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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW OF FRED FUTTERMAN

March 18, 2003



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2 MR. RUSSERT: We're with Fred --
3 Fred Futterman. We're at the Comfort Inn,
4 Brooklyn, New York. It is the 18th of March, 2003
5 approximately one forty p.m.. The interviewers are
6 Mike Russert and Wayne Clark.

7 MR. RUSSERT: Could you give me
8 your full name, date of birth, and place of birth
9 please?

10 A. Yes. My name is Fred Futterman,
11 F-U-T-T-E-R-M-A-N. I was born on August 4th, 1920.

12 Q. Okay. Where about -- where were
13 you born?

14 A. I was born here in Brooklyn, New
15 York.

16 Q. Okay. What was your educational
17 background before you went into the military
18 service?

19 A. Okay. I had two and a half years
20 of college, here at Brooklyn College. And I was --
21 went into a program at the college. I didn't
22 finish. I only had two and a half years because I
23 just wasn't finding myself there and I wanted to
24 try something and this was in the -- in the

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2 depression, 1939. And I graduated from high school
3 in '36.

4 And in 1939 I went to Brooklyn
5 College. And I left in June of '41.

6 I went into one of these
7 government programs at that time. It's called the
8 NYA. I don't know -- you know, a lot of people
9 just don't know what that is. You've heard of the
10 CCC Civilian Conservation Corp, heard of that.
11 This was the National Youth Administration. And
12 they found jobs and places to stay for -- for the
13 young -- for young people so that they can learn
14 something and learn a little something new.

15 I went with two of my friends up
16 to a place in Elmira, New York. That was the
17 fall -- I think September of -- of '41. We worked
18 at the Schleicher Gliders factory. They're
19 known -- that area was known as the gliders, very
20 famous gliders place.

21 We worked in the Schleicher
22 factory and I think we got thirty dollars a month
23 and they took out for room and board because we
24 stayed in a house. And we had something left over,

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2 we had five dollars. That was a lot in those days.

3 Anyhow, we learned -- we worked
4 on the gliders. We helped build them. And this
5 factory I understand later on was one of the fine
6 makers of the gliders in the invasions when we sent
7 in the troops. I'm expecting those gliders to come
8 back crash ed or not.

9 So that's what I did after my
10 college.

11 Q. Now what else did you do while
12 you were there?

13 A. Well, we worked. We used -- made
14 the wings. We made the fuselage the wood and the
15 canvas that goes over it and tightens and stretched
16 made real tight. And that was our work.

17 We were there when the war
18 started in December. And we had to serve a certain
19 amount of time so I think our -- our duty ended in
20 April.

21 Anyhow, I came back home and I
22 went to enlist.

23 Q. Can I go back a minute?

24 A. Surely.

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2 Q. While you were there --

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. -- you obviously heard about
5 Pearl Harbor there.

6 A. We heard that, yes.

7 Q. Where were you and what do you
8 remember?

9 A. It was -- it was a Sunday morning
10 and we were just in our house. We had no work that
11 day. And the house we lived in there must have
12 been fifteen of us or so. And frankly, I don't
13 know of anybody who knew what Pearl Harbor was or
14 where it was. But we heard about Japan in the war
15 and that was pretty much -- when we learned.

16 Q. Did you have any feelings about
17 this?

18 A. Well, you know, we were
19 youngsters then and we knew about war because World
20 War I, which wasn't made World War I until World
21 War II came along that the war to end World Wars.
22 It was only twenty years prior to that.

23 So they -- you'd -- you'd watch
24 the papers so you had an idea a little bit about

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2 war. But other than that, again, we didn't know
3 what was going on in the Pacific until, you know,
4 take a start and come out with papers that was our
5 extent of the knowledge.

6 But do you want me to continue
7 along that line or?

8 Q. Sure.

9 A. Okay. Anyhow I came home and I
10 wanted to enlist in the navy.

11 Q. Why did -- why did you pick the
12 navy?

13 A. Okay. Well I -- I was interested
14 for one thing in aviation. And I didn't want to --
15 avoided to be drafted and get into the army and be
16 a foot soldier.

17 Let me just backtrack a little
18 bit about aviation. I remember when I was in
19 Uruguay. This is right after Lindbergh came back
20 from his flight and he was -- they had a parade for
21 him in our neighborhood and the school -- one of
22 the school kids, you had to line up on the street
23 because the car he was in passed by so we saw
24 Lindbergh. So, that was one thing about aviation.

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2 And of course every time we would
3 see an airplane, which wasn't very often, all the
4 kids would say, oh, there's Lindberg. That's what
5 the kids were doing. So I -- I just got into
6 aviation.

7 And then when the New York
8 World's Fair was here 1939, the first time I went
9 up in an airplane. I went with my brother-in-law,
10 my sister's husband from Floyd Bennett Field in
11 Brooklyn we flew at night over the World's Fair, oh
12 that flight was just a thrill to me. And I just
13 got interested somehow in aviation. And again,
14 being at the glider factory which were for planes.

15 So, I learned of a program that
16 the navy had. It was called a V-2 program. That
17 would be the Aviation Naval Air Corp, and if you
18 signed up for that you enlisted on your own. That
19 was where you would be. They couldn't take you out
20 of that unless you offered to go somewhere else.
21 But -- so I wanted that -- that branch of the navy.

22 And I went down there I think it was about the
23 beginning of May to the recruiting office, downtown
24 Manhattan on Broad Street. And I went through the

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2 whole -- riggamarole of this doctor and that
3 doctor, typical exam pre -- pre going in there. I
4 was shifted around and I'll never forget.

5 I had all my papers as you went
6 from one doctor to another they gave you the papers
7 to keep until you come to the end. And I get my
8 papers and I hand them to a guy in a white coat and
9 he said to me, hold out your hand. So I held them
10 out. Now turn them over. Okay. He looked at them
11 he says, come back when you stop biting your
12 fingernails.

