Noel Addy
World War II Veterans History Project
Interviewed: August 4, 2009
By: Jean Reynolds
Transcript by Ladd Leder and Melanie Hartmann

Jean Reynolds: Ok. Let's start with a little bit about your family history okay? So we'll start with your parents, tell me what their names were and where they were from.

Noel Addy: Ok. Both of them were originally from Arkansas. My dad, he joined the U.S. Cavalry, well, just before the Spanish American War, and he was in the Spanish American War. He went to the Philippines and a few other places, and then he was stationed in Arizona up near Scottsdale, some place up there-- near a base some where up there. During the Indian wars here, in Apache, he was there just afterwards. This was in the 1886's. They kept maneuvering down through here to keep peace among the Indians. The wars had just ended but there was still fighting here and there, a little bit there, and he kept patrolling down through southern Arizona just to keep the peace going. And my mother, he met her there in Arkansas someplace. And then they, they moved to Chandler. And he was there because he knew horses and everything so well, and the movement… His job most of the time was putting in desert areas into farming. When they built Roosevelt Dam and then the other canals, he put in irrigation ditches and worked on canals. And clearing land for farming in the Chandler- Mesa area, that was his job back in Arizona.

JR: Now what was your father's name?

NA: Isaiah S. Addy. He didn't have a middle name, but when he joined the military like everything else, they asked, "what's your middle name?" and he said, "I don't have a middle name." And they said, "We gotta have a something there to show it." Then he said, "Well put an 'S' down there." So he never had a middle name, but on his military records it was Isaiah S. Addy

JR: I guess that sounded good, "S."

NA: Right, that "S."

JR: What was your mother's name?

NA: Hatti Bell, that's H-A-T-T-I Bell. Her last name was Wright at the time.

JR: Do you know when they got married?

NA: I don't.

JR: How, let's see you were born in 1919, were they married prior to you?

NA: Yes.

JR: We can come back to that- that's fine… Yeah. So your parents met in Arkansas.

NA: Yes.

JR: Do you know what part of Arkansas?

NA: I do, but I can't say it right now.

JR: Do you know when it was that they came to Arizona together?

NA: Yeah, they came to Arizona.

JR: Was it before you were born or after?

NA: Before I was born.

JR: So sometime around 1910, maybe?

NA: It was probably around 1917, maybe before that. It was a little before that, [when] they came to Arizona. Of course, he was stationed in Arizona so he knew the country and he had his job, generally clearing desert and building irrigation ditches for farming and everything.

JR: Was he recruited to come to the Chandler/Mesa area to do that kind of work?

NA:Well, after he got out of the… He was in the cavalry for eight years and he was stationed here in Arizona for that time, so he knew Arizona and how it was accumulating people. So that's where he could get jobs and get extra work.

JR: He kinda knew how the area was.

NA: He knew the area. He knew how it was developing fast. He knew how Arizona was developing at that time.

JR: Now when were you born?

NA: 1919. I was born in Mesa

JR: OK

JR: And, do you have brothers and sisters?

NA: Yes, I have nine brothers and sisters-- no, eight.

JR: You have eight?

NA: Well she's [his wife] pointing that out to me. Let's see.

JR: So you had eight total?

NA: Let's see. Yeah, there were 8 of us.

JR: Was it 4 boys and 4 girls?

NA: Uh, 4 boys and 4 girls.

JR: Right down the middle.

NA: Right. That's right.

JR: OK

NA: 1929, when all the dust and everything was going, was a bad year. And he (Isaiah) worked building canals, and farming, and clearing the desert of all the dust and everything. He got pneumonia and died in 1929. And my youngest brother Freddy did too. He breathed that dust and everything. In 1929, it killed them both.

JR: They passed away in Mesa?

NA: Yeah. Yeah at that time, we had moved to Chandler. My dad was in a veterans hospital when he died. I think that was in Tempe or someplace up there at that time. But we lived in Chandler. We had a home in Chandler at that time. I think we moved to Chandler about 1927.

JR: So about 1927 was when your family moved from Mesa to Chandler?

NA: Yeah.

JR: Where abouts in Chandler did you move?

NA: I lived there on that street that's right next to the railroad.

JR: Delaware? Is it Delaware?

NA: I think it is.

JR: It runs right along parallel to the railroad.

NA: Yeah, but it is now part of the railroad, the railroad has taken it all, but the house that we bought at that time.

JR: Could it be Hamilton? One of those-- you lived by the railroad.

NA: Right. We were the first house, first street next to the railroad, on the east side of town there.

JR: Were you near Commonwealth, that little Commonwealth Canal?

NA: Uh huh. We were the first street next to the railroad there, which is now part of the railroad. They took that over and they took the house too.

JR: So your father was… your mother was home taking care of all the kids.

NA: That's right.

JR: And then your father was working in the farming industry?

NA: That's right, clearing land and building irrigation ditches, and so on and so forth.

JR: Did he work for someone in particular?

NA: I don't know who he worked with. Now that's where I started the first grade in school. That when we lived there.

JR: You went to the grammar school there?

NA: Yeah, I went to the grammar school

JR: On Cleveland. Is that the one that's called Cleveland School?

NA: Yeah. The one that is near the high school there, and then I graduated from high school. I went right on through high school, skipped half a grade, and they finally let me get, and so, and I got out in 1940,

JR: 1940 is when you graduated?

NA: That's right, 1940 I graduated.

JR: What do you remember about high school?

NA: A whole bunch. Because by that time we had bought a house there- after my father died- we bought a house on North California street just across from the football field at that time. But now, it's part of the football field. They've taken California and took all the houses down along there. So it was real convenient for us. Well I know we lived

there while I was still going to grammar school, cause it was just a hop, skip and a jump to grammar school. But when I started the high school, I'd just go through, and somebody busted a hole in the football field fence. So I just went in through the hole in the fence and waited until the five minute bell rang. I could run and get a seat before the final bell rang.

JR: That was pretty convenient.

NA: Well right, it was convenient. We had a porch in the front, and most of the time I slept in the front porch, and I could hear the five-minute bell ring. I could get dressed and run to the classroom before the bell rung.

JR: Do you remember any of the other kids that you went to high school with?

NA: I remember a whole bunch of them.

