Bob Boivin

Walter P. Joque

12-4-94

WWII Memories

Tape Transcription

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For Judy Demarks Public History class

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(BB) Walter P. Joque. It is the fourth of December, 1994, and my name is Bob Boivin. I'll be conducting the interview. Okay, mostly instead of an interview, this is really going to be, you just relating really is what we're looking for.

(WJ) You may have to ask me questions though.

(BB) Yeah, that's not a problem. I won't be interrupting you, though, if you feel right, rush right ahead and go. I need to--for...for the record, I need the spelling of your full name please.

(WJ) It's Walter--W,A,L,T,E,R, P-initial, Joque--J,O,Q,U,E.

(BB) Where were you born?

(WJ) I was born in Garden, Michigan, in the Upper Peninsula.

(BB) Okay, what year?

(WJ) Nineteen-seventeen.

(BB) Okay, and where did you go to school?

(WJ) Well, I went to and graduated from high school in Garden. Got to brag a little--I was 15 in my senior year when I graduated in 1933. I was 16 actually at the time of graduation; I was 15 when I was a senior. And from there I had no other formal education

until I came back from service. Then I spent two years at Cloverland Commercial College in Escanaba on a Business Administration course or major was Business Administration. It's no longer in existence today; the college isn't because they have Bay College now here.

(BB) After high school, how did you end up in Detroit?

(WJ) Oh, yes, then I worked as a--in those days there was a W.P.A. [Works Progress Administration]. The older people will know what it is; it was a Nation government program 'cause people were out of work and everything. And I worked in the recreational division of it. And I ended up as supervisor of three counties: Alger, Chippewa, and I can't think of the other one. But anyhow, Sault Ste. Marie, Mannistique and Saint Ignace. When that was finished or the project ended, I had a brother in Detroit so I went down there. I had a letter to go down to the highway department [of] Michigan with recommendations for a job with the highway department but I went down to Detroit where my brother lived and went down to the Hudson Motor Company and got interviewed and got a job there. And I ended up working in the same department that was building rear end fuselages of B-26s, the very plane that some day I was to fly in and be shot down in. Little did I know at that time. I worked there for little over a year, but we'll get to it towards the latter part of that. Pearl Harbor happened. Then I decided to try to get into cadets and become a pilot. You had to pass a

test equivalent to two years of college. Luckily, I did, by the skin of my teeth, and before I knew it, I was called in and I was sent out to California to be assigned to a pilot training school. I ended up at Thunderbird Field in Arizona. It had been originally an airfield owned by a bunch of Hollywood stars. Actually very deluxe, we even had airconditioned rooms. We had a big swimming pool that surrounded that-the, our sleeping quarters surrounded. Course we never had time to swim in it, because we were going from five in the morning until nine at night and by that time you went to bed. I went through Primary--that was Basic--strictly studying-that sort of thing-and training the military end of it. Then from there, at Thunderbird--Steerman, 225 horsepower Steerman that they started you out in. And I trained in that. And I soloed in that. Put in my solo time--I think it was 20 hours--then I was advanced to Basic Training and can't recall now the airbase tell ya truthfully, but needless to say, it was mass-production as I mentioned to you before. And each instructor had maybe eight-ten students that he could only handle five so the five that were the most apt and the fastest to adapt got it. Well, I was in the wash-out group and then I had a choice of becoming a Bombardier or becoming a Glider pilot and I figured that a Glider plot was kind of a one way trip. Besides, with the Glider pilot you went right into trying and with the Bombardiering, we got a ten day delay en route, which meant--I hadn't been home in some time (something like nine months or a year) and so I took the Bombardiering and got my leave of absence. Then I went back to Demming, New Mexico, and went