13 This was a very strange thing to
14 me, but I -- I saw that they wanted you know, sort
15 of a nervous habit and they just wanted to see if
16 you could do that because the navy was quite
17 strict.

18 So a lot of years until toward
19 the end of the war they didn't draft anybody. And
20 their standards were quite high for -- for health
21 codes and stuff.

22 So, this was May. I came back
23 there in June. All I did was hand in the papers,
24 and he looked at my nails or somebody did and they

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2 took me. And I went in on July 7th, 1942. So that
3 was about six, seven months right after Pearl
4 Harbor.

5 Do you want me to continue?

6 Q. Yes, where did you go and where.

7 A. Okay.

8 Q. -- your -- your training and --?

9 A. I went up to boot camp at
10 Newport, Rhode Island. And that was an old -- real
11 old navy base. It had the naval war college up
12 there. I think it's the location.

13 Q. Yes, it is.

14 A. Right. And they were really --
15 really -- the navy is real strict. Every Saturday
16 we had a dress parade and that -- that is what we
17 learned up there. To be real deal. I did do five
18 weeks at boot camp. I came home and we had some
19 leave. They gave us like a week or two.

20 And then I was sent to Dearborn,
21 Michigan. Oh by the way when I was leaving boot
22 camp, they wanted to know if we wanted to go into
23 submarines because they knew I --. They put a line
24 on the wall and if you walked up they looked at you

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2 and they were looking for people so I didn't want
3 any part in that.

4 Then they wanted to send me to
5 what they call flying control school where it was
6 in the custody of Washington -- right out of
7 Washington, D.C. With the flying control, you're
8 on the big ships, the big crews, the big guns, and
9 the battleships. And again, I wanted to stick with
10 what I wanted to do.

11 So, I was sent to Dearborn,
12 Michigan to the Ford plant out there who was making
13 engines. Primarily engines for the army -- for the
14 airplanes.

15 So we started to study that in
16 Dearborn, Michigan. We did classroom work, we did
17 the mechanical work on the planes. This actually
18 led to my ranking as a machinist, aviation
19 machinist ranking. I don't recall exactly how long
20 we were in Dearborn. This is also an interesting
21 thing, of course that's where the Ford family
22 lived.

23 And our barracks officer was in
24 charge of about fifty men in the barracks or a

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2 couple barracks. He was Officer Henry Ford the
3 second, it was Henry Ford's grandson. And he was
4 okay and I was at the time, and of course he was an
5 officer, that goes without saying.

6 And he was our officer. He had a
7 high squeaky voice and every time he'd make a
8 command, you would giggle, it just sounded so funny
9 coming from an officer. And they were very nice to
10 us. He himself, we went to his house for
11 Christmas. He had a party for the men who served
12 there.

13 And the Ford family, they
14 enhanced the monies that the Navy allotted for food
15 for the mess. They always added something so we
16 ate pretty well there in that mess, especially on
17 the holidays, ice cream, cigars, and these kinds of
18 things on holidays.

19 So that was the interesting thing
20 in Dearborn. That was in the winter of '42. It
21 was cold up there. Quite a few times I had to be
22 on duty work or guard duty at night, two in the
23 morning it was cold.

24 By the way for the first six

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2 months I was in the navy, I slept in hammocks
3 because that's the way it was in that time. Later
4 on they had bunks for the recruits but we slept in
5 hammocks and we tried to get used to them. You
6 don't fall out too often. You carried it with you.
7 You had your own bed. And that was Dearborn.

8 From Dearborn we went to Chicago
9 to Great Lakes and there we did some more training.
10 I think that we did a lot of training. We worked
11 on machines -- like lathe know how to make parts
12 and that type of thing. So, we were there for, I
13 don't know, four or five weeks. There's another
14 part of our machines that train in addition to
15 engines you find other things about airplanes,
16 their dynamics.

17 When I left Chicago, the Great
18 Lakes, I was sent to a gunnery school out in
19 Oklahoma, Purcell Oklahoma which is right near
20 Norman, the University of Oklahoma, not too far
21 either from Oklahoma City. We went on a troop
22 train down there and there were a few of us that
23 would end up in Purcell were in the last cars of
24 these trains and they dropped us off about four in

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2 the morning in Purcell. And then they came out and
3 got us in the middle of nowhere. I'll tell you,
4 there was just nothing around. Just black -- red
5 clay, what Oklahoma had a lot of. Anyhow, that was
6 my experience with Purcell.

7 Purcell was a town really out in
8 the past. A motorcycles and stay on the sidewalks
9 and -- old town. I could see cowboys.

10 So we took gunnery training. We
11 used machine guns, fifty caliber and thirty
12 caliber. And we learned to -- to hit moving
13 targets with skeet shooting. At this moving
14 targets, you get an idea how to handle that. We
15 also learned how to use a forty-five pistol, a
16 forty-five automatic. That was in Purcell.

17 Again, we were there maybe five,
18 six weeks. I don't know for sure. I was sent to
19 Jacksonville, Florida. The Naval air station in
20 Jacksonville, which was -- may still be one of the
21 largest airbase -- naval airbases in the country,
22 for what they call operational training. I was
23 assigned to a training squadron there and we were
24 working on -- our planes were these Catalina flying

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2 boats, PB boys, which we used for anti-submarine
3 patrol and for convoy escort. That's what these
4 were used for. So that's what I was trained to
5 fly.

6 We spent quite a -- quite a few
7 months doing training. And we learned how to --
8 and ours was -- our -- that squad was strictly a
9 seaplane. There wasn't amphibious even though they
10 made amphibian planes of the same nature. PB boy
11 five A's, they were amphibious. But ours were
12 strictly seaplanes. So, we learned how to take
13 them out of the water and put them up on land. The
14 tires were attached and those types of things.
15 Learn how to handle the PB boys.