JR: Which ones do you remember?

NA: Uh…

JR: Do you remember the Price family?

NA: Yeah real well. Wayne, we entered the same class. He lived just the street over on Dakota Street. And we were close friends. Raymond Fatbowing, we got together every once in awhile. He lives down in Elfrida and we discuss things, and everything. He was a little younger than I am.

JR: Do you remember what it looked like downtown? Where all the businesses were?

NA: I knew everything. When I was about twelve years old I sold newspapers down there all along the street, so I knew everything [going on]. Most of the people down there, I knew them all. And then when I got a little bit older around fourteen, fifteen or sixteen, or around thirteen or fourteen, I got a paper route and I knew everybody by making rounds. The fact is my first route I had, it was a long one. It was Goodyear. Which Goodyear at that time was five miles. And I well remember the winter cold mornings, when I'd ride a bicycle the five miles, delivered the paper on my bicycle-- five miles, and five miles back-- in cold weather. And before school started I had to do that, before school started.

JR: Wow!

(Laughter)

JR: That's pretty good 'cause it would be dark.

NA: Yeah, it was dark all the time. Fact is, one special morning, I remember it clearly. It was dark as everything, and cold, and I looked down and here something was running right in front of my bicycle. Why I almost started to kick it. I went down there and it was a skunk. Ha ha ha. I saw the tail. I was about to kick what animal it was, until I realized it was a skunk.

JR: You might have been in trouble then.

NA: Yeah. I would have. I would have really been in trouble if I'd have kicked that thing.

JR: And so do you remember anything about the time when you were selling newspapers downtown? Do you have any special memories from that time, of any of the businesses or the people that worked down there?

NA: Well, uh.

JR: Like the families or businesses or anything?

NA: I can't think of 'em right now, but most of them, I just knew 'em by sight.

JR: Mm hmm. Did you ever meet the Bashas?

NA: Yeah, uh huh, yeah, I knew the Bashas.

JR: Did you ever meet Dr. Chandler?

NA: Yes, I think I did. I think he was in Penney's store once, and I think it seemed like I met him. Or at least I saw him. I don't know whether I shook hands. I know I shook hands with somebody in there and I don't know whether it was Dr. Chandler or not, but I know I saw him once.

JR: Yeah, he lived over at the San Marcos Hotel. He had a house that was over there.

NA: Yeah, oh yeah, because when I was selling papers, well I could always sell two or three papers and that was five cents apiece. And I got half of it, so every paper I sold, I got two and a half cents out of it. That was pretty good pocket money for a kid twelve years old.

JR: Did you ever go into the San Marcos Hotel?

NA: Uh, yeah. I've been in there but not too many times. I didn't go in there to eat or anything, but I went in there to sell papers, like that.

JR: What do you remember about the hotel?

NA: Well, it was pretty plush and most of the people in there in the wintertime, why they were pretty friendly and I enjoyed it. Back then, I'd generally, it seemed like I picked the papers up there at that little hotel there just to the south there, where the help from the hotel stayed. And I generally picked the papers up there and so San Marcos was right next door so I generally made that [my first stop]. For a twelve year old kid you need a few pennies. Dollars was almost out of sight. Most of the time, pennies, nickels and dimes were pretty good money.

JR: Did you give that money to your mom or did you get to keep it?

NA: Well, I kept most of it, but I gave her some once in awhile. But we were fortunate enough because she got money at that time- in the Spanish American War, which my father was in- and they got compensation out of that.

JR: So that helped out, that helped.

NA: Right. That helped us.

JR: Yeah because when your father passed away that must have been…

NA: Yeah, right.

JR: You graduated in1940 from Chandler High School?

NA: Yes, that's right.

JR: And um, what happened after you graduated from high school?

NA: I was a pretty good football player. I was a quarterback and I had a football scholarship for Flagstaff, Northern Arizona University. The only thing, I was also in the Arizona National Guard. It was fun goin' to Flagstaff and stuff like that, maneuvers in the summertime and everything, so I enjoyed it. The only thing, in 1940, I talked to the coach at the Flagstaff two or three times, and he was anxious for me to get up there. I was gonna go up there and then Pearl Harbor happened. Well, I mean not Pearl Harbor, but they mobilized the Arizona National Guard for one year, to get the young experienced boys, and everything. Because the fighting in Germany was still going on. So I thought I was gonna be able to get loose and go ahead and go to Flagstaff. But they kept hangin' onto me, so I talked to the coach and he said soon as your year's up, well you come on up and you'll get to Flagstaff.

JR: The scholarship?

NA: Yeah. So I did, the only thing was that Pearl Harbor happened shortly after. So, that was all.

JR: So, when they mobilized the National Guard unit in 19--, it was in 1940?

NA: 1940, yeah.

JR: Where were you training at?

NA: They shipped the whole Arizona regiment including the Chandler Company to uh, that place in Fort Sill, Oklahoma. And then they opened up that base at Abilene, Texas and they moved us down there. And that's where we spent most of our time, down there at Camp Barkeley, Texas. And that's when Pearl Harbor happened, while we was at Camp Barkeley, Texas. And they said you people relax, you're in the military until the war's over. So, that took care of that.

JR: So, do you remember? You talked about Pearl Harbor happening on Dec. 7th, 1941. Do you remember what you were doing when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

NA: Yes. I heard about it, and that was a Sunday. I met this beautiful woman there at church. I went on down there, and I hadn't heard much of it, and I got to the church and it was all commotion. And I was tryin' to find out what it was. And they had heard all the details about Pearl Harbor, so we didn't have much of a service then. But I met her again.

JR: So you were in Texas at that time.

NA: That was in Texas. I was stationed at Camp Barkeley and that was a camp between (unable to understand) and Abilene.

JR: So you were already in the National Guard at the time the war officially begins?

NA: Yes.

JR: So what happened after that?

NA: Well, with the military rehashing everything and getting things goin,' why, they came up with the idea of havin' gliders. Russia and Germany had already developed having gliders and puttin' troops in, and landing' them and workin' them. So the US decided they'd do the same thing. So at that point, they said that we're gonna have glider troops and they would work in conjunction with paratroopers. They'd have glider troops who didn't have to jump, we'd have the larger amount in the glider troops. The fact is, they're big enough, you could even put a jeep in a glider and take it in, so they decided on gliders. They had put out the word they wanted volunteers, so I jumped at the chance.