through the bombing and some navigational because, in some of these bombing planes, the only plane that had a full fledged navigator would be the lead plane, and you had to navigate in case you got in trouble to get back. Graduated from there and got my bars--second lieutenant bars--and of course my Bombardier wings. Then I went to Florida and I was there for a month waiting to be assigned overseas. And of course, we had to train while we were there also, and that's when I first experiences in B-26s were. Now, a B-26 was considered a very dangerous plane. Because, for one thing, is the engines were pretty near as big as the thing, and nacelle of the...is pretty near as big as the wings themselves. And they lost a lot of those planes right in Florida in training. 'Course at that time this was all more or less restricted information because it wasn't good for the public to know and necessarily so: we were in war. There was, but we had an old saying "A ship a day in Tampa Bay," and we weren't too far away from the truth. We were getting kind of anxious to get overseas in combat where it was a little safer. I spent about a month and a half there. Then I didn't fly over; I went over on a boat to Africa and we ended--got out into Casablanca. Then I flew across the whole, the desert clear over to Tunisia, and from there went up to an island of Sardinia, an island in the Mediterranean. Now, the Americans, I mean the Allies, had taken the island of Sicily and Sardinia and had control of Anzio Beachead. They--yes, I believe they did have the southern top of Italy under control, but they were trying to make a landing southwest. Then I put in my 33 missions off of the island of

Sardinia these B-26s. I was very lucky--very fortunate to get a pilot who I didn't particularly like, because he had a lot of ego, but he could fly that plane like nobody's business. He could fly it like a fighter plane and that was my satisfaction: at least he could get us back. Well for some, on my 33rd mission, I wasn't with my regular crew. Let me back up a little bit. Before that, for some reason or othere they had picked me to go down to Africa and stay with the English R.A.F. for a couple of months to study the techniques of night bombing. Now you see, the Air Force--the Allies--the English did the night bombing. We did the day bombing; we never did night bombing. But they didn't know what would happen in the future because England was catching it pretty badly and there might have been a necessity for us to do night bombing. So I spent about a month and a half with the English down there and it was real nice. I enjoyed it very much; the only thing is we practiced in the old Whippy Wellington convas covered or light aluminum-covered with shrapnel and 50 millimeter bullets could go through just as easy. I mean through a more sophisticated plane. From there, I came back and then I went on more missions. And on this particular mission, it was going to be support for the Anzio Beachead group after they had already established a beachead, but wanted to advance. And the bambardier who was to land the group that day, now we had four squadrons, the 438th, 35th, 40th, and the 37th, and the whole group was going to go in and give the front lines support. But something happened to the lead bombardier. I don't know what happened, and I was the

unfortunatee guy to be picked to lead the whole group. Now, let me tell you this: you see, when--in our plane, we had Nordin Bomb Sites. There were two types that were very popular--the Nordin and the Sperry. The Nordin Bomb Site was gyroscopically stabilized within the bomb site itself, and I'll explaiin why later. So was Sperry, but Sperry was made for higher altitudes and therefor the B-17 that flew up around 20,000 [feet] used that. We flew between eight and 10,000 [feet]. Low altitudes, we called it, and we used the Nordin Sitee. Now when you're on a bomb run, once you spot your target, the pilot switches the planes controls over to the bomb site and I actually fly the plane through the bomb site. Now, he flies with a wheel, rudders, and a throttle. I fly through three little tiny knobs in that bomb site in order to be able to hit the target, and once it's switched on to that I have full control of the plane while we're making our bomb run. Now once you make--start on your bomb run, no matter how much flak comes up, how much hell you get (if I may use the word), you stay on your bomb run. And we did, but something happened. A couple of the planes got hit and we, we probably got a hit and [it] sidetracked us some. And we had to come around a second time. Now that was murder, to come back around. Anybody that does, what-do-you-call-it, with shot-guns and shooting?

(BB) Skeet shooting?

(WJ) Yeah--knows that if the target comes around again, the same

place, we you're going to get caught. And of course naturally, they want to get to land plane for the whole group of four different squadrons. Each squadron had I think as four units for formations of six planes. And so when we came in the second time, we got a direct burst in one of the engines caught fire and the second burst was right into the cockpit. Which didn't kill--but he was in bad shape and unconscious--the co-pilot. And the call was to abandon ship--bail out. And at that time, I took my lever I was supposed to then release all my bombs, no matter where we weree, and, of course, my bomb release was shot out too. The bombs didn't go out; they were still hanging up in the plane and we were going down. I'm up in the nose and yoou don't get out of the nose because you'd get killed with the props. I had to crawl through and I slipped between the bombs and the bomb bay doors to slide out. Mow, you don't carry a parachute up in the nose because you have no place to get out and these are small chest packs that you wear. And when I got back there I couln't find a chute. My chute was gone off of the navigator's table that was my location and the plane started tipping down back this way, I s'pose to turn over, and my chute was on the catwalk with the bomb bay doors open and the thing slid toweards me and I was able to grab it and hook it on. Then I started through the bomb bay doors and as I did, I saw the co-pilot, who somebody had dragged back there and dropped him through the bomb bay doors but didn't know it--his chute had hooked on the fuse end of a bomb and I was hanging partly way outt and partly in, and I was trying to get him off the end of the bomb and I couldn't. I kept trying

