

Interviewee: John Alison  
Interviewer: Mike Rowland  
Date: March 30, 2004

R: Today is Tuesday, March 30, 2004. I'm meeting with General John Alison in his home in Washington, D.C. General Alison, thank you very much for your willingness to meet with me. I'd like to begin by asking when and where you were born, and where did you grow up?

A: I was born in Micanopy, [Florida]. You know that.

R: Yes I do, but I'm going to ask some questions that I would say I certainly already know the answer to, but it's good to hear from you and we can kind of go from there. So I do have a lot of canned questions.

A: I didn't really live in Micanopy. My dad was in the lumber business and he had a saw mill out in the woods, and my mother and he were out there and she came into Micanopy, where I was born. And then, I don't know when, but very shortly thereafter we moved to Gainesville. So Gainesville's been my home for my entire life.

R: And when were you born?

A: [I was born on] November 21, 1912. That makes me almost ninety-two, and I sound like it today.

R: What was your childhood like?

A: Growing up in Gainesville was wonderful. Of course the public schools were the only schools that Gainesville had, and my first school, and I guess the buildings are still there, was on the eastern side of town. Then I went to Gainesville High School. They had the grammar school and the high school, Gainesville High School, which was right there on

University Avenue. It's moved since then; I don't know whether the [old] building is still standing, but it was just west of the T&J railroad tracks. I can't even remember what T&J stands for now, but there was a railroad train that ran right across town there, and then of course the Atlantic Coastline ran right down West Main Street. We lived on University Avenue about halfway in between the high school and the university. [It was a] small town, wonderful neighborhood, kids everywhere, and it was a wonderful place to grow up. I went to high school at Gainesville High School. Professor **Fritz Buchholz** was the principal, and a stern authoritarian, who ran a great school. [We] didn't have any of the kinds of problems that you see in schools today because Buchholz was a physical principal, and he was a big strong man, after all, he had been a southern football player, and he was also a real scholar. We had wonderful teachers. There was no playing like sassing a teacher because if you did you had to report to the principal. It was a disciplined school, and that doesn't hurt young people. Then when I graduated from high school it was just a few blocks to the university. I went to the university and I took engineering simply because I wanted to go to the Army flying school and I thought that would be [a good way]. I wasn't nearly as interested in being an engineer as I was in being an Army pilot, but that was a very good background. My friends were John Tigert, Jr., who was the son of the president of the university, and **Adison Pound**, who's still alive and in Gainesville, and **M.M. Parrish**, who died several years ago—too early—and many others. John Tigert had a motorcycle without a seat, and he'd come by and he'd pick up Adison and the two of them would sit on the seat, then he'd come by and pick up me and I would

sit on the back fender. It was a precarious ride trying to hold onto your books, but we were among the lucky ones that never got hurt. **Adison** and I were in the same class. Actually he caught me in the fourth grade because when he started school he just skipped the first two grades. [He was a] very bright child. He's a dear friend, still lives in Gainesville, and has contributed substantially to the university because his father was an astute businessman and bought much real estate in Gainesville and the surrounding areas. It was very pleasant. I belonged to the Phi Delta Theta fraternity, and college life was pleasant. I didn't really take it serious enough, but I got through. I was fortunate enough to be able to pass the physical examination and get into the Army. I went to the Army Flying School. Both my parents really didn't want me to go; they didn't understand what kept airplanes in the air. At that time there was some danger, but I was fortunate and I survived it all. I've just been fortunate my whole life. I survived World War II; I was shot down twice. I've had to bail out of an airplane, and had a mid-air collision, but don't have a scratch. I expect the Lord has been with me. Then after the war [I] came home and started an airline with some friends of mine, and we got our airplanes. Our principal backers, though, decided that it was too risky for their conservative minds, so we never went through with it.

R: Where was the headquarters going to be for that airline?

A: It probably would have been in Chicago. We got a franchise from the city of Chicago to operate off of the Chicago Airport, but when my backers - who didn't really understand what was going to happen in the airline industry, and maybe they're lucky they didn't -

decided that they didn't want to do it, I came to Washington. As a matter of fact I got a call in New York from Ambassador [W. Averell] Harriman [Harriman served as an administrator and diplomat, as well as adviser to Democratic presidents from Franklin D. Roosevelt through Lyndon B. Johnson], but he was then secretary of commerce, asking me to come to Washington and be assistant secretary for aeronautics. So I came down and I did that. After Mr. Truman won his second victory, his election—it wasn't his second, he assumed the presidency, of course, when President Roosevelt died—but after he was re-elected, I wanted to get out in the industry. So I took a job at **Hodges Research and Development** in Redwood City, California, as president of a small company that they had just started. [It was] called the **Transit \_\_\_\_\_ Corporation**, and we were doing research in that field of transportation. I spent two or three delightful years in the San Francisco area, which is a beautiful area, and at that time, of course, it was not populated as it is today and it was really a wonderful place to live and a wonderful place to work. But while I was there the president of the Northrup Corporation called and asked if I would come and be a vice-president of the corporation, which got me back into aviation.

R: When was that?

A: [That was] 1953. I married my present wife, who lived in San Francisco, and we moved to Los Angeles, and we spent about eighteen years in Los Angeles. Then the company moved me to Washington, and I was in the Washington office here until I retired from Northrup.

R: And when was that?

A: I retired in . . .

R: Well when you think about it.

A: Well I worked for Northrup for thirty something odd years, so it must have been in the 1980s, either 1984 or 1986. Then I continued working for the company for another three or four years, and then retired completely. Then because of my association with many of the world's great engineers, two of whom are close personal friends, one was Edgar Schmued, who was the designer of the P-51, which was our number one airplane in World War II, and another one was Gerhard Neumann [or Gerhard Newman, either spelling is used], who was group vice-president of General Electric in charge of all of their engine research development and manufacturing. Both of these men were German, and both of them were really engineering geniuses. I knew Gerhard was a straight mechanic because he had been with us in China as a sergeant. As a matter of fact, the Chinese had captured a [Mitsubishi A6M] Zero [The most popular Japanese aircraft. During the first six months of the war, the Zero controlled the aerial war in the Pacific] which had been forced down, did some damage, and Gerhard put the thing all together. I went down to this little field where he had checked the airplane out, and I flew it back up to one of our main bases, where he put it into excellent shape. Its destination, of course then, was back to the United States, but in order to get it back we had to fly across the mountains, the Himalayas. I decided that maybe I ought to take it up for one little short test flight before I started back in the aircraft. I took it up and I was up about five

minutes--it performed beautifully. It was a delightful airplane to fly. I wouldn't have wanted to fight in it, but its flying performance was really just excellent. When I put the landing gear down, only one wheel had come down, and I couldn't get the other wheel to come down, so I brought it in and landed it on one wheel. There was Gerhard with his pet project. The airplane was so controllable that I was able to keep the wing off the ground until it was going maybe twenty-five or thirty miles an hour. Then when the wing hit the ground, of course it spun around and it was damaged. It fell, it was damaged, the propeller was damaged, but Gerhard was just grinning. He just rebuilt it, put it right back together again, and we finally got it on the way back to the United States.

