and they were giving these gifts out during the wartime. This is your wallet and your hundred dollar bill. If I hadn’t done that I wouldn’t have received it. But instead of turning right I turned left. Never went back.

T: So you were not interested in that.

F: Definitely not.

(2, B, 616)

T: When did you start school at St. Cloud Teachers’ College?

F: September of 1946. I took all that time off. I enjoyed myself for three or four months, then I went to work for the mining company. I worked in an open pit. I worked in the summer months. In the meantime I enrolled at St. Cloud. A friend of mine had not made the service because he had a crippled leg and he graduated in ’42 from St. Cloud. He steered me to St. Cloud. I was thinking of Duluth Teachers, but it was closed. My sister had graduated from there. But this friend of mine said, Go to St. Cloud. There’s a good Range contingent there. You’ll be happy there. He said he would take me down one weekend. He already was teaching in the Greenway District. He said, “I’ll take you down. I’ll get you housing. Introduce you.” Which he did. That’s why I went to St. Cloud.

T: Were you, when you went to school in the fall of 1946, were other students about the same age as you?

F: Oh, yes. We had a whole big contingent of veterans. Ex-servicemen from northern Minnesota towns like Ely, Virginia, Mountain Iron, Chisholm, Hibbing, Grand Rapids. I got to know individuals from each town that I mentioned. Classes with. Sociability with. We had a Rangers group. We kind of dominated.

T: So you felt quite at home there.

F: Definitely. We had a good contingent of hockey players there. The coach and instructor was from Eveleth. He was Van Del. I remember he was a math instructor. But it wasn’t the same hockey as we have today. It was outdoor and it wasn’t the same caliber as it is today.
T: Now it’s almost a professional thing.

F: It’s a big league. Most of the fellas from Eveleth were hockey players. They made the hockey team. They played outdoors. I remember that.

T: Did you live in a student apartment or did you live off campus?

F: Off campus. I roomed. I was able to get a room in a private home when I was single. Then we were able to get an apartments to some extent. I got married in ’47.

T: After your first year in school.

F: Yes. Then I got married and my wife Patricia came down to live. We had difficulty in finding housing. Had I had children, I could have lived in a Quonset there. They had a Quonset hut area for veterans with families. You had to have children. I had a heck of a time getting housing. I ended up in a two-room apartment in a four family home. We used one bathroom, one tub.

T: So you had to share the facilities.

F: The facilities. We had an oil heater. Half the time I didn’t know to run it. One room was a bedroom and a curtain divided the one room from the kitchen.

T: So the housing market was tight even in 1947.

F: The housing market was tight. I had difficulty. I had to beg for that apartment. When I first brought my wife, I was able to sublet a nice apartment. Sublet for three months only. Then I had to scrounge and look, and I was very lucky to get the apartment I did. In fact, I’ll go one step further. I’d be visiting a friend who was living in this apartment building that I eventually lived in and I talked to the landlady many times. I said if you ever get a vacancy let me know. She said she would have one soon. Then I remember I had to move out of the place that we sublet. We lived in one room for one week before this other place was available. I went to move into this apartment, this home, and the man of the house came out of the house and he was waving his cane at me and he said, “You can’t move in here.” I said, “Why not? Your wife said it was all right.” “No, I don’t care what she said.” And he was waving his cane. “You can’t move in here. She said you’re a nigger lover just like your friend upstairs.” Actually we had a mutual black friend in Chicago and we had broken bread with him. “Regardless,” I said, “I don’t have a place to live.” “I don’t care,” he said. “I don’t care.” This guy was a German. His name was Hemburger. Not Hamburger. Hemburger. I said, “Please, I don’t have a place to stay. Your wife said it was all right.” I’ve got my boxes. “Please.” “No, you can’t move in.” I said, “Sir, please. I fought for my country.” “I don’t care who you fought for.” Then I got angry. I said, “Sir, if you were ten years younger I would punch you right in the mouth.”
T: An older guy?

F: Yes. And a friend was with me helping me haul stuff. He’s laughing. The old lady came out.

T: Was she German as well?