JR: Hold on one second. Let's wait for that clock to stop chiming for a minute. I don't want it to mess up your voice.

NA: Okay.

JR: So let's go back a little bit 'cause I want to ask you about one other story that we skipped over.

NA: Okay.

JR: Okay, so let's go back to the day of Pearl Harbor, December 7th. Um, what was it? Um you had met your wife already, right?

NA: Yes.

JR: Can you tell me how you met your wife?

NA: Yes, one Sunday while I was in Merkel-- the town of Merkel was fairly close to Camp Barkeley-- so I decided to go to church that day. And I went in there and her mother met me at the door. We shook hands and we chatted awhile and then she said well my daughter's right down there, let me introduce you to her. So she brought her up there. So I thought I liked her, she's a pretty beautiful woman to me. So I said, ha ha ha ha, yeah, and then she says, well, would ya like to come home and have lunch with us today? And I jumped at the chance. Laugh. So I had a good evening there and I didn't let it stop… I kept goin.'

JR: That's good. So, on December 7th, what were you doing that was special?

NA: We were, oh yeah, December the 7th. Do you remember Edith Tate and Harold Sheppard? You know them? Well, they had just been married a short time and they lived in Abilene, and they had asked us to come over for lunch that December the 7th. So we did. And uh, we went to Abilene where they had the apartment and we had lunch with Edith and Harold. We stayed there shootin' the breeze until about church time, so we drove, it was about 7 miles, over to Merkel. We walked into the church there and everybody was talkin' and Pearl Harbor happened and everybody was concerned about it.

JR: When did you propose to your wife? Do you remember?

NA: Oh, yes, I do. The deal is after we'd had lunch with Harold and Edith, uh, I stopped on by the side of the road and pulled over by a shady spot, and shot the breeze, and pretty soon I got around to sayin', would ya marry me? (Laugh.) Right there, so she said yes. Oh, then we went on to church and that's what happened that day. I proposed to her on the way to church, and we got there and the whole church was in a roar cause they just listened to Pearl Harbor.

JR: Now, how did you feel when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

NA: I knew something was really in the will, and I had everything goin' there. I would have been out of the military in a few months and that Fall I could go back and go to

school. But of course when that happened, why we had a feelin' things wasn't gonna work out. I think it was the next day or so and the word came out, and they said you people are not goin' anyplace, and stayin' in the military.

JR: And how did you feel about that, cause you had that scholarship that was waiting and you just proposed.

NA: Well, my hope was- I finally got a hold of the coach again at Flagstaff, and he said well, when it's over why, we'll see what happens then. Of course nobody knew how long that was gonna be when it was over. So…

JR: So we were talking a little bit before we stopped, we were talking a little bit about the gliders and um, so you , you were in the National Guard and then um basically joined uh, the US Army? Is that correct?

NA: Well, no, you didn't join, they just automatically said the National Guard was part of the Army at that time, and they came under the Army officially, especially as soon as the war broke out.

JR: And were you part of the Air Corps?

NA: Well, then that's when the Army started doin' all of the tryin' to get ready for war, and everything. They decided to do the same thing like Russia and Germany were doin' havin' gliders to take in troops and material for fighting, along with the paratroopers. They put out the word, they wanted people to try to be glider pilots and I put my name in, in a hurry. That's when I got it. Then there they took us to a small field, and there in Texas, and we did training in small aircraft cubs. And then they, uh, opened up one glider school, small gliders, and in Arizona. So I jumped at the chance to go back to Arizona and see Mother and folks there and everything. So…

JR: So there was training in Wickenburg?

NA: Right. So, I was actually sent to Luke Air Force Base, and that was really our home base. But I was always assigned to, we had a place up at Wickenburg. It was just a little place and that's where, as soon as I finished my course in gliders, why, they said well, you did pretty good. So they sent me on as an instructor. So I stayed at Wickenburg all the time, teachin' others how to fly the gliders, the small gliders.

JR: This was about 1942, maybe? When you're in Wickenburg?

NA: Yeah, I guess that was about '42, yeah.

JR: Now what was it that made you decide to volunteer to be a glider pilot?

NA: The flyin' into war seemed like a whole lot better than doing it walking. And that's what you were in the Army, in the ground troops, you walked into war. And I figured

let's fly, I'd just rather fly. That was a feeling to me.

JR: Tell me about, can you describe the glider a little bit for me?

NA: Well, it's uh…

JR: Like, what's it made out of, and how does it move around? How is it powered?

NA: Well, mostly it's wood and fabric, and a little bit of metal tubing around, and the only way to pull it is with another airplane. On the small gliders, well they could use small aircraft to pull us around. But when we got the larger one, like the CG4A, like those, they had to have a larger aircraft. Mostly the largest was the C47 troop plane that they used, and they had plenty of those. They could pull two of those at the same time so it was pretty good.

JR: A C47 could pull two gliders at the same time?

NA: Right, they could pull two gliders at the same time.

JR: Mm hm. What did the gliders carry?

NA: They could carry about 4000 pounds. They could carry a jeep and maybe one or two passengers with it. And, that's about the top thing. If it was just the troops you could put about 16 troops in there with full gear and take them in. And that really enforced the paratroopers, cause when the paratroopers went in, they was more scattered. But when you went in with a glider, the trooper gliders, then each glider would have quite a few fightin' people in it itself, and they were in one bunch. So when we landed, it so happened that normally I was a flight officer at that time. Most of the time we just had enlisted personnel and sergeants, and I was generally the highest rankin.' So I bein' in the military that long, in the Army, I knew enough about fightin' and battle. There was about 80 of them, so in fact when we landed, I was almost always in charge of goin' into battle with them.

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JR: Mm hmm. So, let's go back a little bit. Um, you were training in Wickenburg and you became an instructor.

NA: Yes.

JR: So what happened after that? When did you actually move from doing the training to actually going into battle?

NA: Well, after we got through all the training with the small gliders, then the large gliders were available. Those that had been instructin' the small glider, they took us out, and I went to Victorville, California. There they had these large gliders, the CT480s, and they checked us out on that, and they graduated us, and I kept on instructing. Soon as I went through my course, I kept on instructing in gliders, until not too long before D-Day.