and trying and finally the slip stream pulled me out and I went out and had I not gone out at that time I probably wouldn't be living today because we were at very low altitude at that time. So he went down with the plane. My chute opened up less than a thousand feet from the ground and I hit the ground probably at 30-40 miles and hour and that time I didn't realize what it was but I crushed a bunch of my disks in my vertebrae. And naturally we weren't too far from the front lines so I had a--I said a reception of a half a dozen fellows with machine guns. That also saved my life 'cause, had I been any higher, well, they were using us for targets too at that stage of the game. In the early part of the war they didn't shoot a fellow when he bailed out and came down. But it got towards the--things were getting pretty rugged then. So I would say that the fact that I bailed out that low probably saved my life. And of course from there they took a, an Italian house of some kind. In the basement I stayed for about a week. And our planes were comin over and bombing and strafing everyday and I was sort of cowering in a corner, scared to death. I'll be truthful to ya. And one day, I looked out and here's a little old lady sitting underneath a stirway in a rocking shair amongst all of this going on it was her hime, the war was going by and she had no other place to go. And then I sat there and think; I start feeling ashamed of myself. To think here I am, waiting, because I was afraid we were going to get hit and here's this little old lady sitting in her rocking chair. How ironic can it be? Ya know? And it sort of changed my mind right then and there that, you know, either

you're going to get it or you aren't. Well, then they eventually took me further in, in up to a what they call a sweat box. It was a little room--probably, maybe four feet wide and about eight feet long, with no windows or anything--just some boards to sleep on. And they passed your food through a little slot in the door. I don't know how long I was in there--could have been two weeks, could have been a month because you couldn't tell day or night. And then they would take me out and interrogate me, because they wanted to account for everybody in this outfit that I could. And I was in the lead ship, bear in mind; now in that lead ship, normally any ship you kave the pilot, co-pilot, then yoou have the boardier, who was bombardier and navigator and you have your engineer and your radio man, who are both also gunners, and you had a tail-gunner. But, in our ship, we had Major Yates, who was the commander, and who stood in between the pilot and co-pilot to direct the whiole operation because we were leading the whole group. Then Captain Wilson, was the first pilot and a first lieutenant, Darrell Ratliff was the co-pilot and he was the one of course what got killed in the action, and I know when you read that, if I might mention, our first-born my wife and I named our son Darrell after the co-pilot that I tried to save.

[Pause]

(WJ) Where was I at? What was the last thing I was talking about?

(BB) You were talking about the people in the plane.

Oh, yeah. Well, yes, and Major Yates was like I said, was leading the whole thing. So we had a bunch of brass in ours. I was the lowest ranking; I was a lieutenant--a first lieutenant also, but the lowest ranking officer on the plane. And plus we had, of course, three non-com officers on the plane who were the engineer and the tail-gunner and the radio operator. Course, the radio operater ended up in the top turret of the plane. And I in the nose, of course, see have--there's one gun that you can see on the side that the pilot could operate it was just a stationary gun. These are all 50 calibers. And the swivel one in the nose is the one I operated. [Break] 'Course the sides operating the bomb sites--course I also operated the nose gun. In this case we had had P-38 cover so we didn't have too much trouble as far as fighter planes were concerned. The first part of the war. I'll back up just a little bit. We didn't have any cover so every once in a while we would get hit and with fighteer planes and of course then I had to use the gun. But my primary job was, of course, to hit the target with bombs, not the gun. After I, I was the last man out naturally. I don't know where the plane went, what happened to it, of anything. The only thing is it must of a--there must have been a-- When Major Yates, who was leading, landed. He thought he had landed near his own plane that had crash landed and saw a dead bombardier in the nose; well, it was our wing plane. But they wouldn't list me as killed in action because they won't do it unless you--they actually see your dog tags (thank God) but, at that, of course my folks were