R: Now you said you wouldn't have wanted to have fought in it, could you explain why?

A: One of the reasons it had such beautiful performance was it was a very light aircraft. It had no armor plate and no bullet proof tanks. Although it had two twenty millimeter guns, they were not really as good as the six fifty caliber guns that we had in our aircraft. I was hit many times. One time I was hit, [I] came back from a fight, and there was a power piercing bullet stuck in the armor plate right between my shoulder blades. Well up until that time I had not really appreciated that plate of armor that was right back of the pilot. But our airplanes would take a tremendous amount of damage. This time that the armor plate stopped the bullet [was just one of the times I was hit]; I was hit many times. We were in a big fight – I had seven Chinese with me and one American – and early in the fight a Japanese fighter that I didn't see hit me in the main hinge of my runner and my runner came off. Then the airplane was helpless as a fighter because you couldn't

maneuver, but it flew—not well—but it flew, thank goodness. I headed back toward friendly territory and I didn't think I would make it because this Japanese fighter was right behind me and he was really letting me have it, and I was talking too. We were escorting American bombers. I was talking to my wingman, who was fluent in English—I didn't talk to any of my Chinese pilots because I spoke very little Chinese, [although] they spoke more English than I—but I was calling on my American wingman to come help because I said, if you don't, I'm gone. He says, I can't see you John. Then the bomber pilot, the squadron commander who was leading the bombers, he and I were [having a] running conversation. He was asking me how I was doing and I said, well the airplane is damaged and there's a Japanese pilot right behind me, and he's just eating me alive. Cause I could actually hear when the bullets hit the airplane, particularly the armor plate, they ring a bell. Just about that time, when I was just sure that I would never make it back, I was just encased in a hail of bullets. I realized that one of the Chinese pilots was in back of the Japanese fighter and he was shooting at both of us. Fortunately, he did kill the Japanese, and it gave me time to get away.

R: But you got a few bullets into your plane too.

A: I don't know, all I know is when I got back—I was at a Chinese airbase—they had sent an airplane to pick me up. I left almost immediately, but I was told that every gasoline tank on the airplane was hit--of course we had self sealing tanks--and there were several hits

in the armor plate. I have a picture of the rudder post, which is a very small vertical on the back of the airplane, and there are three bullet holes right down that **fin**. I did get it back to the grass strip where I'd taken off, and I would have landed it successfully except he'd also taken out both my tires. The airplane stood right on its nose behind the transport that had been sent to pick me up. This is interesting, because a tall gentleman got out of the transport and he walked over to where my airplane was standing as I was sliding down the nose. I looked around and I recognized him immediately—I'd never met him, but I recognized him—he was Eddie Rickenbacker, "America's First Ace." I said, Captain Eddie, I'm terribly embarrassed, I know that this never happened to you. He laughed, [and] so that was my introduction to our World War I Ace, who later became president of Eastern Airlines. Of course when I was in the Department of Commerce I visited him quite frequently, and he sure ran a tight operation. I don't know what happened to Eastern, but after Rickenbacker died, of course, Eastern was picked up by other airlines, I don't know which. But I got back to the United States. Of course that wasn't the first time I was hit; I was hit many times. The first time I was shot down was at night. Japanese bombers came over and bombed our airstrip. The AVG [The American Volunteer Group (also known as the Flying Tigers) were a group of American fighter pilots that flew for China in the early part of 1942, led by a controversial American, Colonel Claire Chennault, with great success in battles against the Japanese] had been there, and of course, there were very few us. We had no replacement for the American Volunteer Group. They were under contract; they were

mercenaries. When they went home, a few very patriotic boys in the AVG stayed to help General Chennault in his transition. I was just an individual—it was hard to figure out how I got there—but I was in Russia and then I was in Iraq and Iran, and I got a telegram one day saying report to China. So I arrived there just before the American Volunteer Group was disbanded, and General Chennault put me in the 75<sup>th</sup> squadron, which was out of the third AVG squadron. The commander of that squadron was a young Texan by the name of Tex Hill, who turned out to be one of the outstanding pilots of World War II. I was in Tex's squadron as a deputy, and when this night attack happened I asked him, has the AVG tried to stop them at night? He said, yeah, but we were never very successful at it. I said, well if they come tomorrow, I'm going to be up there. So I was up with another individual who had made his way to China, a pilot by the name of **Ajax Balmwa**, who had been an Ace in Spain. He fought for the wrong side, but he was a good pilot. We had some weaknesses, but Ajax and I were up, and they did come that night. I positioned myself at 12,000 feet because the night before, although you can't tell at night because you can't see the airplanes, but you can see their exhaust. From the ground we could see their exhaust and I just estimated that they were at 15,000 [feet]. I said, well if they come over at 15,000, I'm going to be underneath, I'm going to be below them so I can see the exhaust. So I positioned Ajax at 9,000 feet, and I orbited our airport at 12,000 because we knew they were coming, and we were the only target, so we knew they would come after our airport. And sure enough, here they came, and there were six of them. They were very hard to see, but we were successful in locating them and I shot down two. [They]

exploded and went down in flames, and I hit a third one, probably killed everybody aboard, but they hit me too. I knew I was in trouble, so I tried to get through 15,000 feet back down to our airport. The engine ran poorly. I didn't know at the time, but there was a five inch hole right through the crank case of my engine and I'd lost all the oil. The airplane caught fire, and in the excitement or panic or whatever it was [of] trying to get into the airport, I missed it. Fortunately, there was a river about a mile ahead and I put the airplane in the river. It sank in fourteen feet of water and put the fire out, and I swam ashore. I put it in the water right next to a big log raft. The Chinese were floating, I guess, tree trunks down to the mill, and a young Chinese ran out across the logs and I swam over to the logs. I was cut up a bit, but I wasn't hurt badly.

R: Were you cut up from the impact when the plane hit the water?

A: Yeah, the impact when the plane hit the water.

R: I read that a bullet had grazed your arm? Did that actually happen?