16 And the pilots learned how to go
17 with the crews because they were pretty new also.
18 So, you learned pretty much how to operate in those
19 planes. That was the operation chain.

20 I also was designated as a flight
21 engine. The PBYs were high winged airplane, a big
22 slow airplane. Looked like a boat on the bottom.
23 And it's attached to the fuselage by a tower
24 between the top of the fuselage and the bottom of

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2 the wing. But up in that tower is where the flight
3 engineer sat is because he had engine controls
4 which he used in coordination with the pilots when
5 it was starting the airplane and when they were
6 shutting it down or they were making adjustments
7 with it. It's like a dashboard on a car. It had
8 all these instruments.

9 So, I was a flight engineer
10 there. And aviation machinist and a gunner.
11 That's what everybody on the plane had to go
12 throughout the school. So that was the
13 Jacksonville barracks.

14 From Jacksonville, I was sent
15 home after the training -- am I going to fast?

16 Q. No.

17 MR. FUTTERMAN: I was sent home
18 after the training for a week or two. And my
19 papers ready for Quanset, Rhode Island. I went to
20 Quanset Point, Rhode Island at the end of April,
21 towards the end of April and I was assigned to a
22 squadron. And it was VPV sixty-three. I had that
23 on my hat.

24 And then we start, you know,

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2 preparing to go overseas. We did convoy patrols
3 out of there and as a matter of fact the first
4 flight I took with this squadron was on May 30th.
5 And we crash landed coming in, that's a good way to
6 start with the squadron. Thank God I wasn't hurt.
7 I got just bruises on my nose but we -- the plane
8 started to sink because popped rivets sunk at the
9 bottom of the bay. It wasn't that deep but the
10 plane did sink.

11 We all got out. One fellow broke
12 a leg that was the extent. And we were all lucky.

13 Anyhow, all our clothes were wet
14 so we had to go to sick bay, so they could give us
15 some tetanus shots. And we came back to the
16 barracks at Quanset Point and it just blackens
17 around --. So we get back into the barracks and
18 there's a bunch of sailors that just came from boot
19 camp. I was already a seasoned sailor, but just
20 came from boot camp and they're looking at us. I
21 patch on my nose, you know, and it was bleeding and
22 so on, and it was something else.

23 We're not in a war zone here,
24 what happened to you guys? So these are the things

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2 you know, that you remember. We're talking sixty
3 years ago.

4 All right. So we took our
5 training there and -- part of the training with the
6 squadron and then we were to go over to Iceland.
7 They told us in Iceland we'd be there about a month
8 and then we'd come back to the states.

9 Anyhow, we didn't fly with our
10 planes to Iceland. A group of us, the crews were
11 sent to -- we went over to Boston and picked up a
12 ship to Iceland. Where the seaplanes had loaded
13 which obviously would be good for our kinds of
14 planes. It's a much smaller ship than even a
15 destroyer. But we went out to sea planes we didn't
16 have any choice, we were strictly passengers on
17 that flight. And we went up there and most of us
18 slept done on the decks.

19 But a couple times during the
20 night they would shoot at icebergs, their five inch
21 guns. If you were against that -- that deck you
22 felt it.

23 Anyway, we got to Iceland and
24 this was in --.

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2 MR. RUSSERT: Did you -- did you
3 go alone or was it in escort with anything else?

4 A. No, that went alone. I don't
5 think there were -- I don't remember this one. We
6 were pretty close to the states and this was still
7 fairly early, you know, North America I should say.

8 Although, when we were in Quanset, we also -- we
9 made a few convoy escort patrol to certain area so
10 that we could come back to Quanset Point but we --
11 and in another group of people so that's what we
12 were doing in Quanset.

13 Now, we got to Quanset Point and
14 then our planes were flown over with just crews and
15 did this -- they carried the aircraft when it came
16 back.

17 So, we were there just about a
18 month. This was the height of the summer, July.
19 And it was daylight all day, you know that's when
20 the sun doesn't set. We played ball until eleven
21 thirty at night. The sun went down, the horizon
22 maybe about an inch and it came right up again.

23 So, in the Quanset Huts we slept
24 in, we had these big black shades to block out the

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2 light, otherwise we couldn't get any sleep. But
3 Iceland was fun. We flew in the Arctic Circle, saw
4 the volcanic holes they have in Iceland. And they
5 have hot steam come out of there. That's how they
6 warm a country up by utilizing the steam.

7 And we were there a month and
8 instead of coming home we were sent to Great
9 Britain. We were sent to Wales. There was an
10 RAF -- or Royal Air Force base at Pembroke in
11 Wales. And we went to that base. We shared it
12 with the British. We were doing anti-submarine
13 patrol, excuse me.

14 And or regular crew, well, we
15 went there -- we flew over with our planes, but the
16 regular ship -- crew, like the mess people, you
17 know, made food, they didn't come for two weeks.
18 So, for two weeks we were eating British which was
19 pretty bad you know.. But luckily after the two
20 weeks our mess came. But the officers still had to
21 eat with the British. So they didn't -- they
22 didn't take advantage of the better food.

23 Okay. Our job in Pembroke was to
24 fly anti-submarine patrol in the Bay of Biskay.

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2 Now that's -- you know that -- the map of France is
3 that little white dented part and that's where the
4 Germans had their -- because they already captured
5 France. That's where the Germans kept their
6 submarines. They would bring them back at night
7 from there over to the submarine pads and that's
8 where they would go out from, into the Atlantic.

9 We were the first navy personnel
10 in the Atlantic, based in the Atlantic area. And
11 obviously the first navy, the first airforce,
12 airforce personnel. About two three weeks after we
13 were there one of our patrol planes was shot down
14 at night from German aircraft. Gennaway kings I
15 believe they were. And we got the reports and our
16 particular crew, my crew number eight was sent out
17 to search for them in the middle of the night. We
18 started out. Now, these PBYs could stay up a long
19 time. I haven't tried anywhere from about six to
20 fourteen hours, you could patrol that long.