notified that I was missing in action and I think it was six months before actually the Red Cross found out that I was still alive and in a German prison camp, and then they finally got that information. In the mean time, they had already presented her with a purple heart posthumously to me, which didn't make them feel too happy, but then that's beside the point. I did earn the purple heart, I can assure you of that. In, well from then on it was prison camps, I ended up at Stali Gluft Three. Now Stali Gluft Three was a prison camp for officers of primarily Air Force because at that stage of the game, there were few prisoners taking only taken. As far as ground troops are concerned, but most of your P.O.W.s were Air Force people because they were shot down and naturally they were taken prisoner and they did the two and there was a partial reason for that. Well, for one, is officers and enlisted men were kept separate anyhow. Secondly, is, according to the Geneva Convention, they couldn't work an officer, so wee weren't allowed to work, but on that basis then, we got what they called an non-working man's ration, which was 900 calories a day. Now that's what I think they feed an infant when they're first born, so you didn't gain much weight on that, I can assure you. Our diet was mostly blood sausage and rutabagas, some kind of ersatz bread they made out of wheat and sawdust, and we would get a soup that--now, and this sounds ridiculous, maybe--it was wormy, but there is nutrition in worms, so we ate the wormy soup and all, and we got one slice of bread a day. We got our one bowl of soup a day. See, they didn't feed 'em like we do here--the prisoners three meals a day. And we

depended on Red Cross parcels that used to come in occasionally, and those were a godsend, cause if it hadn't been for the Red Cross, I well say this today, a lot of people criticized it on certain things they did, but if it hadn't been for the Red Cross today we couldn't have survived on what they fed us. I can be truthful to ya. 'Cause when I got back the first thing I did, when I got back to the States was make a donation. It wasn't all that big, but as big as I could afford, to the Red Cross because I figured that they were partially responsible for my getting back. So the first camp I was in was a clean camp. It was four different compounds with 2,000 men in each compound. And one of the compounds had an English group in. Now, there was a story on it. I don't know if you remember Tom, Dick, and Harry that they built four tunnels and the reason for that is so that if one was discovered they'd have another one. This was the compound next to ours. And, about a month before I got there or a little, maybe two months, I don't know, they had escaped, but they all got caught and of course, prior to that time they didn't shoot escapees; they sent 'em back to camps. But Hitler gave them orders and all 50 men were shot, that were picked up. So people were a little more careful now. In our camp, you didn't try and escape. If you tried to escape on you own, you got reprimanded right within camp. We had our own executive officer and everything else of our own to keep us our sanity and everything that had nothing to do with the Germans see. To see that we kept clean, as clean as we could. I noticed in my little notebook, when I was giving an interview here some time ago, that I made a

note and the note was, at the time I made the note, it said I got my first shower since, that was on in March, January 21st, I think, and I was only allowed about a minute and a half under cold water, because they didn't give you much. But, you know what? When nobody bathes you don't notice it for some reason or other. Anyhow, I was in that camp. Our room was clean. We kept it clean. And what we could save and conserve out of our Red Cross parcels we did. And we put a little aside each time because we knew some day we figured that we--the Russians were going to come in before the Americans and we would have to leave that camp and be sent to another camp so we made up mixtures that wouldn't spoil that we could take a bite of and chew on to keep alive and not starve to death. Cause the Germans didn't feed you when they hauled you anyplace from one camp to another. In January, we had to evacuate because the Russians were coming. This is in '45. It was in mid-winter; their, like, winters are comparable to ours and we had taken like two shirts and we had an old blanket that we put newspapers in to make like a comforter out of it that we could wrap around us. And we walked the first 70 miles, or 90 kilometers, I think it was. And we had quite a few fellows that couldn't make it they put on wagons and they hauled. If and we never saw them again. I don't really know what happened to them, whether they just disposed of them or whether they did take them somewhere, but the war was getting towards the end and they weren't doing too much. When we were walking and getting pretty desperate, and I fell once, and usualy if you fell they couldn't stop to pick you up and I yelled and I