A: Yep, I got hit pretty hard. Several rounds [came] right through the cockpit, and one of them took out the radio that I was talking on, so I couldn't talk anymore. One of them grazed me on the left arm and one of them went through the seat and into the parachute, but miraculously I wasn't hit. This was an airplane that had been built for the British and it didn't have a lap belt, it just had shoulder harnesses, and they were so stiff I couldn't turn. They restrained me so that I couldn't turn and look and see all I wanted to see, so I never used it.

R: So you were not secured into the cockpit in any way?

A: No.

R: What did you do when you went into a deep roll?

A: Well if you turn all the way over then you're going to fall out, but normally you can turn because the centrifugal force keeps you right in the seat. Only when you roll over on your back and stay there would you fall out, [which] you didn't do that in combat because the Japanese were much better at it than you were. They had airplanes really built for maneuverability. Although our airplanes weren't built for maneuverability, they were built for strength, and they were better than the Japanese airplanes if used correctly. Fortunately, General Chennault was a real genius of tactical/fighter aviation, and he understood the weaknesses of their machines and he understood the strength of ours. The strength of ours, of course, was for our guts. Also, Chennault had established a warning net. There were listening posts on the ground and they had radios or telephones [that] came into a central net, so we knew where the Japanese were before they knew where we were. That's always a big advantage.

R: So the night that you went up to do the night intercept, you knew that they were coming.

A: Oh yes, and we knew where they were. So when I hit the water, of course, the airplane stops rather abruptly, but I had put my hands up on the cowling because the gun site is right in front of your face. So many American pilots had lost their teeth in crash landings on the gun site, and I was worried about my teeth. Well fortunately I put my head down—I put my head into the gun site—and it cut me up, but fortunately it didn't knock me out. So when I hit the water I was able to get out and swim over. This Chinese [youth] took me

across the logs and put me in a small house until he could get a rowboat, and I went back down the river to a missionary hospital because we didn't have any doctors at that time, or medical technicians. As far as I know, we didn't even have a First Aid kit. But China was at the opposite side of the world, and getting supplies out there was very difficult. The most important supplies we had to have was, of course, gasoline, and we had to have ammunition and we had to have bombs. We didn't have any American bombs to begin with; the Russians had been there before us and we were dropping Russian bombs. The United States was not ready for the American Volunteer Group to leave, and unfortunately they did leave. We were completely unprepared for World War II; we didn't have anybody to replace them. Replacements were just individuals like me that were somewhere in the world and got ordered there. Eventually we got enough Americans to make a full air force, but that was long after I had left. We didn't have enough airplanes, we didn't have enough gasoline, we didn't have enough pilots, and the Japanese had a lot of both. I think the first time I saw the Japanese there were forty-five of them and there were five of us, and it was not a good day. We claimed one Japanese fighter destroyed and we lost our engineering officer. In fact the only time I have seen a P-40 explode [was when] I saw his explode.

R: Explode in the air?

A: Yeah, in the air. They were coming toward me. He was flying straight and level, and right behind him and underneath him, which he didn't see, was a Japanese fighter. I saw the first one, of course, which had the shark's mouth. There were two P-40's, and I was trying to join them when the first P-40 exploded. Then I realized that that was a Japanese airplane instead of a P-40 that had been following him. But our warning net served us very well. The warning net at Canton--Canton Airport was called White Cloud Airport because it was right under White Cloud Mountain. A friendly Chinese, and an observer on White Cloud Mountain with a radio, called the net one evening and said that there were forty-five Japanese airplane fighters landing at White Cloud. Well I knew their destination had to be us, we were about 200 miles away, so I told the fellas, get as good a night's sleep as you can because we're going to have visitors in the morning. And sure enough, shortly after dawn, the net reported forty-five fighters taking off Canton Airport, and then they reported their progress as they approached us. Well because we were short of gasoline we stayed on the ground until they were about thirty minutes out, and then we climbed. Fortunately we could control whether we wanted to fight or not, and we were above them, and when they came there was nothing we could do; we couldn't stop forty-five fighters. The Japanese like to show off, they just dominated the air of course, and they would actually put on an air show for you. We didn't have many buildings. There was one Chinese guardhouse that was built out of stone, and then there was our thatch covered operations area that we lived in. When I came down and landed, the guardhouse was in flames. When I landed and I went over, the building was burning, it

wasn't a very large building, and there was a body in the flames. So I asked, who's that in there? Apparently he was a Japanese squadron commander, [and he] had been hit. Kids were firing from the ground, they were firing everything they had in their pistols and their rifles, and they were in their slit trenches, but shooting at them. It was very difficult to hit them, but apparently somebody hit him because there was a wound in his buttocks. He flew the airplane across the airport, did a 180 degree turn and came back and just flew right into the Chinese guardhouse. That was the first kamikaze I'd seen, [but] before the war was over I saw quite a few of them. It was a Japanese pilot in there and I said, why haven't they pulled him out? They said, well the Chinese did pull him out and they got his papers, and then they threw him back in. I said, well have them pull him out again and let's give him a decent burial. But life in China in the summer, when the days were long, we'd get up about three in the morning. The Chinese took good care of us. None of my enlisted men ever had to make a bed [in] the houses—hostels they called them, which are very much like motels. This particular hostel was a three story building. When we had an air raid, the Chinese would run down the balcony of the three story building tapping their chopsticks on a tin can saying, air raid, get up please, get up please, air raid! But we'd get up about three in the morning, go down, and the Chinese would have breakfast for us. Considering everything, they fed us very well. Then we would go out to the airfield and we had this thatch roof shelter with only one side to it, the rest of it was all open, but it was hot. We'd get there after daylight—we really didn't fear the Japanese coming at night or getting up that early to attack us—and we'd spend the day, all day, sitting and waiting

for something to happen. Initially we couldn't go on very many offensive missions simply because we didn't have fuel. We had to have enough fuel to defend ourselves if they came, so we didn't fly as much as we [would] have liked to. But our targets were Hong Kong and **Hangkow**, which is to the north—those were big industrial centers that the Japanese had taken—and Hanoi down in Indo-China. The first time I saw Hong Kong I was pointed straight down bombing their harbor. I know I'll never forget it because I lost one man on that mission. As I pulled out, we were skimming along the water looking at that beautiful city, [and] I said, one day I'm going to go there and see it. Of course I went back several times, and it is an interesting and delightful city. But the Chinese were wonderful to us; they took good care of us [and] they fed us well. At the first hostel that I stayed at, they were reluctant to serve us rice. They served us white potatoes. I went to the Chinese manager and I said, we'd like rice. He said, well rice is for the common people, and these potatoes are very rare. I said, no, Americans love rice. So from then on they began to fix rice in various forms, fried rice and white rice. We didn't get anything from outside of China except we had canned butter from Australia, and canned evaporated milk. I don't know how they got them into China, but we had those. We'd spend all day down on the alert, and they fed us usually five times a day. Dysentery was just endemic, and cholera, although we were all back stated for cholera. Then [you had the] plague and other diseases [to deal with]. But other than the unsanitary conditions, simply because the Chinese save every bit of human and animal waste to fertilize their crops, and if you're not careful, it's poisonous. There's no control of the flies. In the