And then they took most of us, the most experienced, and made ready for D-Day. That's what I did then.

JR: Okay. So where was the first country that you went, you know, after you finished the training and all that. What was the first country that you went into?

NA: We went from Victorville, we went to, where did we go?

JR: Did you go to England or…?

(Wife) You went to England.

NA: Well, but we went to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, that's where we went. Yeah, we went to Fort Bragg, North Carolina from Victorville, and then they shipped us on from Fort Bragg, we went to England. And we stayed there and prepared for D-Day.

JR: So that was like 1944? When you went, or earlier?

NA: Yeah.

JR: So maybe like late 1943 when you…

NA: Yeah, yeah. 1943. And there we prepared for invasion to Normandy. We did all our practice and we had the airborne infantry there. We would do the practicing there, showin' them how to put in a jeep in the glider, and all the machine guns and the small cannons. How to fix 'em. And we'd do the take off and landings, and flyin' with the troops too. Getting everybody prepared to go. You had to, generally, we tried to get the airborne troops in just a little bit ahead of the paratroopers. Then the paratroopers could come in afterwards. We'd secure the area pretty good. Then the paratroopers could come in, and when we mixed up that troop, we had a pretty good front for battle at that time.

JR: Can you, I want to get a little bit more into your memory about what it was like to actually pilot the glider. So can you describe for us, since none of has ever been in a glider before, can you describe for me about what it was like, you know, when you do the take off, and the landing and that kind of thing? What do you remember about that?

NA: Well, the takeoff was fairly smooth and because the aircraft had that much load they didn't take off too fast either. So you had to have a fairly long distance to get up to speed. And when it got to a little bit above 75, or 80 miles per hour, well the gliders generally got airborne. Then they would get up high and then slowed, by pulling up. That pulled along the aircraft and that slowed them down. So then you dived a little bit and give them plenty of room. A little bit more-- not to pull so much-- and he could pull up. And once he got airborne, why you were pretty well off. Then the glider tried to stay just a little above the aircraft, to stay out of the rush of the wind and everything. Stay just above it. And then you always decided ahead of time where the landing for the glider was gonna be. And the glider pilot has to know too. And the aircraft pilot knows. And the pilot of

the aircraft, he would shake his wing a little bit when he saw the area. Then the glider pilot decided where he wanted to get off, so the aircraft pilot would cut loose, and then he would go ahead, and the gliders, we would go ahead and reach to our landing area. Yeah. We'd try to know ahead of time exactly where we were goin,' where we was gonna land, so we had to maneuver around to get in the right spot. And then the pilot would decide where he wanted to drop the [tow] rope or not. He'd take it back, or drop it there, or wherever he wanted to. We wanted to be sure he wouldn't drop it on us or anything.

JR: So when they're finished towing, how did the tow rope get disconnected? From the glider.

NA: We hit a lever and it would disconnect. We had a lever up above, ya hit that and it would come loose, right.

JR: And then from there, the pilot would take the glider down to the area where you needed to land?

NA: Yeah. Uh huh.

JR: And um, what was the landing like?

NA: Well, it's kinda which field you was at. If on combat missions, it was always hopefully a small field-- a small field where you could land, hopefully the good ones. But if the glider wasn't too good, they'd come in crashing. That's the reason most of the time they planned ahead of time to have some fairly open places-- not too many trees and too many obstructions-- so you can land in farm field and pastures, and stuff like that.

JR: Did two planes ever try to land in the same area? Two gliders?

NA: Uh, yes, because if you're goin' into combat you wanted to be as close together as possible. So you see some of those pictures where the gliders are scattered all around, but you tried to at least get in there fairly close, but still not close enough to run into each other. Although that happened a few times. But you almost had to pick your own thing, and especially you wanted to be goin' in the same direction instead of goin' in crossways, or comin' in like that. At least if you went in together side by side, you're less apt to hit each other for your landing.

JR: So do you remember when you were piloting the glider plane, do you remember what kind of sounds you heard? What did it sound like inside of that?

NA: Well, it had that blowin' horn sound all the time.

JR: So let's go back a little bit-- you're training in England and you're getting ready for the invasion at Normandy?

NA: Yes.

JR: Is that correct? Can you tell me about what you remember about the invasion at Normandy?

NA: Well, except this bein' the first time into combat, there was quite a give and take. All of which is the best way to go. Where you're gonna place 'em, and when the paratroopers are comin' in too, so you could always get in there, and be in the fighting force when ya landed. Try to figure out exactly when to take off, and also what kind of return fire are ya gonna get. Either from the ground or airplane, and especially any aircraft flyer from the ground. What most you'd get, because most of them were goin' into Germany-- the Germans had pretty good ground fire comin' up at ya . At one time, I got, goin' into Holland, and one of 'em almost got me. Blew the side of my glider out and put a big old hole in it. Lucky it was just a last minute hit, but they just barely hit. It didn't hurt any of our passengers in there.

JR: Were you able to land?

NA: Yeah, I was able to land. It didn't hurt a whole lot because I knew what I was doin.' It hit me while I was still on tow. I thought the glider was gonna come apart, afraid it was gonna come apart. But I was about to cut loose and get it down before it did fall apart, but it seemed to be holdin' on pretty good. So I just held on a little farther and we weren't too far from our landing zone. And I went ahead and landed, and everybody was safe.

JR: Was that the only time that you came under enemy fire?

NA: No. We fell under enemy fire on every one [of the flights], but luckily, that was the only time I got hit.

JR: And do you remember other pilots getting hit?

NA: Yeah, some of them back then. We generally lost one or two of the aircraft and the gliders going on each of the missions. That's how much of the ground fire we got.

JR: Very intense.

NA: Yeah.

JR: Do you remember your first glider flight during that battle, like the first time you actually went into the battle?

NA: Yeah. I guess Normandy was my first into battle and I remember that fairly well.

JR: What was that like?