21 The wings -- the wings were very
22 large but very slowly, perfect patrol plane.

23 Now, this night we were out for
24 eighteen hours and ten minutes without landing.

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2 And of course, that's a pretty long flight. Of
3 course we had a lot of food aboard these planes in
4 the summer because they busy.

5 We didn't find anything but we
6 understand they were picked up by a British
7 Corvette which is like a destroyer. So what
8 happened the Corvette ran into a German ship also
9 so they had a little battle after they take these
10 people. Five of them were killed, you know, shot
11 down. And a few wounded came back. One of my best
12 friends was one of those and the other one was very
13 badly wounded but he was able to come back.

14 MR. RUSSERT: Can I ask you a
15 couple questions?

16 A. Certainly.

17 Q. Did you fly in the same plane all
18 the time or?

19 A. Most of the planes were the same.
20 I have my logbook with me. Until they needed some
21 kind of repair you went flying. But for the most
22 part we took care of, maintained our own planes.

23 Q. Did you ever name the plane or
24 anything like that or --?

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2 A. I don't recall our particular
3 name of the -- our particular name for our plane.
4 But the planes themselves, the PBYs were called
5 Catalina's.

6 Q. Yes.

7 A. And I don't know really where
8 that came from. It's possible -- I don't have a
9 record on it.

10 Q. What kind of --?

11 A. Yeah, go ahead.

12 Q. When you were flying, you know, I
13 know we've interviewed a lot of airforce pilot
14 personnel, what were your flying suits like? Did
15 you have to wear heated suits or?

16 A. No, no.

17 Q. When you go up so high --?

18 A. In the first place, we never we
19 over -- we usually cruised and patrolled anywhere
20 from four thousand to six thousand. And one time
21 we went over about ten thousand, we didn't carry
22 oxygen. These planes were not made that.

23 Q. Right.

24 A. But there's something else I just

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2 want to mention about our -- our particular
3 squadron.

4 There was one squadron like ours
5 in the Atlantic with special equipment which I'll
6 explain in a minute. And one squadron in the
7 pacific with the same equipment. So we were really
8 very special.

9 And the type of sonar which would
10 spot submarines but it was a -- a piece of
11 equipment that was added on to the tail of our
12 planes. It looked almost like a small torpedo. It
13 was a tube. It may have been about three feet long
14 which had electronic equipment in there.

15 Now, this squadron was with bombs
16 that we had aboard the plane. Bombs were actually
17 under the wings. And the way that this worked, we
18 had a screen in the air plane, the radio, sonar
19 similar to a radar or sonar screen. And when there
20 was a -- they -- you were aware that there was
21 something -- a signal on the screen. There was
22 something below the water, our plane -- our bombs
23 were automatically released and they went straight
24 down. But they were released backwards rather than

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2 forward so it made up to the speed of the airplane.
3 Normally a bond --a bomb has a trajectory.

4 So this was a different thing.

5 It supposedly going straight down. Actually, our
6 squadron got credit, not my particular crew but our
7 squadron got credit for three submarines. Though I
8 think this was in North Africa, they were talking
9 about.

10 Anyhow, again, we called that
11 magnetic airborne detector, we called it MAD,
12 M-A-D. So we were the only ones that had that --
13 that type of equipment.

14 I'm trying to think how long we
15 were in Great Britain. I think until December of
16 '43. Yeah. North Africa. We went to a base --
17 I'm trying to think of the name again, let's see
18 if -- okay. That had been a French base that they
19 captured when we went into North Africa and we went
20 into the -- to the base. It was right on the river
21 actually, we took off from the river. That was
22 about thirty miles from the capital of Morocco.
23 This was in Morocco which is Rabat we were about
24 thirty miles from Rabat.

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2 Now, what we did, we patrolled
3 these Straits of Gibraltar. Because at that time
4 we had started with the Italian campaign and the
5 Southern France campaigns. And our duty was to
6 patrol the straights back and forth between Spain,
7 or Gibraltar actually in both directions and
8 Morocco I believe -- no, Algeria, that's where it
9 was, towards the coast of Tangion because Straits
10 are. And was our -- the way we did -- the way we
11 worked it, we'd fire during the day, patrol
12 depending on how many hours, for five -- six hours
13 and then when it got dark we landed -- just before
14 dark we landed at Gibraltar a British base right by
15 the rock just the way it looks. And the next
16 morning we would start patrolling again and fly for
17 so many hours and go back to Port Leonie.

18 So we did one day and the next
19 day we went back to our base. We stayed at the
20 British base, which wasn't very comfortable. We
21 slept on discuss with straw pushed into something.
22 And we lived in very interesting place.

23 And we stayed in Africa for quite
24 a while. And I think this was in June/July of '44.

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2 We had to take our particular airplane back to the
3 states for a major overhaul, had to be brought back
4 to Norfolk, Virginia. The airbase there. The
5 engine had to be changed and everything had to be
6 checked out, had to be repaired or replaced. It
7 was a major overhaul. And they're required so many
8 hours and that's what they had to do.

9 To get back to the states we went
10 from across the LT to the Bulge in Africa, familiar
11 shape which is closer to -- closest point to South
12 America. It's near Dekron it was a British Airbase
13 called Dockerson so we stayed there over night.

14 We have to make these stops
15 because you know, the planes had to land and refuel
16 and resupply the plane with food and whatever else
17 had to be done. We couldn't just fly direct.

18 So we left there for a couple of
19 days. And after we went to Lake Talcottville, to
20 Atholls which -- Also, these are also a Naval
21 Airbases.