days before DDT, a battlefield was just a mess. I don't know where the flies came from, but they would be there in the thousands. But in the spring, we'd have corn on the cob for almost three months, so we were fed well. And then we had eggs. But we got no food from the United States. The airplanes were loaded with gasoline and arms coming across the \_\_\_\_\_; they didn't carry any [other] supplies. But we finally, in our escape kits, every pilot had an escape kit, and in the escape kit were bars of soy meal with chocolate, chocolate soy meals. They weren't the greatest Hershey bars in the world, but we would put them in a kettle with the evaporated milk and water, and it made real first class hot chocolate. Down on the line we always had a charcoal fire going, and we'd make toast. I taught the hostel manager where we were how to make peanut butter. They had peanuts, but he'd never seen peanut butter. So we really never were hungry, but [there was] a lot of boredom [from just] sitting and waiting, particularly when we didn't have enough fuel. There was one time that Chennault ordered no flights whatsoever, but I had every pilot fly at least once a week because you want to be in good form when you really have to [fight]. It was a very interesting tour, and Chennault was really a wonderful leader.

[end side A 1]

A: Anyways, I survived the tour in China, and I was sent back to the States and given a brand new fighter wing to take to England.

R: What unit was that?

A: That was a 367 fighter wing. We were training out at Hamilton Field, which is just a

lovely spot, and I'd been there one month when I got another telegram saying, report to Washington. Actually I had taken a couple days leave and I was down in Los Angeles when the message came. They called me from Air Force headquarters in downtown Los Angeles and said, we want you to be out at the airport at such and such a time, and I said, why? They said, well, you've got to go to Washington. I said, well do you know what for? And they said, we don't have the slightest idea. Well anyway, to make a long story short, I went to Washington, I reported to the chief of the Air Force, [General] **Arnold**. As I walked into his outer office, my friend **Phillip Conklin**, my longtime friend, [was sitting there]. We'd gone through flying school together, we'd been in the same squadron at Langley Field before the war, and we even rented a house together. We were good friends and we'd flown together in training for a long, long time. When I walked into General Arnold's outer office, Phil was sitting there. I said, Phil, what are you doing here? He says, I don't know, what are you doing here? [I said], I don't have the slightest idea. Well to make a long story short, we were called into General Arnold's office and he told us the story of this English guerilla fighter who had become famous, General Ord Wingate, who the Israeli's credited with being the founder of the Israeli airport. He was a very pro-Zionist because he believed that \_\_\_\_\_ in the Middle East would work to the advantage of the British empire. He trained the first Israeli night squads, the guerilla squads, and then from there he went to Ethiopia and he fought there with the Ethiopians. He actually led **Hiley Silaze** back to \_\_\_\_\_ when the British prevailed in Ethiopia. He had gone from there, from the Middle East, to India, and he had started a guerilla

operation against the Japanese where he maintained that the British could outfight the Japanese at night in the jungle. He was very experienced at that, but they had to move and move fast. They infiltrated through the Japanese lines, rather large forces. They used mules for transport and they had to swim rivers and it was very difficult. But he had one significant liability, and that was that he couldn't care for his wounded because he had to move. If a man was ambulatory, he could go with them, but if he was wounded badly and couldn't be moved, they had to leave them there. They'd prop them up against a tree or wherever and put a rifle across their knees and leave them to the tender mercies of the Japanese.

R: Which were not so tender.

A: No. Wingate had been noticed by Winston Churchill, who supported him. He was always in some kind of controversy with his seniors, but Wingate would go right to the top. He did this campaign in the Burma which was quite successful. He would get several hundred miles behind the Japanese lines and hit their logistics facilities. The logistics troops really weren't trained fighters like the Japanese Army, and they would go in and destroy the Japanese supplies and destroy bridges. They did a lot of damage to the Japanese Army in Burma. So they were planning a second campaign and he told Mr. Churchill, I just can't do it because I can't leave my men. He said, it'll destroy the morale of my troops, I can't do it. So Mr. Churchill put him on to Queen Elizabeth when Churchill went to the **Glomex** Conference, and then he introduced him to President Roosevelt. He told the president the sad story and he said, I just have to have air

evacuation of my wounded and the RAF doesn't have the resources to do it. [He said], I'm in hopes that the American Air Force can do it for me. So apparently the president turned to General Marshall and said, can we do it? And General Marshall turned to General Arnold, who said, we can do it. The next thing I knew, my friend **Phil Conklin** and I were in General Arnold's office, and we organized the first Air Commandos [with] Phil as commander and me as a deputy, because Phil \_\_\_\_\_ me.

R: I guess it was kind of a decision that you two made that he would be the commander and you would be deputy.

A: When it started out, General Arnold was mistaken, but he thought I was the ranking officer. He said Alison, you're the ranking officer, you will be the commander. I said, no sir, my friend Phil ranks me, and he said, well you'll be co-commanders. Well co-commanders are just hard to manage in the bureaucracy, particularly when we were putting together a small army to go to Burma. So Phil and I just worked it out. I said, look Phil, you're the commander, you're the ranking officer; I'm your deputy. So we put together, in a very short time, this special force. It was really the first special operation, I guess that the United States Army had done in modern times. General Arnold told us first of all that he was going to give us some light planes that we could land in small patches and bring the wounded out. I said, well sir, I don't want to go. I said, you've given me the best assignment in the Air Force, you've given me a wing, I'm going to England, and I'm going to fight over Germany. Then Phil said, well sir, I don't want to go either. He said,

well wait a minute, I wasn't going to tell you—this was all super secret, we couldn't tell anybody what we were going to do—he says, this man walks in, it takes him maybe six weeks to get in position to fight. When he gets there a lot of his men have been sick, some of them have been wounded, and they're tired. He said, we could move them in by air in just a few hours, and he says, I don't him to walk, I want you to take him in. So that was our assignment. I had flown over Burma many times when I was in China, and I knew that there were certain open plains in the jungle where you can land, so we decided that we would build landing fields behind the Japanese lines, and for this we needed engineers. We had a company or detachment of airborne engineers with gliders to bring in their little tractors and bull dozers, equipment to build the airstrips. Our plan was to fly at night because the gliders and the transports are very vulnerable. I didn't want to land at any of the Japanese airports and try and take it because I didn't want to be sitting in the glider on the runway and have them turn their machine guns on me. So we decided that we would build a bare strip and we picked two: one was named Broadway and the other was named Piccadilly. We were going to establish headquarters at Piccadilly and I was going to fly one of the lead gliders into Piccadilly and set up headquarters, and then we were going to use Broadway as the second. Well our last minute reconnaissance before we took off that night showed that Piccadilly had trees placed all across, so we couldn't land there.