NA: Well, ya had all kinds of stories about what it could be and everything. But the main thing is trying to keep everything exactly right to make sure that you're going to get in there to do the mission. Fear, there was a little bit there, but not a whole lot. The main thing was the urgency to do the right thing and get things done, and take care of it. So you couldn't let a lot of bad feelings go because you knew you had a mission with 16 people back there ready to fight, and things to do, and fear was almost out of the question. The main thing is, are you gonna do things exactly right, get it done correctly and save lives, and come out ahead, and you be the winner.

JR: So it sounds like you had to be very focused.

NA: Focused on exactly what you want to do, and let that be in mind all the time.

JR: Now uh, what was that like-- I guess you landed many times, so what was kind of the scariest landing or most dramatic landing that you had? With a glider.

NA: Well most of them, most of them was pretty good. Uh, I guess I was fortunate, a lot of times you were concerned a little that you was pickin' out the right place to set it down. But, I guess I was fortunate, uh, I got it down good each time.

JR: Good.

NA: Pretty good.

JR: Yeah, somebody was watching over you.

NA: Yeah.

(Wife) You should tell her about goin' in on D-Day, wasn't it? When you had to set it down in a certain length of time. And the time when you had this mission, and you were in this field that was not very large, and you had to go through an airy place, and those winds.

NA: Yeah, right.

(Wife) And you came right up to the hedgerow before you got…

NA: Yeah. I knew how to dig it in. I did come right up to a hedgerow, and if I had hit that I knew what would have happened. Yeah, I knew ahead of time the hedgerow was right close and I really dug it into the ground.

JR: So this was a flight that you were taking where you had a lot of artillery in your glider with you? And then what happened? You came to like a short landing area or what happened exactly with that?

NA: Well, to get the large artillery or stuff like that out, why you opened the front, the front of the door. Luckily I never did have any problem getting [the door] beat up, so it couldn't open up. I never did have any problem on stopping it in time, and not up against anything that I couldn't open the top and take either a jeep or artillery piece out, out of the front.

JR: So this place that she was talking about, she said that you, um, you actually hit both of your wings when you landed? Was that correct?

NA: Uh, I didn't break the wings on that one landing. I did knock limbs off of the trees on both sides but it didn't damage the wings. So they went ahead in and landed. And of course the field was short and I really dug it in. I knew I had to dig it in fast 'cause I had a lot of ammunition right behind me.

JR: How did that feel?

NA: So I really dug the wheels in, and well, I knocked the wheels off, and went in on the skids. I knew I had to stop, and they was shook up a little bit, but it stayed put-- stopped . We got out good.

JR: Okay. Let's take a little break here.

JR: I want to talk to you a little bit about the glider pilots because this is a new area for me. So once you landed, what would happen then? So what happened once you landed? Would you unload and then, how did you get back where you needed to be?

NA: Okay you want me to go ahead and do it now?

NA: Ah, well, most of them did about the same thing, especially in Normandy when we went in there first. I had a machine gun squad and they were sergeants. I was pretty well trained in maneuvering and the gun, so the sergeants just naturally took control of the machine gun group. We got out and I guided them. And we spread out to fight. It's hard to say whether we, how many we got- Germans we got- but we got a bunch of them and we dug in there. We fought until we got additional people in there. We captured most of the Germans.. . and all that night we held them off, and the next day, why, we were supposed to-- we were always short of glider pilots. They needed more and everything. And they told us to try to get back as soon as possible. So the next day, why, we'd secured the area pretty well, so the glider pilots started joining together. We started workin' our way back to one of the fields where they said they could come in and take us back. So we could have another flight. All our missions was about the same, cause they generally had more gliders goin' than they had pilots to take 'em. So most of us, we didn't have a co-pilot and everything, we just had one pilot goin' in. They wanted to get us back as soon as possible so we could pull some more in [do more flights].

JR: So once you landed you basically had to fight your way into a place that had to be open, so you could be picked up again.

NA: That's right and most of us, we just joined the rest of the fightin' troops that were in our gliders. We'd become part of the ground troops until we could have a break in time and start-- the glider pilots would try to get together eventually, and be shipped back to the base and to start another one [flight].

JR: Mm. What's your most vivid memory of the Battle at Normandy?

NA: (Sigh.) I guess the fire, the tremendous ground fire we got goin' in. And after the landing, to finally find our way into a time where we could work our way together-- the glider pilots-- work our way together, and then get back to the coast. And then back to England so we could do another invasion.

JR: So how long were you basically involved with Normandy, as far as being a glider pilot, like how long?

NA: I guess I was about three days I think. Three days and three nights, I was over there in the battle. Until we had a word that if we got together and got back to the coast, they'd want us to get back there. They sent a message over there that they wanted us back as soon as possible to come in with another fleet.

JR: Mm hm. Okay. You mentioned that you were with a group of men who captured German soldiers?

NA: Yeah.

JR: Um. I'm curious about what that was like, to capture some of the enemy soldiers.

NA: Well, most of the time you got up close, hearing them, and then maybe shootin' a few times. And I learned to say *"hande hoch!"* That means get your hands up. That means that you're gonna start shootin.' If you saw any movement and they weren't ready to surrender, you shot. And that's about the way it worked. And generally if you had them pretty well surrounded, they surrendered. And of course as soon as you got 'em out you stripped them all of everything, I still have a few rifles and pistols uh, that I took off of 'em.

JR: All right, well so once you were finished with your mission in Normandy, you went back to England?

NA: Yeah, we went back to England and then we'd be prepared for another invasion.

JR: And is that, and once you finished there, is that when you went to the Market Garden?

NA: Yeah. Uh huh.

JR: Can you talk about that a little bit?

NA: Um, try to get my mind straight on that Market Garden.

JR: If you need it, you can look at your outline to refresh your memory a little bit. No problem. Was it pretty soon after you finished at Normandy that you went into Holland?

NA: Uh, I'm tryin' to think of the how long it was between. I think it was about a week, maybe a little bit more, cause we had some more training to do. After that we pushed 'em back into Holland and they were…

JR: Are you trying to remember that one?

NA: Yeah, it seemed like maybe it was about a week, something like that, we pushed 'em back. They were planning another big surge and the Germans was comin' this way. Something' bad went on, went wrong with Holland. The Germans was killing a lot of civilians, and other things, and that's when we went into Holland. And that's one of the largest invasions we made.