said "I tripped. I didn't fall" you know, out of exhaustion although I was exhausted and two of the fellows picked me up and I was able to go on. And we finally got through to this--it was a former Italian political prisoner concentration camp. And they were no longer there and they were using it for us. And that place was bad. It was infested with lice and vermin and everything else. Two or three months we were there. We had nothing but dysentery, diarrhea, ptomaine poisoning. At night you'd tie a string around your sleeves to keep the lice from, because you'd wake up in the morning and you'd be bloody around you wrists from the lice chewing, you know. And you didn't want them going up any further than that if you could help it. And there was no such thing as showers or anything. Now we were in a room that was about, I would say, 12 foot by--this is 20 feet--a little longer--30 feet. And there were 24 men in there, now, in that same room you had your bunks. Now the bunks came from here to the wall so this is how much space you had. So everybody couldn't stand up at one time. Some had to lay down. And our bunks were like, you know, in a shoe store how these little holes in the wall? Well, that's the way your bunks were. You had maybe a hole 30 inches wide and 18 inches high and you could slide in there and that's where you slept. 'Course, we were right next to a bunch of railroad yards and the English'd come and bomb the yards, everything but, I will give them credit, they knew that the plant--the prison was there and they knew that we were in there. With luck and good bombing we never had a bomb drop right within the plant, within the prison, but we weren't

allowed out to see them bombing. Now, I'd been a lot of places when I was transported up a lot of times the 500 pound bombs would drop maybe within, I'd say maybe 2-300 feet of us, and if you were standing up it could blow you head off, but if you were laying on the ground you'd come out all right because bombs go out into a V shape and there's a safety area down there, little hard on your ear drums, but if you keep your mouth open, you're not apt to get your ear drums busted. I'm losing my train of thought, but to get back to this. They, our bunks, the fellows that were sleeping in the top bunks two across didn't like it, but we were about three feet off the ground even in the lower bunks, so it didn't make any difference and they wouldn't allow us outside when there was a bombing raid going on because they bombed probably three nights out of a week there; that would get you a little on the nervous side. You couldn't help it. And it was a mess there. Then spring came and we had to move again because the Allies were coming in then from the other direction and we ended up near a town of Mooseburg. Now by this time, it was all nationalities. Australians, Americans, Russians, and everybody else and we were in one gigantic field. We had tents and stuff like that. Some tents to sleep in that all you had--and I would say there was close to 200,000 of us--of all nationalities of the Allies there. And Patton was on his way to let us out. Now the little things that you remember. I had--I was able to--Well, in the first place, you know these bomber jackets you see advertised where you can buy for $195 or if they're good leather $225? I still had my bomber jacket, and I

was able to trade it for half a loaf of bread, and glad to get it. But then I had some oatmeal. I had gotten this oatmeal and I wanted to cook it. We had tin cans from the Red Cross and we had manipulated little stores with them that we could get twigs and stuff and put in and get enough to warm up enough to make it edible, see, instead of eating it dry. I can still remember the fuselage of bullets went overhead, and the was a silence and I crawled out because I wanted to get my oatmeal made. And I finally did get it made. I made a duck pass back in. I'm mixing two things there thinking how I often tell my kids how I traded this jacket, how they would very much like to have had it as a memo. I said, well, it did some good cause it got me a half a loaf of bread and kept me alive for a while. Anyhow, after about three, four more days we woke up one morning and the camp was surrounded by M.P.s [Military Police] with machine guns. We were still prisoners, but American prisoners by American and Allies. The reason for that is, during the night the Germans had vacated but also some of these men had gotten out that were prisoners. And they'd been prisoners for maybe two, three years, ever since Dunkerc. And you know they were crazed. They went out and this is no lie. I hate to say this but they were killing Germans. I don't know what they were doing to the women but I don't think it was very good. And so the military had to come in and surround the camp with military police. And things calmed down then. People finally got to their senses and that. But I can still remember another incident. When Patton did come in, the next day he had a twin, not he, but one of his men was a twin and in the