R: Now when you say trees, do you mean like tree trunks? The Japanese knew you were going to try to land there, so they booby trapped you.

A: That's what we thought. Later on we learned that these were Burmese lumbering. I don't know how they did it so regularly. It looked to me as though it were the Japanese. We fully expected that the Japanese had somehow or another gotten wind of what we were going to do, and there were people there waiting for us. So we decided to put all of our gliders into Broadway. We took off at night and flew 150 miles into Japanese territory. I flew one of the lead gliders myself; I'd never flown a glider.

R: I was going to ask about that. So you didn't fly glider in training or anything?

A: No.

R: So the night of the invasion of Broadway was your first experience in a glider.

A: With the jungle grass we couldn't see rusts, the Burmese log teeth, and they pull the teeth across in the wet season with elephants just getting them across these glades down to the river. But they let the logs dry for two years because they won't float; teak logs are so heavy, but after they dry they put them into the river and they float down to the mills, and they will rust where they drug these. When the gliders hit the rust, the wheels came off. They were down on the belly, we couldn't move them, and six \_\_\_\_\_ ran into them and we had a real pile up and mess. The next day, the British commander, **Matt Mike Talbert**, who really was one of the world's great guerilla fighters who believed in hand to hand combat--and he was quite good at it--he and I went out and looked at the airfield, and there was just gliders piled everywhere. The captain of the engineers had been killed in the gliders, and his deputy, who was a small, skinny lieutenant, came with us and we were looking at it and I said to him, lieutenant, do you think you can make an airstrip

here? He looked at it, I didn't know what to expect, and he said, well if I had it done by this afternoon, will that be soon enough? I said, go to work son, and they did. The British soldiers got out there with their little shovels, and we got our tractors going and our scrapers, and pretty soon we had a clear strip. That night I think we took in 100 transports.

R: These are C-47's.

A: [Yes] C-47's, and they were loaded with combat troops and mules. By the next morning we had a fighting force and really were ready to embark. Of course then they kept coming in and we built other strips at other places where we landed, and all together I think we moved 9,000 men by air, and another 3,000 walked in, and we moved in probably 1,400 mules, which was quite a feat. The mules were very docile. As a matter of fact, they had three horses in one of the gliders on the first night, and thank goodness, because I had been running that night. We were trying to keep gliders from running in[to each other], which is pretty impossible, but [we were] trying to get the people out of the glider before the next glider hit. I had run until I couldn't run anymore, and a man came up and said, you don't have to run anymore, and he was leading a horse. I said, where in hell did the horse come from? He had a saddle on him and everything. He says, he was in one of the gliders. Sure enough. So I got up on the horse and in the saddle and I was at home and mobile. I think the second day we had enough troops in, so they started to march out, and their first objective was a bridge on the main rail line which goes up through central Burma. They dropped the bridge, but the Japanese had fortified the area.

There was a small hill which overlooked the bridge, and it was fortified; they had a fair force there. The British took it by storm, just charged it, with **Matt Mike Talbert** out ahead of all of them with his saber. The Gurkhas were there \_\_\_\_\_, it was pretty \_\_\_\_\_, and as in many battles with the Japanese, they had to kill every one of them. But they went up and went right into the trenches on the hills and cleared it out. General Wingate wanted to talk to Mike, so I picked him up in a B-25.

R: You picked up General Wingate?

A: Yeah. I flew him all of the time when he flew in the daytime because I didn't want to lose him. But we dominated the air over Burma. I flew him in unescorted because I figured the B-25's a pretty tough airplane itself, and if I flew low right on the treetops the Japanese would never find me. So we landed and then got in an L-5, which is a little **Litter**. I went over to where the battle had taken place and the British had cleared a drainage ditch by the airport.

R: I do have a question. I understand that you took the first helicopters to be used for combat rescue and that kind of thing with you to Burma.

A: That's correct.

R: How did you get those?

A: Well when General Arnold gave us this mission, he gave us a priority. He said, you can have whatever you need to do the job. He actually said, forget the paperwork, just go out there and do it, which made it a lot easier than going through all the rigmarole that you need to get equipment. So Phil had seen a helicopter--I had never seen a helicopter, I

knew what such a thing was, but I'd never seen one before—the army had none in service, but they were going through a service test at **Wright Field**. So Phil went out and talked to the program manager of the helicopters and he just cut Phil off and said, no, you can't have them. So Phil came back to Washington. He had to go out and advance, and I stayed back until we got everybody out and on the way to India. Phil said, I wasn't able to get the helicopters, so go out and get them. I said, alright, I'll do my best. I picked up the telephone and I called the program manager, an officer by the name of **Frank Gregory**, and I said, Frank, I'll make a deal with you. The Navy didn't have any helicopters either, and the **Navy Admiral King** saw them one day and he says to his exec, the Navy needs helicopters, get some. So the Navy took half of the Army's production. I knew this so I said, Frank, you've lost half your production, but I'll make a deal with you. I'll take six helicopters; I'll take three from the Navy and three from the Army's authorization, and we'll just run a test in India. I said, we'll need pilots and we'll need mechanics. He said, John, they're not ready to go. I said, Frank, this is World War II, a lot of things weren't ready to go. I said, I've been on thin rations since the beginning of the war. I said, we need them, and he says, well you can't have them. I said, well Frank, I'm going to get them anyway, and he said, over my dead body. I laughed and I said, Frank, lie down. So I wrote out a memorandum for approval by the officer of the chief of the Air Core, and we got the helicopters.

R: Did you know **Frank Gregory** before?

A: I knew him slightly, yes. He's a good officer.

R: And how did things turn out with the helicopters?

A: He was right, they weren't ready to go, but we used them. [They] actually, I think, moved twenty or twenty-one wounded with them, but they didn't even have enough range to get back to where we were fighting in Burma. Well we had bad luck with them to begin with. The first one came over flown by air flying in a C-46 with our senior sergeant that we had recruited—sergeants kind of run everything, [and] this was a wonderful non-commissioned officer. The C-46 got almost to our airfield in India, and sixty miles short it crashed.