JR: When you went into Holland, did you have a specific mission?

NA: Yes. Uh …

JR: You trying to remember back?

NA: Yeah, I'm tryin' to get the brain rollin'.

JR: Well, you remembered a lot about Normandy.

NA: Yeah.

JR: So you went into Holland and you were doing the same kinds of missions, right? Where you were bringing in troops and supplies?

NA: That's right.

JR: Across enemy lines or behind enemy lines?

NA: Yes, uh huh. And then the ground troops that was comin' in. We went into Holland and we stopped them from comin' out farther. The ground troops was able to get in, get into Holland there. And then the same thing, we were goin' into Germany on that mission. The Germans had quite a force to the west of the Rhine River, and also they had backups on the other side of the Rhine River. And we went over the Rhine to stop them, so the main ground troops could cross the Rhine successfully. And that's when it was

getting close. We was getting Germany good, when we went across the Rhine.

JR: So when you went into that third battle, which was around the Rhine River, how did it feel to actually be going into Germany? As you flew your glider plane into Germany?

NA: Well, I can't think of any special thing, but we knew that we had to get there and put up a blockade of fight against the German invasion comin' this way. Because we had to clear the way for our ground troops to cross the Rhine and to get into Germany. And-- that was the main thing-- for us to stop the German enforcement comin' and be sure that our troops could cross the Rhine. And it was quite a deal when we went in, our command had blanketed all the area with smoke. You couldn't even see the ground for a long time. I thought for awhile we'd have to go through that and land without even being able to see the ground. But, just after we crossed the Rhine, why it got cleared up. We were able to land, we could see the ground pretty good-- not real good-- but we could see the ground and see where to land. Then our troops crossed the Rhine durin' that time with all the smoke and everything. And we were able to stop the Germans, to stop 'em as they crossed the Rhine.

JR: So was that your last major battle that you were involved in?

NA: Yes, that was our last one.

JR: Okay. There's still a lot of questions here. What do you remember about some of the men that you served with when you were a glider pilot?

NA: I'm real impressed with their courage and what they did, all of them. They were real military men.

JR: Sounds like you had a very important job to do.

NA: Mm hm.

JR: Can you tell me a little bit about what you think about the significance of the actions of the glider pilots, and the gliders coming in, like why they were so important to the war?

NA: Yes, they were. And it was something new, and of course, it didn't last too long. And um, primarily, I guess they-- what happened is the helicopter pilots almost took their place after World War II. So, we only lasted a few years there. When the war was over, we were still going strong until Germany had surrendered. Then we were getting' ready to invade Japan. We got back and we had a small orientation. I was already scheduled to head for the Far East, cause we were going to go into Japan just ahead of the invasion, like we did at Normandy. Then they dropped the bomb and it was over. But I was already in San Francisco, ready to get on a ship headed to go East. We was takin' all the glider pilots over there too. And they had already taken all the gliders and everything, and shipped them. We were ready for the invasion of Japan when they dropped the bomb.

And the thing was over after that.

JR: What do you remember about VE Day? Cause you had been so heavily involved in Europe.

NA: Yeah.

JR: How'd you feel about VE Day?

NA: I enjoyed it. I really did. Then, I get to go back to my wife and my daughter.

JR: You had gotten married during the war, correct?

NA: Right.

JR: Yeah. You were married in 1943, and when did you have your daughter? What year did you have your daughter?

NA: I was in England I think. Just about the time of D-Day, close to D-Day. And then I got word that I was a father.

JR: How did you feel about that?

NA: I was pretty happy about it.

JR: It must have given your spirits a little lift?

NA: Yeah, it did. 'Cause she was a little early anyways, I wasn't expectin' her that soon.

JR: What do you remember about VJ Day?

NA: Uh, we, we had a ball. We really did.

We had taken a vacation. When I got back from England, then when I got back from Europe, she [his wife] had been stayin' with her folks in Texas. I had her come out to Chandler to stay with my brother. Then when she got there, I had about five days leave--something' like that-- before I had to get to the Coast to go to Japan. And we went up to Prescott and stayed a few days, and had a good time. And that's when we heard the bomb went off. And then, shortly after, I was already goin,' and then we got word that we didn't have to go. The bomb, and the war was over.

JR: Were you in California when you heard that?

NA: No. I was still here in Arizona. Yeah, when they said that.

JR: You were in Chandler when you heard?

NA: Yeah, I was in Chandler when they said it... Where were we?

(Wife) We were at Mormon Lake.

NA: We were still at Mormon Lake when they said it?

JR: You were at Mormon Lake when that happened?

NA: Yeah, when the bomb happened, yeah. When VJ Day happened. Yeah, we were still there, yeah when the VJ Day happened.

(Wife) They sent word for you not to come.

NA: They told us we didn't have to go to the coast. Report to someplace, I forgot now where they told us to report.

JR: Bet your family was very happy to hear that.

NA: Right, uh huh.

JR: Do you, when did you first get to see your new daughter?

NA: Uh.

JR: Did you not get to see her until… how old was she?

(Wife) she almost was 2 years old.

JR: So your daughter was almost 2 years old before you got to see her the first time? And how did if feel when you actually got to see her?

NA: Oh it, it was (gestures)

JR: You must have been pretty excited about that.

NA: Uh huh.

JR: Kinda knew you had something that you were fighting for?

NA: Yeah. Right. Uh huh. Uh huh.

JR: Were you ever wounded in battle?

NA: Uh, well, I was shaken a little bit; I didn't get a rifle bullet or anything like that. I probably got a little bit of shrapnel here and there, but not much. I came close a few times, quite a few times.

JR: That's pretty amazing.

NA: Yeah.

JR: With all that, that's a lot of danger that you're in. This is something that I've been asking all the men I've been interviewing and I've had different responses. How did you feel about the people you were fighting at the time?