22 A. Now we're at navy bases
23 Talcottville.

24 We went from Natal after being

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2 overnight to what's called Bay Landen Brazil, which
3 is another part of Brazil on the Amazon River.
4 Beautiful Northern part Portuguese town.

5 And then we went up to Trinidad.
6 And from Trinidad, again, stayed over night on the
7 coast. Trinidad we went to San Juan Puerto Rico.
8 And San Juan we went to Jacksonville and then back
9 up to Norfolk, Virginia. I forgot how long it too
10 us, maybe ten days or something to cut across.

11 When we went from Africa to South
12 America we crossed -- crossed the equator which was
13 some kind of event that I say was positive. But in
14 the navy it had some significance.

15 We left the plane at Norfolk,
16 Virginia and then we got leave, I think it was
17 about a month I flew home. I wasn't married yet.
18 To see my girlfriend. Other friends that were
19 home.

20 I got back to Norfolk, and we had
21 to go to Clay Field Louisiana to pick up a brand
22 new PBV to bring to the Russians under the
23 lend/lease program. I'm sure you're familiar with
24 that.

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2 We picked up a brand new PBY. It
3 had Russian markings on it. A little navy
4 belongings. And it was filled with food for the
5 Russians. Which we couldn't touch we had to
6 deliver. We delivered this to Kodiak Alaska where
7 the Russians picked it up.

8 From Louisiana, the Malls Area we
9 flew to a place called Eagle Mountain Lake in Texas
10 to Neil Fort Worth and over lake we. And at night
11 we put up the Russian flag on top landing and
12 nobody said anything.

13 I was still young, still tried to
14 have fun if we could. From Eagle Mountain Lake we
15 went to San Diego California. We stayed there.
16 From San Diego we went to a place near Seattle
17 which was Whitbe Island a fairly new Navy Base.
18 And we stayed there for about a week.

19 Before we went to Whitbe Island a
20 pilot who came from Seattle and has seventy solos
21 in Seattle, he flew over in this big lumbering
22 airplane and he spotted his house, he pointed his
23 house up to us. This guy real drop dead daredevil.
24 Oh we would go any place with this pilot. He was

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2 just somebody you could trust with your life.

3 And we went to Whitbe Island and
4 stayed there and we had to adjust the compass, they
5 call it lock in the compass because we were going
6 up towards the Arctic area. And other things we
7 had to do at that point, maybe wait for the
8 Russians to get sent for picking up to the area.
9 And we flew from there right into Kodiak, Alaska.
10 And that was pretty treacherous on that seaplane.
11 Each side surrounded by mountains up there and they
12 were pretty good. But again, with our particular
13 pilot, Lieutenant Nicholson we didn't mind.

14 Again, overnight we handed the
15 planes over to the Russians and then we got a
16 transport back to Anchorage where they refuel and
17 they took us back to Olathe, Kansas, which actually
18 was pretty much the middle of the continental
19 United States. Actually, it was only continental
20 United States so Hawaii wasn't in.

21 So, what I saw is a transport
22 point for people coming from all directions that
23 needed transportation to their bases and so on. We
24 got in there about eleven o'clock at night. Can't

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2 tell you why so many Navy personnel, and everybody.

3 But we were traveling on a
4 one-day called a -- but anyhow, we had a day. The
5 only flight that was higher than our plane was the
6 mail, the U.S. Mail had to go through above
7 anything else. So if you don't have a one eight
8 priority you were down much lower on the list,
9 you'd have problems getting flights anyway you
10 can't be sure of the priority.

11 Got a flight pretty quickly to
12 Floyd Bennett Field. And they were deliberating
13 any cannon -- establish a cannon to that area, I
14 guess the Brooklyn Navy essentially. So the only
15 thing on that plane was that big cannon and our
16 crews would be priority and some mail. So that
17 took us back to Floyd Bennett Field, right near my
18 home.

19 So again I went home for some
20 time there. And then this all reversed itself now,
21 we had to go back to Norfolk and backtrack again to
22 Africa for a little more flying.

23 That was until December '44 when
24 I was discharged, not discharged, I was -- I left

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2 Africa and we came back home by -- also picked it
3 up at Casa Blanca.

4 Oh by the way, when we were
5 stationed at Port Leonie we was waiting for Pan
6 America clipper which landed at our base
7 periodically to take them back to the states. I
8 don't know whether he was entertaining troops in
9 Africa or what I think was a little later after he
10 had made the Casa Blanca movie that he was on
11 the -- he and his wife, first wife were on the
12 base. Very nice you know, friendly, it was just
13 something --.

14 Q. Did you get to talk to him? You
15 got to talk to him?

16 A. Yeah, sure, yeah, he was on the
17 base. And not very long. A lot of the Italian
18 prisoners also stationed on our base. They didn't
19 really do anything at all. Just prisoners.

20 All right. This was December of
21 '44. So we got to the sea planes. We're supposed
22 to make a stop on to Bermuda but we ran into very,
23 very bad storms in that area that shook you
24 religiously. Couldn't stop, we had to go back into

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2 Norfolk. So we landed at Norfolk, this was just
3 around Christmas time. I called my wife to be and
4 I said we're going to get married. And this was at
5 the end of December. And we had a full wedding,
6 she did it all on her own, January 7th, of 1945.
7 About two weeks, cards went out, everything. The
8 whole thing was final. And we got married.

9 And I was stationed at Floyd
10 Bennett Field for a couple of months. It was it in
11 a different squadron and we were training to go to
12 the Pacific at that time.

13 Most of the work we did there
14 was -- we were learning our new aircraft and also
15 we also ferried airplane from one place to another
16 and you know just in passing we'll take the
17 airplane out and take back another one. That's
18 what we did in Floyd Benett.

19 And after, I think it was in
20 April now of '45, I was sent back to gunnery school
21 and this was not in Oklahoma, this was in Florida,
22 but I -- but I don't remember -- it was called near
23 Jacksonville, I'm not sure of the name now.
24 There's a river. That's who we took gunnery

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2 school.