F: German. She came out. “He can move in. This is my house.” I said to her, “Are you sure?” “Just move right in.” He stepped aside and I moved in. I stayed away from this guy, so he took a shine to my wife. He saw the earrings. He asked her if she was born in Italy. No. Nice earrings. Pierced ears. I stayed away from him. Three weeks. Pretty soon, one thirty, two o’clock in the morning the ambulance comes. Takes somebody away. I’m in class the next morning. It’s summer school. “Hey, Frank. I just heard your landlady died.”

T: She died.

F: She died. Three weeks. I thought, oh my god. I called my wife. She was working. I said, “You better get the boxes ready. Hemburger will probably chase me out.” We went to the wake. We said, the least we can do is go to the wake. He greeted us at the wake like long-lost friends. Nice to see you, Frank.

T: No kidding.

F: And would you know that I stayed there for the remaining part of my career in St. Cloud.

T: A couple years then.

F: A couple years at least. When we left, the morning I moved out, my father-in-law came down and picked us up. He was at the door. He was in tears. He apologized for everything. I got along with him. I stayed clear. If he said that black is white, I said you bet. I didn’t want to rock the boat.

T: With the housing market being tight you couldn’t.

F: Whenever he said something, “You’re right, Mr. Hemburger.” He liked my wife. He’d bring us carp. Homemade candy. He said, “You’re wonderful people. I almost made a mistake. I’ll never see you again but good luck.” I thought I’d tell you that. I don’t know if that fits in at all.

T: It does. One of the things we’re about is talking about how people adjust to civilian life again. How civilian life adjusted to you.
F: And not only that cash and carry. You had to pay everything. Too many Gls would leave, fly the coup. No credit. But for some reason or other, somebody liked you, because the store would give her credit.

T: Really.

F: And the neighboring girl couldn’t get it.

T: At the time when you were in the service and over in China, what did the war mean for you personally?

F: It was something that had to be done. It was a job that I was trained to do. To do as well as I could and make sure I contribute to winning the war. Winning this war so we could come home and be free again and live like I did before I became a military person. To enjoy life as I did before. Make sure that we win this thing and not going to be dominated by some type of government or some type of people that just wouldn’t fit in my way of living.

T: What’s changed in the last fifty-five years? How do you look at the war now?

F: There’s no draft law, so they’re relying more so on professional people. Weapons. Ever since the dropping the atomic bomb...

T: I mean your own experience. When you think about your experience in the war. About what it meant. Have you changed in the way you think about what the war meant for you as years have gone by now?

F: No, I haven’t changed at all with what the war meant for me. I just said what the war meant for me.

T: What’s the most important way that the war changed your life?

F: It changed my life because I found myself. I found my life. I found my career, my life’s work, because of the war. If it wasn’t for the war, I would perhaps still be in that steel mill, or I’d be in the ladle that made the steel. I’d have jumped into it because I disliked it so much. The only reason I stayed in the steel mill is because I always feel obligated to somebody and I felt obligated to this brother for helping me get this employment. I never would have left that job. And I hated it. Normally if you don’t like it you move on, and I wouldn’t have done it because of an obligation to my brother. The war changed my life. It made for me a very healthy enjoyable life. I was so happy. The proof of the matter is I would leave it. I didn’t leave it until I had to leave it.

T: Being a teacher.

F: I never would have followed that route if the GI Bill, if the war hadn’t been there.
T: The war meant you were eligible for GI benefits and that meant an entirely different life for you.

F: A whole new life for me. A whole new life. I feel that I’m not very mechanically inclined. Without the war I would have been a laborer. The big trucks, the big mechanism. I don’t know if I would have been adaptable. I found my niche. I feel, and I’ve always told the students of mine, if you find what you can do well, do it and you’ll be happy.

T: So you did that.

F: I did that. I said, “Don’t worry about monetary.” I’ve been asked by students, “Would you give up money?” I sure did. I gave money to move from one school district to another. When I left Tower-Sudan for example, the first year I lost seventeen hundred dollars. And I had to go back to the fifth stick. They wouldn’t hire me otherwise. I gave up money for a move, for a change which I felt I would enjoy or better myself.

T: That’s the last question I have. At this point let me thank you very much for all the time you spent answering the questions.

F: I enjoyed it.

END OF INTERVIEW