R: Did you ever try flying one of these helicopters?

A: No. I had flown a helicopter, but I didn't have time to fly the ones we got. They got there late. The first one we lost in the crash, the second one arrived without the tail rudder, and it took us several weeks, or maybe a month, before we located the tail rudder. The last four helicopters got there, then we lost one in an accident, so it took us awhile to get them into operation. I wasn't in for very long. I was in and out of Burma for maybe three to four weeks when I received another telegram from General Arnold saying [I needed] to report to him in Washington. I got two telegrams that day. Another one was from General Eisenhower [General Dwight D. Eisenhower was a commanding general over forces in England during WWII, and was responsible for commanding the Allied Forces on D-Day in France in 1944. He later was elected the thirty-fourth President of the United States from 1953-1961.] saying report to him in London. Well General Arnold was my boss, so

I wired him and asked him if I were authorized a delay en route to respond to General Eisenhower, and he said, you can stay two days in London and then I want to see you. So I flew from India to London, where I reported to General Eisenhower, whom I found was a most gracious five-star general and the most attractive personality. What he wanted to know was what were the troubles with the gliders, because he said, we're getting ready to cross the channel and when we do we're going to use gliders. I think they had a harder time with them than we did. But I told him the problems we had, and then I went on to Washington. General Arnold was very enthusiastic because actually we had been successful. We did move the Army in by air and they were successful in their operation, until General Wingate got killed. I told you, I had flown him on all of his missions, but on this last mission he wanted to go in, I was just getting ready to go to London, so I couldn't do it. He was in one of our B-25's with a very experienced pilot, and on the way back to our base in India, the B-25 crashed--we don't know why--and we lost him.

R: So when you finished talking to General Eisenhower, you went to talk to General Arnold.

A: Yeah.

R: At what point did you get involved in the creation of the other Air Commando groups?

A: Right there. He said, I've authorized four more Air Commando groups and four Combat Cargo groups. I inquired what did he plan to do with them, and he said, we're going to retake Burma from the air. I said, who's army are we going to use? He said, we're going to use the British Army. I said, sir, I don't think the British intend to use their army to retake Burma. The British were essentially doing a holding operation and waiting for the

war to be over. They were reluctant to divert the equipment there, which was less important than stopping the Germans. So he said, I don't believe that, there was a vast resource that he had committed to retake Burma. I said, well order Phil back—he dealt more with headquarters than I did—so he ordered Phil home. Phil confirmed what I had told him, and the two of us were together with Arnold in his office. He said, come with me, and we got in his car and we went over to the combined headquarters. Sir John Dill was the top ranking Britisher in the United States, and he took us in to see Sir John. He said, John, I've committed this very large resource to retake Burma from the air, and he said, these two boys are telling me that the British aren't going to fight to retake Burma. Sir John said, and they're right. Then what do we do with the fort? Well he'd already activated two.

R: Now a third Air Commando group did some training in Gainesville.

A: That's Alachua Army Airfield.

R: Did you ever go to Alachua Army Airfield with them?

A: No. We were tent training down in the Tampa area, Lakeland, and I was down there on one of two trips because Arnold had given me the job of overseeing the creation of these new groups. So we had to decide what we were going to do with the two already activated, and I said, well, I'm sure we can use one in India, I know they'd like to have it, but I don't know what you'll want to do with the other. He said, well do you think that General MacArthur's forces would like them? I said, well I don't know, but it's quite possible. So he said, you go to Brisbane, Australia, and you talk to **General Kenny**, who

is the commanding general of the Army Air Forces in New Guinea—well actually they were in Australia [because] they had not yet gotten to New Guinea—and ask him if they'd like to have the third Air Commando. So I got an airplane, I flew all the way to Australia, spent a couple days there in headquarters. General Kenny said, yeah, he'd like to have the third Air Commando group. So I went back and reported to General Arnold and he says, well, you're going to go over and join **General Kenny's** headquarters and do the planning for the use of the third Air Commando group. We were going to use it to go into \_\_\_\_\_ before the landings. It would have been duck soup because the Philippines are far friendlier, and there were plenty of places that we could have chosen to land, but we were rotating the engineers in to build an airstrip. Then prior to the landing by sea, we were going to land a force by air to attack the Japanese from the rear when the landing party was coming in off the water. Well fortunately the general staff in Washington changed the invasion plan, and instead of landing in Mindanao, which is the southernmost island of the Phillipines, we went around that and we landed in Leyte. There wasn't time to get into position to land at Leyte, and there weren't any good landing areas at Leyte anyway, it's a mountainous island. So the third Air Commando then became a part of the fifth Air Force, and I became a part of the fifth Air Force, and I ended up as deputy of operations for the air force. I made the landings at \_\_\_\_\_, and it was on a battleship that was kamikaze. They'd killed the captain of the ship, which it was named the *USS New Mexico*. How could I forget the name of that ship? [He gives the name of the ship in the following dialogue]

R: That's okay, if it comes to you later you can tell me.

A: I've always had it on the tip of my tongue.

R: On my way back, I had just come from the \_\_\_\_\_ museum in Fredricksburg, Texas, modeling this battleship. Fortunately on the day they went kamikaze, we were in preparing for the landing. It's very interesting to see a battleship operate and see it shoot all of its guns. The *New Mexico*, that was the battleship. I was on the half mast because we were being attacked by kamikazes everyday, and we had not been hit. The cruiser from Australia was right behind us in the battle line. I think in the battle the \_\_\_\_\_ was hit five times. It was a four stack cruiser and it was a flagship of the Australian fleet, and one of the smoke stacks was knocked off of it, but it survived. Any time you wanted to see any action, all you had to do was just look to the rear and somebody was diving on the Australia. But this \_\_\_\_\_ came in over the rear of the ship, and I've got the photographs of it. I was down there on the half mast as a photographer up there.

R: You have the photographs?

A: I've got the photograph. He went right over our heads and into the back of the foremast, which is the navigation bridge, and that's where the captain was, and the Australian lieutenant general, and [the] command of all of their troops [were], and *Time/Life* correspondent **Bill Chicle** was there, and they were all killed. Thank goodness I wasn't on that bridge that day.

R: Right. Now I had read somewhere, speaking of the Navy, it was a *Gainesville Daily Sun* article from during the war years, it said that you had thought about becoming a Naval

aviator. Is that true?