NA: Well, it's hard to say. The ones I got to be around a little bit was the prisoners and, and they didn't seem too mean at that time. Now of course, when I'm shootin' at 'em, when they're shootin' at me, and they did, why you don't really know, but you wanna get a shot in where it'll help. But I happened to help with the prisoners and everything and I didn't really have a whole lot of hard feelings. I know some of our troops, our airborne troops and everything, they expressed their opinion pretty verbally hard against some of them and everything. And they'd go along, and we'd be watchin' our prisoners and here a paratrooper man would go up and kick the other, kick a prisoner real hard and everything, and we'd slow it down. Slow it down cause we already had the prisoners, and we knew what we was gonna do with them, and I couldn't see one of our men kicking a prisoner in the rear and everything. That happens quite a bit. One of them would hit a prisoner over the head with a rifle or something' like that, why, you couldn't take that. But you know the reason was because most of them have been in combat all the time anyways.

JR: It was very stressful.

NA: Yeah. So, they'd let it out at the time, and we had to slow that, I had to slow that down.

JR: And you were in charge a lot of the time. That's good. It sounds like you were a strong leader.

NA: Well, I had my thoughts…

JR: Yeah. Okay. Now, did you ever encounter any of the German gliders?

NA: No. Never did and I was always curious about that myself just to see what those were. I never did get to see the German gliders that they used.

JR: And which gliders did you fly over there in Europe?

NA: Well, our squadron was equipped with a Horsa, the large English glider. And we flew that all the time on missions, on practice and missions and usin' the troops. We

would use some of the English troops but I didn't ever take one into combat. Every time on the combat mission I had the CG4A glider. Although now, I know one, let's see, I think in the Normandy invasion, I think part of our squadron used the Horsa. I was assigned to a group that had to go in first and we used the CG4A.

JR: Was that the Waco?

NA: Yeah, the Waco. We used the Waco. But our squadron was equipped with the Horsa, English Horsa, and some of them, they used that to go in with that.

JR: I was talking to your wife and she was mentioning that in 1942, it was December of '42, there was an article that came out in the newspaper in Chandler that talked about a crash that had happened. They thought maybe it was your glider that had crashed. Do you remember hearing about that?

NA: Yeah.

JR: Were you training at that time?

NA: Yeah, uh, we were, let's see, that was up at…

JR: Was it in Wickenburg?

NA: Was that at Wickenburg or was that at…

(Wife) That was when you were in Victorville? You were takin' aircraft someplace else.

NA: Yeah. Yeah.

JR: That was in Victorville? You were flying the plane. Did the plane crash?

(Wife) The plane crashed and the [glider] driver didn't and the paper had it vice versa, they made it that the glider had crashed and the plane did not. His obituary will be in the Williams' paper, in the Chandler paper.

JR: So they kinda had your obituary long before your time.

NA: Yeah.

(Wife) But then he's been reported dead a second time.

NA: Yeah. Yeah, that's right.

JR: They reported you dead two times?

NA: I think I mighta damaged the glider a little bit, not much.

(Wife) We walked into the Silent Wings museum down in Terrell, Texas before it moved to Lubbock and they had his obituary on the wall. The fella, when we walked in the door, he said, “you’re alive, you’re alive!!” And he was the one who was the head of the museum then. And he took you back and showed you this article that listed part of the obituary. He gave us a copy of it.

NA: I got the glider down when the aircraft went down. I got the glider down pretty good, but they deceased me on paper along with the other people that got killed in the aircraft.

(Wife) And they had already called Mom, and the paper came out on Friday. Thursday night, I think it was dated on Friday, but anyway it was published, the paper was published.

NA: Well, yeah, as soon as it happened I called her and told her what had happened-- that I was okay.

(Wife) And they sent her [Noel’s mother] a wire and instead of delivering the wire, they put it in her post office box. It was Sunday or Monday that his brother-in-law found the paper in California, to see if they could find out what had happened, because nobody there had gotten in touch with the right people. Then they got his wire saying there was an accident, but ‘I’m all right.’

JR: That must have made your mother feel a lot better.

NA: Oh yeah. Yeah, she-- what was it a day or a couple of days before she knew it was wrong and I was alive, and she knew.

JR: So let’s go to VJ-Day. You said that you were with the family at Mormon Lake when you heard about the bomb being dropped in Japan? So, when were you officially discharged? Well, I mean you didn’t officially get discharged cause you stayed, you stayed with the service?

NA: Right.

JR: But basically in 1945 was when you were sort of officially back in the US?

NA: Yes.

JR: Okay. What are some of your strongest memories of your experiences during the war? You described some things, but do you have any other memories that are very strong for you about the war experience?

NA: You know, I don't really know where the bad ones were.

JR: You have many good memories.

NA: I guess I was probably a little worried about all the Chandler people, the Chandler men who was in the war, and how they were getting along. And a lot of them was in the Pacific. They went to the Pacific and that was pretty hard goin' over there. I was concerned about them quite a bit too.

JR: Did you ever get to hear about any of your friends or people that you knew that were in the war, like what happened to them, or where they were serving at or anything?

NA: Yeah. They told me quite a bit. Well a lot of our friends went to the Pacific. They were in the Chandler Company and everything, and most of them went to the Pacific there.

JR: And how'd you find out about what was happening with them?

NA: Well, Leonard, my brother was over there. Most of them were my friends and I heard from them about what was happening over there.

JR: Which brother was it that was in the Pacific?

NA: Uh, Charles. Charles was over there.

JR: What medals or honors did you receive?

NA: You know, I don't know all-

JR: You got three Bronze Stars?

NA: Yeah.

(Wife) One was, if you don't mind my saying, one was really interesting and he didn't receive it until about 5 or 6 years ago, when we went to a reunion in Albuquerque. And it was because one battle was fought with only the glider pilots were involved in it, I forgot just how it was, but it was fought only by officers. What was that one?

NA: Yeah. That was one.

(Wife) It was very belated but it was a unique thing and I can't remember what that is. But anyway, General Dula was a friend, was a close friend of ours so they gave you your bronze star, and someone from France from the embassy came and gave it to you.

NA: Yeah.

(Wife) And kissed him on either cheek. (Laughter) The way French do.

JR: So, what was it that you did after you returned from the war? What happened?

NA: Well, tryin' to decide what was my career gonna be after that.

JR: You came back to Chandler, right?