3 Now, this time they've been
4 training us for airplanes which had the turrets on
5 them. We learned to use machine guns to turrets,
6 for pointing toward being sent to the Pacific.

7 Right after that though, was when
8 Germany surrendered. So it was going to Japan that
9 they were fighting at this point. And I had -- we
10 accumulated points for the length of service you
11 were in and at that point -- at that time they
12 wouldn't send you to another theater of operations
13 if you had all these points. You would be -- you
14 would be detached from service.

15 So I accumulated enough points,
16 even though I was -- my wife joined me at different
17 places. We went to Oklahoma again for another
18 reason, we went to school there again. And then
19 she joined me there Duncan Oklahoma and then we
20 went back to Jacksonville, Florida. Again just I
21 was -- at Jacksonville I was considered what we
22 call Ships company. I worked as a -- with a duty
23 officer on the base. I wasn't duty defined.

24 And we were there until I was

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2 discharged in October. I came home from
3 Jacksonville, Florida. And she was with me from --
4 for a time when we were married. Let me just see
5 if I can answer that.

6 Unless you want to go to
7 questions?

8 Q. Did you stay with the same crew?

9 A. No, not once I left Africa.

10 Q. Pardon? While you were in
11 layover?

12 A. Yeah. From Quanset Point for a
13 few exceptions okay, from Iceland to Wales yes, we
14 stayed with the same pilots for the most and
15 occasionally you'll get another from a training
16 flight or something if you --. What happened
17 though, when I was back to the states for the
18 overhaul, not all the crew was sent to the states.
19 They stayed, they were still there. Put into other
20 crews.

21 Unfortunately, one of my good
22 friends there was killed. Their plane exploded off
23 North Africa. They don't know actually what
24 happened -- if they were attacked by an aircraft or

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2 anything, they never found any bodies or anything.

3 MR. CLARK: Were you ever under
4 attack by aircraft at all?

5 MR. FUTTERMAN: The only time
6 that we were attacked -- well one time in France we
7 saw a couple of German planes but thankfully they
8 were building their own -- or maybe they spotted us
9 and said let's not bother with it.

10 But when we fly in the straits of
11 Gibraltar, we flew too close to Spain, how
12 theoretical it was, neutral, let's say
13 theoretically and they shot some anti aircraft that
14 us -- I -- I don't think they meant to hit us but
15 when you -- you felt it and you sort of new.

16 That was the only thing I came
17 even close to.

18 MR. RUSSERT: What kind of flight
19 suits did you wear?

20 A. You asked me that already, I
21 didn't tell you.

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. Well, in the first place we could
24 not wear -- we didn't take heavy parachutes. But

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2 it not safe to go in parachutes. Oh I'm sorry, we
3 had them, but we couldn't wear them in the
4 airplane.

5 The only thing we wore in the
6 airplane was the inflatable vests, the Mae West.
7 We had at some time we had these full coveralls
8 flight suits were coveralls. And that's when we
9 wore that in the winter also but we had heavy
10 flight jackets, you know, it was cold, which it was
11 cold many times. And the heavy flight boots, the
12 leather ones, you know, with the fur inside, the
13 pilots that's what we wore.

14 And in fact it's quite
15 interesting. The coldest place I was at where they
16 actually issued the two extra blankets because
17 initial issue -- originally issued, it was only two
18 blankets. And Africa it gets so cold at night by
19 contrary because in the day you could hardly get
20 into the tents. At night the desert doesn't hold
21 any heat so it was very cold. We slept with -- I
22 slept with my heavy flight jacket on, I had the
23 boots by the bed in case I had to go out. But it's
24 just funny that that's a place in Africa, which was

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2 cold. But we -- we wore -- we wore these overalls
3 and sometimes just our outfits like this, jeans and
4 these kinds of shirts.

5 But most of the times it was the
6 coveralls. You know, depending on the flights.
7 And we had the heavy snow falls but the only thing
8 you could wear -- you couldn't wear a parachute
9 like they did in, you know, some of the airforce
10 pilots because we were moving around too much.

11 You know, we ate on board, we
12 were able to cook, there was a real stove there and
13 different things like that. But we moved to the
14 window seat we couldn't wear the parachutes, they
15 were afraid of going off in the plane. So that's
16 pretty much what we wore.

17 Q. LPS?

18 MR. FUTTERMAN: Yes. Okay. At
19 the end of the plane, in the back, there was a
20 hatch, a little door. You go in the back. I'll
21 tell you a little story about that also if you
22 don't mind.

23 There was a seat and you used,
24 you know, on a can actually with a seat and you put

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2 waste in there. And you -- yeah because they
3 didn't use the disinfectants like you use on
4 regular airplanes or -- and theoretically you
5 aren't supposed to throw it out over the ocean, it
6 could have been kept.

7 The other thing to urinate you
8 had tubes that actually went out so that's -- you
9 know, we flew out long hours and had to have. And
10 to get back to this thing with the toilet in the
11 gear.

12 Lieutenant Nicholson, when we
13 were crossing the equator he went into the rear.
14 And we were all decided to take a photograph, which
15 I still have. I don't know if I brought it.

16 And he knew and he heard us
17 talking. So we got all set -- I think I took the
18 picture much earlier. One of the guys opened the
19 hatch and he's sitting there with a big smile on
20 his face as we're crossing the equator. But that
21 was the kind of crew it was when we're doing these
22 things. Everybody was for everybody else. And
23 they -- they weren't high court officers. They did
24 what they had to do and like that and vice versa.

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2 And you really had to know each of the people.

3 MR. CLARK: Being in the navy,
4 did you do anything special when you crossed the
5 equator and other ships and --?

6 MR. FUTTERMAN: Well, yeah, they
7 do something but this was the only thing we did. I
8 think we're supposed to get some kind of
9 certificates but I don't recall.