A: I told you my friends John Tigert and **Adison Pound**, they both went into the Navy. I thought, well okay, I can learn to fly with the Navy as well as I can with the Army, and I wanted to be with my friends. So I applied, and I was about a quarter of an inch too short for Navy regulations. Somehow or another [that] turned into an argument with a doctor who was shorter than I, [and] to make a long story short, the Navy wouldn't accept me. Turns out that was the luckiest thing that ever happened to me.

R: When was that? Had you already graduated from the University of Florida?

A: [I had] graduated from the University of Florida, and when I took the physical I was too short to pass. I went across the street and enlisted in the Army and went to the Army flying school right from the university.

R: Now you were in Army ROTC, is that correct, when you were at the university?

A: Well I had to resign my ROTC commission and start over as a blind cadet. There were three of us from the University of Florida who were in that class. **Coleman Hinton**, whom I had known on campus, and **Francis Black**, whom I didn't know very well. The university was very small then and you knew most everybody. We got in **Coleman Hinton's** Ford B and drove all the way out to Texas to \_\_\_\_\_ Field and started our flying training. Black did not go into the Army Air Core. As soon as he could he signed up with Eastern Airlines and survived; he was a captain of Eastern Airlines. Hinton was from Lakeland, Florida, and [was an] absolutely delightful, wonderful young man. Everybody liked him and everybody called him Sugar Boy, and he and I were

roommates. Black and **Hinton** and I roomed together in primary, and when **Hinton** got out of flying school, we became aid to **General Tinker** at a base in Tampa. Then when the war started, **General Tinker's** outfit was ordered into the Pacific. They were flying out of Waco, [Texas], I believe, on a combat mission. As they were flying along, **Hinton** was the pilot, and they called the formation and said, we've got a problem but don't worry, we're going to go back home. There was a cloud layer, and the last they ever saw of them they went into the clouds and they were never heard from after that. That was a great loss to all of **Hinton's** friends because he was really a delightful young man. He was a part of the ATO fraternity and very popular on campus.

The third Air Commando was trained at Gainesville. It was commanded by a former AVT squadron commander, **Arnold Olson**, who was an old, old friend of mine. I picked him to be. He had gone with us in the first Air Commando. He had been in one of the gliders. We lost some gliders en route in the landing field. If you didn't synchronize the two gliders behind your transport perfectly, you broke the rope or you pulled a fitting out of the back end of the C-47. The glider that **Olson** was in, both gliders, apparently pulled the fitting out and both gliders were up there over Japanese territories. **Olson** landed right at the headquarters of two Japanese divisions, but it was night. He was in one of our radio gliders. One of the things that we had when we left the United States is we had wonderful radio. We had radio stations in two gliders going in that night. Fortunately, one of them made it all the way, but the one that **Olson** was in went down just after it crossed the

**Chinlin River**, which is a very broad body of water, and the Japanese had machine guns on them before they could get out of the glider. But there were also three gurkhas with them, and they're very resourceful little men; I don't know whether they were captured or not. In every glider we carried a British tin of gasoline, so when you landed you set the glider on fire. This was a radio glider, so they forgot to set it on fire. Well naturally under fire, it's pretty easy to forget about the glider and the radio. But they got about 100 yards away and they sent the gurkhas back, and they set the glider on fire. I don't know what happened to the gurkhas, but Olson and the glider pilot and a radio operator, and I think a glider mechanic was with them. They got to the Chinlin River, but only two of them could swim. It was night, and it was a full moon, so Olson and the glider pilot, they were the two that could swim, they were going to swim and get help, and they started out and actually swam this very broad river. They used the moon as their guide because they couldn't see across the river. Olson said, we were really lost when the moon went down; but they did it, they made it across.

[end side A 2]

A: They got across the river and a British patrol, fortunately, found them. Both of them were a sorry lot then. They had made crutches for themselves out of tree limbs and had their feet all bandaged. Somewhere I've got a picture of the glider pilot and Olson with their feet all wrapped up and with the crutches they used to try and walk on these bare feet through the jungle. Anyway, this was the first Air Commando group, and when Olson got back in the States, I chose him to be the commander of the third, and he trained in

Gainesville. He had quite a record first as a Navy G squadron commander.

R: Now I think I remember you telling me that sometime after you got your wings, when was it, 1937, that you flew into Gainesville.

A: Yes.

R: Where did you fly in?

A: There was a hangar and there was a grass strip that kind of started on the southwest corner and headed a little bit northeast. I landed there on the grass.

R: And this was the airport out off of Waldo Road?

A: Yes. As a matter of fact, the strip was very close to the road.

R: What kind of plane were you flying?

A: A P-36, which is a lovely airplane to fly. That was my first trip home, which I survived, which many pilots didn't survive because they would go to their hometown and try to show off and kill themselves.

R: But you managed to avoid the temptation.

A: I avoided the temptation.

R: Then after that, I guess at some point before the war started, you went to England for awhile, and then you went to Russia, and had all these remarkable experiences.

A: Yeah, I got to London the night of the last big air raid in the war, I think probably the biggest in terms of casualties. [I] didn't know what was happening. Several RAF pilots met, I went with Hub, and Hub was in flying school when I was in flying school. We'd been in the same outfit both at Langley Field and at Mitchell. Before he was sent over

with the P-40's to help the British if they needed any, which they really didn't, so we were sent over, really, as observers of the air war, because we weren't at war. I guess headquarters knew that sooner or later we were going to be in it, and that we ought to know a little bit about how [it works]. So we went over with the RAF about four months before we went to Russia. Of course we were ordered, really at the expense of our life, not to fly across the channel. There was great anti-war sentiment in America at that time, [there were] people who didn't want to spend a dime [and] didn't want us to get in the war, so we were very slow to get prepared. General Arnold said, look, let me explain, this was \_\_\_\_\_ and me. Your RAF buddies are going to say, come on, go with us today. And if you are to fly across the channel, particularly in an American airplane, and you were shot down in France and the Germans get a hold of your body, that would be the biggest propaganda aid that they could have, and it would also set us back tremendously. [He said], so at the penalty of death, don't cross the channel, so we didn't. The British were wonderful, they wanted America to come into the war, so they couldn't do enough for us. It was a very pleasant experience. They let us fly all of their airplanes. Hawker Hurricanes and Spitfires, even Tiger Moths and their new trainer. It couldn't have been a more pleasant experience.

R: And you had to bail out of a plane over England.

A: Yeah. They were having war weapons week, that's when the \_\_\_\_\_. This little town near where I was stationed was having a war weapons week rally of some kind. They'd asked the RAF to have a flyover or have someone do some acrobatics, so the RAF chose

me. So I said, yeah, I'll do it. So I started for the town, and I could see it over in the distance, but there was a very low overcast, it was about 400-500 feet of cloud layer. I figured, well, can't do any acrobatics, the best I can do is fly across the town upside down.