NA: I came back to Chandler and I talked to the coach again at Flagstaff if I should go on up and get a college degree. But, at that time, I had a two-year-old daughter, or a year-old daughter, and a wife to support. And I was thinking all the time, do I put four years into college at that point, or what? So I decided, well, I'll just stay in the service. Let's see at that time I must have had about six years, four or five years in the service, so I said, well I'll put in another fifteen years and retire 20 years. Well, that's what I did. So I really stayed in 30 years, 31 years.

JR: That's a long time.

NA: So that was my career. The Air Force.

JR: And what, do you have any specific memories from being in the Air Force for all those years? Such as where you were stationed or things you were involved with during your career?

NA: I think that was a good decision, and I enjoyed the Air Force. And of course, I changed jobs a few times and they shipped us all over the world a few times, which that's a little enjoyable in itself some times.

JR: Did you have an area of specialty while you were in the Air Force?

NA: Well, first off after World War II, I decided I didn't know what, which specialty to go into. I decided something. I thought that weather was pretty good for me, so I was a weather forecaster.

JR: Like a meteorologist?

NA: A meteorologist just for two or three years-- three or four years-- about four years I guess, as a meteorologist. And then I decided that in meteorology you gotta work day and night and everything. After so long, let's see, we lived in Albuquerque. Then, oh yeah, missiles came along about that time. So I said, fiddlesticks, I'd been in electronics before radio, and so on and so forth, when I was in the Army portion, and I think I'll go into missiles. They had missiles all around. So that's when I went into missiles.

JR: What was your job doing, you know, in association with the missiles?

NA: Uh, I was a on a crew for shootin' 'em. We went to Mississippi and I went to all the schools and everything, and ended up putting missiles in Tucson.

JR: Langley? She said you were in Langley for five years?

NA: Oh yeah. Yeah, that's right. Went to Langley.

JR: Ok, so you left Langley and came to Tucson, which is where we're doing this interview. So I believe your wife said you came in 1962 to Tucson here, and then you said that you were at Titan Missile?

NA: Right.

JR: Is that correct?

NA: That's correct.

JR: What kind of work did you do there?

NA: Well, I had all the experience of a crew member, going through all of that. Then I was a supervisor too for their crews, testing them and checking on 'em, and assigning them to all the missiles we had here.

JR: Where were those located at? Just around, different areas?

NA: Yeah, right here in Tucson.

JR: And that sounds like, basically, your kids grew up Tucson?

NA: Yeah, right, in fact we bought a home there not too far from the Davis Monthan Base. Right next to a grade school, and then they went through university. So it worked out real smooth.

(Wife) And you went to Vietnam.

NA: That's right, I spent a year in Vietnam when that war was going on. I didn't get out of wars.

JR: Okay, were you involved in Korea at all?

NA: No.

JR: But you were in Vietnam for a year?

NA: Yeah.

JR: And was that related to the work you were doing with missiles?

NA: Uh…

JR: Alright. So you had three children, Patricia, Noel Jr. and Michael. Is that correct?

NA: Right.

JR: And you're living in Tucson. You've been living here since 1962. Did you go ahead and leave right away from Chandler? When you decided you were going to go into the Army, go into the Air Force, did you leave Chandler right away or did you stay in Chandler for a little bit?

NA: Uh, I guess I didn't stay there over three or four months, I guess. It was probably about two or three months, and that's when I decided to go to meteorology school.

JR: And where was that at?

NA: Illinois. Illinois I think.

JR: So that's where you went and got trained?

NA: Yeah.

JR: Now if you think back, you weren't in Chandler for a long time after the war ended, but your mother stayed there?

NA: Yeah, she stayed there.

JR: How do you think Chandler was impacted by the war?

NA: Well, at that time Chandler wasn't too large. Most of the people there my age, in Chandler, they were affected by the economy and everything. They were affected by the war, and so many of them were in the military. That's the reason it's such a large group of my age group and older that went into the military, and the Arizona National Guard. The Chandler group had a huge bunch of the Chandler men.

JR: So a large number of the people who were in the Arizona National Guard were from Chandler?

NA: Yes. They were.

JR: And when did the Chandler branch, the Chandler Company, when did that form? Was it before 1940?

NA: It'd been in effect for some time. It was a headquarters company for the, let me see--

JR: You have some information on that in your book? And if you can find it, I can do a little bit of research on it.

NA: Yeah. It was a 45th Division, 189th Squadron and we were the headquarters company, I'm trying to think…

JR: I can look that up. There was an armory there, right? For the National Guard?

NA: Yeah.

JR: Was that located on Boston Street-- where the armory was? Do you remember?

NA: Yeah, it was right there near the post office.

JR: Just a little ways west of the post office?

NA: Yes. Right. That was our, yeah.

JR: Did you know anyone in Chandler who lost his life during the war?

NA: I did, but let me see…

JR: Any of your classmates or…anyone you were friends with, or siblings of people you knew maybe?

NA: Seems like Jack Frost got killed flying a aircraft, and uh, there's quite a few I can't recall right now, but quite a few.

JR: Like a Skousen maybe? I have a photograph that shows some of the names of some of the people. Do you feel like your service in WWII affected the rest of your life?

NA: I think so, I guess I really didn't have any experience as a career when I got out of high school except being in the military, and I guess that just stuck with me. And that's just-- I liked it so I just stayed military.

JR: What lessons did you learn from this time in your life?

NA: Hmmm…Doing the right thing I guess.

JR: It's interesting. I've asked that question to Lefty Soto and he said a similar thing. When I asked that question, he said it's important to be strong.

NA: Right, well doing the right thing. And doing it the best way.

JR: Ok, do you have any other thoughts you'd like to share?

NA: Well…

JR: Do you have anything you'd like to tell your grandkids about your time in the service? If your grandkids were to watch this, you know, ten years from now, is there anything you'd like to tell your grandkids about your service?

NA: Well, the main thing is just to look ahead and see what's best and what the right thing to do is.

JR: Why do you think WWII is important for us to remember?

NA: Well, protecting the people. Protecting your nation. For the most part we haven't gone overboard, I think. That's the main thing. It's getting really on edge now. Uh, we got the nuclear bomb going. We got it and that's also in other nations, and I think, what are we gonna do about other nations developing it? How much we're gonna try to keep 'em from it, or only we and few others will have nuclear weapons. And that's a hard decision to make.

JR: Well, I think that's the last question.

END OF INTERVIEW