10 MR. RUSSERT: Do you remember any
11 reaction when you found out about the death of
12 President Roosevelt?

13 A. Yes, actually I was based on
14 Floyd Bennett Field and I came home and I don't
15 know whether -- actually I -- we were already
16 married then and we were staying with my
17 mother-in-laws, my wife's mother at the time. She
18 had a room for us because my wife was working.

19 I don't know if I heard it when I
20 got home, but I think when I was walking home from
21 a bus that I had taken, I heard in the streets
22 people were talking about it or somehow the radios
23 were blasting. I don't know if I had a little
24 radio at that time, I don't think I did.

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2 But that is a real poke for everybody. You know,
3 Roosevelt, the time before that, as a younger
4 person nothing like that had ever happened.
5 Terrible, terrible tragedy.

6 Q. What was your reaction when you
7 found out about the atomic bombs being dropped?

8 A. Well that too at that time we
9 didn't know too much about it. We heard about it
10 of course. And until you read the papers or
11 whatever they wanted to tell you about it. We
12 didn't really know the impact of what that meant.
13 We knew it was a very destructive bomb, obviously
14 killed a lot of people. Of course at that point we
15 wanted to defeat Japan so that was okay.

16 But we didn't really know the impact of what that
17 would be until after the war ended.

18 Q. Did you ever make use of the G.I.
19 bill when you returned?

20 A. I went to -- not very much but I
21 did -- did use it partially. I went to La Guardia
22 Field, it was a -- I think it was KC -- something
23 KC flight school. And again I was continuing with
24 my aviation mechanics and so on. I thought I would

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2 want to continue with that. And they paid for
3 that. I used to go at night after I was working.
4 Then I had to stop. It was too much, we had a
5 family already and I just -- stopped.

6 Q. Did you ever make use of their
7 5220?

8 A. It was --.

9 Q. Fifty -- fifty-two weeks, you
10 received twenty dollars a week. It was like an
11 unemployment after you left?

12 A. I don't believe so because I was
13 working and I didn't do that.

14 Q. Did you -- have you stayed in
15 contact or did you stay in contact with any of your
16 crew?

17 A. For about a year or so there was
18 a gentleman up in Boston and one of my closer
19 friends on the crew out in Pennsylvania right near
20 Pittsburgh. I had been in contact with him. As a
21 matter of fact he came one day with his wife and he
22 stayed over a couple days with us here in Brooklyn.

23 He was the ordinance on crew.
24 Some of the pictures that took at New York. He was

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2 pretty confident. So as I said he visited and we
3 spoke to each other. But after awhile, again, and
4 you're raising your family, you're into your own
5 thing you lose track.

6 I know some people never did but
7 there's one other person that was really in
8 Brooklyn, my neighborhood and I went to visit him
9 once. He wasn't in my particular crew but I knew
10 him from the squadron. I think we have fifteen --
11 fifteen crews in a squad. And you know, I contact
12 him, I went over to his house a little bit. And
13 again, everything is different.

14 When you're there, you're all the
15 same. Afterwards, you go back to the life you had.
16 But I still -- more recently the last couple years
17 I've got a lot more interest in what I was doing or
18 what I did then and so on.

19 Q. Were there any kind of reunions
20 or anything?

21 A. I never went to one. I never was
22 contacted. I never pursued it. I'm sure the
23 interest I do now have, you know, as you get older
24 you look back at things. I may have continued. I

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2 know they've had reunions because I've seen it on
3 the computer.

4 Q. Did you join any Veteran's
5 organizations?

6 A. No. I never joined. No.

7 Q. You never joined -- they didn't
8 contact me.

9 A. No, I didn't join any of those
10 groups at all.

11 Q. We're just curious.

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. How do you think your military
14 time affected or changed your life?

15 A. Well for one -- for one thing, it
16 was a good place to learn discipline. Which I
17 think I've used knowing or unknowingly that
18 everything I do. And I value a good friendship
19 with people you can trust to be with.

20 And it was an experience and if
21 you come out of it whole, there's very -- very
22 interesting, worthwhile. It's just an unusual kind
23 of experience for a person. I was in for -- this I
24 don't forget, three years, three months and eleven

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2 days. That's a lot of time. And I remember all my
3 dog tag numbers.

4 But it -- it isn't the fun I
5 believe, you know, you're surrounded by people
6 getting hurt and killed and so on and you know
7 every time you're there, you go on an airplane you
8 can crash. Anything can happen.

9 But you're young, you enlisted
10 and this is what you expect. You aren't afraid of
11 doing these things. And it's a discipline, you
12 know? You took an oath to do something and did it.

13 So did it do anything for me? Yes.

14 Q. When was this photograph taken?

15 A. This I believe, I don't have a
16 date on it, but I pulled it out of a book of mine.
17 And I believe it was from boot camp because I had
18 insignia. And as I said later on I was a aviation
19 machinist second -- second class which had two
20 stripes which you'll see on that medical.

21 MR. CLARK: And how old are you
22 in that picture?

23 MR. FUTTERMAN: Well let's see,
24 out of boot camp and -- I was probably -- just

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2 twenty, just twenty years old.

3 Q. Okay.

4 MR. RUSSERT: Okay. How about on
5 this?

6 MR. FUTTERMAN: Which one?

7 MR. RUSSERT: You're squadron?

8 MR. FUTTERMAN: Squadron number
9 eight. My squad number eight. Can I look at it
10 this way?

11 Q. Sure.

12 MR. FUTTERMAN: Can -- will you?
13 Well, this is me which is the worst of the
14 pictures. This is professor -- it's now
15 professors, Lieutenant Nicholson. This is what
16 they call the captain of the crew, Wheatpas he was
17 a first class mechanic.