R: What kind of plane were you in?

A: [I was in] a P-40. So on my way over, at low altitude, I did a couple of rolls to the right, a couple rolls to the left, and then the controls jammed, but they were jammed in a neutral position so I had partial control of the airplane. I had a roommate that had been killed jumping out of a P-40 about a month before [I went to London]. He was a good person, a dear friend, and we lived together in the same house. **Phil Cochran, John Aiken**, and I rented a house on Long Island, and that's where we lived. John had jumped out and he hit the tail and his hand was in the D-ring on the parachute, but his arm was broken and he couldn't pull the D-ring, he couldn't pull the parachute. We found him not more than 100 feet from the airplane. So I was concerned about getting out of there. I tried several ways to get out, all unsuccessfully, and finally in desperation I just jumped, and I made it. I was in an RAF parachute. It must have been rigged for a very large man because the harness and everything slipped all around and the backpack came over my head and I could never see my parachute, because it was a small parachute. Probably the only thing it could do was to keep you straight as you fell. So I fell into a field and I hit so hard I sprained both my ankles and my ankles were numb. I started crawling to a farmhouse across the way and there was a hedge row. Before I got to the hedge row I was

able to stand, I got some circulation back in my feet, although both ankles were sprained.

When I got up to the hedgerow, I saw several guns pointing out of the hedgerow at me, I was like, oh god. So I immediately dropped my hands. I was in civilian clothes.

R: They didn't know if you were a German or what?

A: No, I said, I'm an American, I'm an American. Then one of the guys said, hey fellas, it's a Yank! So they took me into the farmhouse and they had a proper tea with all kinds of cakes and goodies and tea. They couldn't do enough for me in waiting for an ambulance to come pick me up. Fortunately the airplane went down in a field too. I tried several experiments, I wonder what will happen, as you try to get out of an airplane. Because I'm small and these airplanes didn't have adjustable seats, I used a cushioned life preserver cushion to sit on, and an RAF blanket behind my back to get me up where I could see properly. I threw the blanket on one side and the cushion out the other side, and it hung on the tail, and then I said, my god, it's going to be hard to get out of this airplane. I tried several ways and none were successful.

R: This is as you were flying at fairly low altitude with jammed controls?

A: No, by this time I had gotten out where there was no cloud layer, but I was up above the clouds. So this was kind of an early morning cloud layer. To make a long story short, I got out of it. They took me over to see the airplane, which fell very nearby, and the front part was buried completely in the field, and the tail was sticking up, and the yellow cushion was still sticking up on the tail. I said, well I'm glad that's not me sticking up on

that tail. I was reading **Brighton**, because the death of my good friend who tried to get out of a P-40, because getting out was not easy. But I kept on flying and the RAF bandaged my ankles and I kept on flying. When I went to Russia and got cold, my ankles started to hurt again, but I was flying there and I had a similar experience with controls. I was delivering an airplane from the assembly area over to a Russian fighter field, and on the way over I did a few rolls just for fun. These airplanes were manufactured so rapidly they didn't clean them out, and there was dust and dirt and nuts and bolts flying all over the place. Sometimes you'd see a wrench; an old wrench would be in the airplane. I came in to land and everything was all right until I started to flair, and the controls jammed, fortunately, right at neutral. By opening the throttle I was able to bring the nose up and made a very fast landing, but I had a long, long grass field. I got the airplane on the ground safely. Then I said, alright, now I'll find out what [is going on], because it was the same kind of experience. What had happened, the controls that control the elevator went through the cockpit, and there were two bell cranks right in front of the armor plate to which the cables were attached to the elevator. As I rolled, one of fuselage wings that caught in this channel that was supposed to keep everything out, but it just funneled it right down to one of the bell cranks, and that's where the controls jammed. I was very happy when I pulled up to the Russian mechanics and I showed them, I said, you can't get the stick back. So they took all the shrouds off, and there was a body \_\_\_\_\_ locked in the controls. Anyway, from England we went to Russia. **Zifkey** and I were out at an RAF airfield spending the weekend with the RAF and this spider outfit was out near the

channel. I got a call from the Embassy saying, we want you to come in on Sunday. I said, what for? They said, we can't tell you. I said, do you want me to bring my bag? We just had one of these Army bags—and they said yeah, bring your bag. So I went into town and reported to the Embassy, and they told me to be down at such and such station, that I was leaving that night for Russia. I said, I don't have any clothes. They said, well you're not going to be there for the week. I would be going with Harry Hopkins, who was President Roosevelt's confidant and counselor. I learned that **Mr. Hopkins, General McCarty**, who is a high ranking Army officer in the Air Core, [and I] were going to Russia to find out—the Germans had just marched into Russia—and the president wanted to know if we could send the police to Russia to help them fight the Germans. Even though we were at war, the president apparently anticipated it, so he wanted to strengthen Russia. So I got out of the station and the American **ambassador Litith** was there, and **Mr. Harriman** was there, and very few others, and **Mr. Hopkins** and **General McCarty**. We had a five car train all to ourselves nonstop to Northern Scotland. We got to Northern Scotland, got in a RAF flying boat, and for about twenty-four hours we went north off of the coast of Norway, part of so that the Germans couldn't pick us up. Then [we went] around the northern tip of Norway and ended up **archangel**, landed, and the Russians met us in a couple of speed boats and led us to a yacht that at one time had been a grand yacht. On the afterdeck there was a canopy and a wonderful Russian \_\_\_\_\_, the standard dinner. [There was] caviar and lots of butter and good black bread and vodka, a lot of vodka. Five glasses, starting with a shot glass of vodka and finishing up with the tulip glass of

champagne. I didn't drink, and several times Mr. Hopkins would ask, \_\_\_\_\_, drink. I would say, no, Mr. Hopkins, I don't drink. He was a man with great sense of humor. He said, I don't mind that you don't drink, but he said, please don't look so **experienced**. Finally during this repast, they had been toasting everybody, \_\_\_\_\_, churches, \_\_\_\_\_, until finally I thought they were going to toast the seagulls. But eventually this big Russian general in his white tunic stood up, picked up his glass of vodka, and said, I want to toast the friendship of the American pilot who has gone so far to help us in our struggle a common enemy. [He said], I want to toast to his friendship and ours. I said, time's come, I stood up, I took mine, and I downed it. It wasn't that easy, but it went down. I tried to put my napkin up to my face when I sat down and Hopkins, with whom I wouldn't have a drink, sitting across the table from me said, Alison,