camp there in Richmund. I didn't see myself butt it must have been something worthwhile to, you know. Then they took us by air. One plane after another, they vacated. Now this is the Americans. I presume that the other nationalities did the same, as best they could. But I think we probably had a little better set up, more organized because they got us out of there pretty good to camp Lucky Strike in La Harve, France. There, of course, the doctors examined us and then they put us through a delousing chamber and then they finally started feeding us soft foods and I mentioned before we had an experience. The Red Cross meant well and they distributed some doughnuts. Instead of one fellow eating one, he ate about a half a dozen; he nearly died cause he wasn't used to it. I mean your system wasn't used to it. You're not getting very much foods, or food. Then once they started feeding us jello and oatmeal and good food, but soft foods and stuff. Then we were put on a boat in the Channel-English Channel. I never set foot on England, but thee day before we left the war ended and so then we headed for the States. After we got back to the States, and I can still remember, we came to Boston, but before we hit Boston, we went by New York and I saw the Statue of Liberty. I'd never seen it before and I'll tell you, that and one other thing when Patton's army came in and we saw the American Flag, quite a few of us, tears started coming out of our eye. And yet, today you get a funny feeling in the pit of your stomach when you see the flag. That's why you see a flagpole out in my yard. The weather's bad--has been bad--I haven't put it up lately, but I usually put my flag up. Well,

they took us in and by that time of course, our systems had gotten quite used to, although we used to go by on the boat and see they had others on this boat too, besides prisoners and they were in the dining rooms, 'course they were, you could see them eating meat and all this sort of stuff. And we'd peek in the windows and salivate because we'd go back to our quarters and we'd have our jello and our oatmeal and our soft foods and stuff like that. But, when we got to the airbase in the States, I still remember this commanding general said, "Now tonight," he said, "every one of you men are going to get a small steak, whether it kills you or not." And so help me, we did. And from then on, 'course, our systems got adjusted to it. As I mentioned before, I had weighed 165, but when I came out of prison I only weighed 112. One month home recuperating, and one month down in Miami, where they had these hotels they had taken over to let us recuperate in. And a good diet and I gained back about 30 pounds, so I was, you get back up there you know; you're young and with the proper foods it was okay. Then they assigned me to a refresher course, of all things, in bombing, out in Texas. So, we went out; I didn't know what they were going to do with us 'cause they didn't need Bombardiers anymore. Well, of course, the Japanese war was still on. Well, then, after we were there for a while, the Japanese war ended and they had to assign us somewhere because they had hundreds of us and I was assigned as assistant personnel officer at Chanute Field. This is at Rantoule, just south of Chicago a ways. Luckily I had no personal experience in personnel, butt I had a--the personnel who-

-the major who was thee person in charge of personnel was very good and the master sargent knew more about personnel then I'd ever know. If you had a good master sargent then you were oka and that's the position we were in. I was there for a year and then of course they had to start. Either you could accept a permanent commission as a master sargent even though I was a captain, that was a temporary commission during the war. You could accept a permanent commission as a master sargent, and that next day you'd see he was a master sargeent. Some of these fellows, they only had three or four moree years to go and they would have retirement see. So this was fine if they took it that was and surprisingly enough I think some of them got their commissions back again probably, but I don't know. I wanted to get out, you know, because I wasn't really a military man at heart and by that time, I was married 'cause this was nearly a year. We had a son that was to be born. We didn't have any place to stay, with it was hundreds of them coming back. We weree staying in one of my friend's home with them cause we couldn't even find a place to reent. We didn't know where we were goingto put the baby when he came. Finally, being in personnel, I had one fellow that wanted to go to a certain place and he had a place rented in Rantoule and I said, "I'll transfer you there on one condition. I get your --you see that the landlord gives me your place." And so he did. And we had a place for the baby to be born in. Well, we were about a month and then I was discharged. That time I think it was you resigned--you didn't--an officer had to resign, you didn't discharge him,