18 This was a radio man. And this
19 was a -- this was my friend who was an ordinance
20 man which was you know, emissions and guns and so
21 on.

22 This was a -- an enlisted pilot
23 you know, in those days they used pilots you
24 weren't commission. He was a chief yet. Because

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2 they used to train them, and they weren't given any
3 commissions then.

4 And Nicholson and I don't
5 remember his name. These were two other pilots,
6 another crews that sometimes we were with but
7 sometimes we weren't so I can't really give you the
8 names. I don't know. But this was -- one radio
9 man and this was the other radio man.

10 MR. RUSSERT: Okay. What is
11 that?

12 A. This is a -- I was awarded with
13 the distinguished flying course. And actually I
14 was not aware of this until six months after I left
15 the service. And one day my wife called me at work
16 and she told me I got a package from the navy. A
17 big envelope. She says it's a medal. I didn't
18 know what she was talking about.

19 Anyhow, I got home. I got the
20 medal that you saw, the Distinguished Flying Cross.
21 And there were other copies of this particular
22 citation but you know, and I made extra copies of
23 it.

24 This is awarded because I believe

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2 it says every twenty flights we were given period,
3 in the --.

4 Q. How many flights? How many
5 missions did you fly in total?

6 A. Well this -- this --
7 distinguished flying course you're eligible if you
8 have twenty missions. I would say compact missions
9 are probably -- maybe around fifty to sixty, you
10 know, missions where you're just there. I have
11 over a thousand hours in my logbook. And that's
12 what this was for, you know, I wasn't aware of it.

13 All right. Now this -- is this
14 okay?

15 MR. CLARK: Yeah. That's fine.

16 MR. FUTTERMAN: This is the
17 distinguished flying course. And it's quite an
18 important medal like I say, real great to get it.

19 Okay. This is the gunnery patch
20 that I wore on my right sleeve up on top. This was
21 my wings which you wore on the left -- the pocket.
22 This was my dog tag.

23 On the bottom that's my chevrons
24 which are the aviation and the two red ones there

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2 which is second class appear right in the top medal
3 that's for the American Campaign. This medal close
4 to me here on the bottom is the American -- well,
5 let me read this to make sure. I can not see.

6 Excuse me one second. European
7 African. Yeah, it's very small. This was a good
8 conduct medal I believe and this is the other one
9 on the other side is a World War II medal. I think
10 that is, the middle one is the Distinguished Flying
11 Cross.

12 I'm going to pull some things
13 out.

14 MR. RUSSERT: It's whatever you
15 want to show us.

16 MR. FUTTERMAN: Well this one I
17 was home from leave and it's my family. I'm right
18 up close as you can see. Sitting next to me is my
19 brother-in-law, my sister's husband who was -- is
20 it too close?

21 Q. No, that's fine.

22 MR. FUTTERMAN: Directly across
23 from him is my sister. And next to him is my
24 father and directly across from him is my mother.

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2 And the first one of the ladies is my wife.

3 I don't think we ever -- I'm not
4 sure. So this was a family picture. Looks very
5 similar.

6 These are some of the things you
7 get when you finish school. You get diplomas when
8 you go to school.

9 Q. Got it. Got it.

10 MR. FUTTERMAN: This one is -- I
11 just graduated from something, Naval Chain course
12 certificate. Aviation Machinist made third class.
13 So when I was going to school you had all kinds of
14 diplomas.

15 Q. Okay. You said you had your log
16 book with you? I'm just going to get a shot of
17 that.

18 MR. FUTTERMAN: That's the
19 aviator squad log book. And I'll show you
20 something with it also.

21 Q. Okay.

22 MR. FUTTERMAN: See if it works.

23 Am I okay here?

24 Q. Yeah, that's fine.

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2 MR. FUTTERMAN: This was November
3 19th, '44. And these are flights I made. The
4 dates are up here. The type of airplane. The one
5 of the plane and if you notice most of these are
6 08449. Majority of the planes. And then the next
7 thing is the type of flights which are codes which
8 I have to -- back of the book which tells you what
9 they are.

10 And again you have Lieutenant
11 Nicholson and I think they were all Nicholson at
12 that point. Oh here -- as a matter of fact that's
13 interesting. This was on the way back. This was
14 on the way back to Africa. See, San Juan to
15 Trinidad, Trinidad to etcetera, etcetera. And it
16 tells -- oh, we were back in action.

17 So, these are the type of things
18 you write in your log book. And it's an official
19 logbook and signed and so on.

20 Q. Okay. I'm actually down to one
21 more minute so do you have any final thoughts?

22 MR. FUTTERMAN: Any final
23 thoughts? Well, I really enjoyed this. And I'm
24 glad that they're keeping records of World War II.

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2 By the way, question are they
3 taking Veterans of other wars?

4 Q. Oh yes. Yes.

5 MR. FUTTERMAN: Good. That's a
6 very interesting thing. Nothing else I can say.

7 MR. RUSSERT: Well you're very
8 enjoyable. Thank you very much.

9 MR CLARK: Thank you very much.

10 MR. FUTTERMAN: We didn't show in
11 that other wedding picture. I was in my uniform.

12 MR. RUSSERT: Great. How long
13 have you been married now?

14 MR. FUTTERMAN: Fifty-eight
15 years. Nineteen forty-five.

16 Q. Okay. Thank you.

17 MR. RUSSERT: Okay. Now where
18 are you in that?

19 MR. FUTTERMAN: I think I may be
20 right in the middle.

21 Q. We got it.

22 MR. FUTTERMAN: Okay.

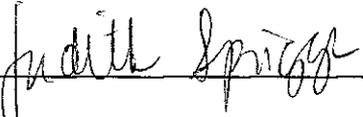
23 (The interview concluded)

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This is a transcription of the audio provided to us. It is completed to the best of our skill and ability. The transcript consists of pages 1 through 51 inclusive.



Judith Spriggs

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