but you didn't have any choice. I had a choice and sometimes I wish I'd have stayed in as a master sargent. I didn't realize what a good deal it was, see? A lot of these fellows after, of course then, stayed in the Reserve and today as I get--as I still get--the 319th as I mentioned to you before is still in existence out West, and when I went to a reunion--I'll back up I had a daughter that worked-works in Chicago, but she had to work for about a year and a half in Hawaii. She's with American Express. She got a pretty good job; she's regional director of personnel for the Midwest. But, anyhow, they sent her out there for a year and a half and we went to Hawaii. That's beside the point. But two days w spent in L.A. because the 319th, the old 319th of WWII was having a 50th reunion--anniversary reunion and I got to go to that and saw surprisingly enough nobody that I had actually known because I presume half of them were dead by that time anyhow and some of them didn't come and maybe some of them were there that I didn't know might have been. The captain, Wilson, lived only about 60 miles north of L.A., but he has Parkinson's now and he's quite shaky you know, and I guess he got to the point where he didn't want to drive anymore so I didn't get to see him, but I spent a couple hours on the phone. And we, once a year, we'll talk back and forth, but he's the only one I've ever had contact with of any of the group. And my original crew that I flew 30 some missions with I never saw after I was shot down--never heard rom or anything, but I did find out through the 319th directory we have that he had died here a few years ago. That's about the sum of the substance. I came back to Escanaba here 'cause my

wife was born and raised here. Went to commercial college for two years under the G.I. Bill. I think we got $105 a month to live on, butt I had saved some money and bought a vending operation, candy vending operation, so I worked that part of the time and then the rest of the time I went to school for two years until I got my Associate's Degree in Business Administration.Wanted to go back a little bit when we talk about P.O.W. [Prisoners Of War] you know. Course there's more make of it today and they have P.O.W./M.I.A. [Missing In Action] day and that sort of thing, but you see when we came out of WWII a P.O.W. was--nobody ever mentioned you or anything else; it didn't mean anything that I was a P.O.W. They didn't recognize you. You were just though luck. You weren't missing in action anymore. You got back to the States. One of the first men that met me when I came back to the States was an internal revenue man, to collect income tax off of me while I was in prison camp as a P.O.W., believe it or not. Now, don't misunderstand me that's nothing against the internal revenue; it was their job. And I'll tell you I was because we got our pay while we were in, or our pay went on while we were there, and I was a first lieutenant so my pay went on. And I had, had made arrangements in case I got shot down and went to my local back here and my folks. I had to help them out. It was Depression, you know, was still on and everything. But anyhow, the first person to greet me wasn't a band or a bunch of people to say what heroes you were. We weren't heroes, believe me. The heroes were the ones that didn't come back and were down six foot under over there. But was an

internal revenue man and I still got a copy of the letteer that I wrotee asking them if they could wait until I was out of service and then make arrangements to make payments on my, what I owed them while I was a P.O.W. in prison camp. And believe me, I was very happy to pay it. To be out of prison and back in the United States. 'Cause you know--you heard of the Pope when he gets somewhere he kisses the ground. Well, I can assure you, when we got back and got off that boat we kissed the ground too. So the Pope and I have something in common, besides both us being Catholic. I don't know what else you want to know that's just about the sum substance of the whole thing. I raised a family of five children. I showed you a picture here. I don't know how because every year, well, I bought a small wholesale business, I told you. That with money I had saved and I worked for him for about two years and he wanted to get out from under and go to Florida and go into the building business. My wife did most the bookkeeping and she knew at least as much about the bussiness as I do, and I'd usually end up in the V.A. Hospital once a year or so in tracking because of my disks that were ruptured. At one time, all five kids went through college, and at one time, we had three of them in college at one time. Now I give creedite to the kids too; they all worked and in those days you didn't get a lot of grants and stuff like that like you do today. It wasn't quite that way but then tuition eveen though it was a lot less was just as much for wheat we earned in those days, and just as hard to pay. Anyhow they all got through and they all got their--not only did they go through four years of college--besides the point

the other have families and they're self-supporting so I don't have a heck of a lot, but at least I don't have to support. I'm going to have to feed them at Christmas time, but I tell you it'll be nice to have them. It wears you out we're getting at the age where a bunch can wear you out in time, but I'll tell yo, you don't mind getting worn out finally. I don't know what else I can tell you.

(BB) That's really good. Thank you very much.