

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
WARREN H. WEBSTER
Pilot, Royal Canadian Air Force and U.S. Air Force, World War II
2000

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Webster, Warren H., (1915-). Oral History Interview, 2000.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 44 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 44 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 44 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Military Papers: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Warren Webster, a Madison, Wisconsin native, discusses his World War II service with the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and later the U.S. Air Force flying close air support. Webster talks about being turned down by the Air Corps because he did not have two years of college, enlisting in the Canadian Air Force, and basic training at Toronto. He estimates that twenty percent of those in flying school were Americans. Webster comments on getting previous flight training as a civilian, flight training in Tiger Moth and Avro Anson planes, flight instructor school in Trenton (Ontario), and serving as an assistant flight instructor. Webster mentions having difficulty getting promoted. He discusses duty as a check pilot and transfer in 1944 to the American Air Force. Sent to France with the 514th Squadron of the 406th Air Group, he touches upon flying support and fighter escort during the Battle of the Bulge. He speaks of different types of bombs he carried, mentions he once missed some tanks and hit a hospital by mistake, and describes the effectiveness of dive bombing tactics using machine guns. Webster evaluates ways the infantry indicated friendly forces to those in the air, the lack of experienced pilots, and different types of airplanes. He touches on daily life, including food, mail, and going to a little hotel in Ash (Belgium) on his days off. Webster describes emergency landing two damaged airplanes. He mentions volunteering for Pacific duty, discharge, Reserve service, and active membership in the P-47 Pilots' Association, 9th Air Force Association, and American Legion. He explains how he was almost called up for Korea but slipped through the cracks.

Biographical Sketch:

Webster (b.1915) served with both the Royal Canadian Air Force and the United States Air Force over Europe during World War II. He served in the Reserves until 1956 and eventually settled in Monona, Wisconsin.

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2000.

Transcribed by Travis Schwartz, 2010.

Corrected by Channing Welch, 2010.

Abstract by Susan Krueger, 2010.

Interview Transcript:

James: Alright, we're off and running here.

Warren: We're off and running, okay.

James: Are you comfy there?

Warren: Yes, yes. I'm fine.

James: Ok. Yeah, I can forward this just a bit. Ok, were talking to Warren Webster on the eighteenth of September the year 2000. Where were you born sir?

Warren: In Madison.

James: And when?

Warren: 25th of April, 1915.

James: And when did you enter military service?

Warren: April 15th, 1941.

James: And how did that go?

Warren: Well, I joined the Royal Canadian Air Force at that time.

James: How did you contact them?

Warren: Uh, wrote to them in about the fall or early winter of 1940. And they sent application.—

James: And where did you go?

Warren: And finally, there was some delays. You had to have three people who knew you to recommend you and what not, being a foreigner. So I enlisted in Winnipeg, April 15th 1941.

James: They knew you were coming though?

Warren: They knew I was coming.—

James: Oh, ok.

Warren: That was my date of arrival.

James: Tell me how everything transpired then.

Warren: Well, they had measles or something at a manning depot up there. So they sent me from there to Toronto. [Both laugh]

James: Right off the bat you were having trouble.

Warren: Right off the bat, I'm having fun. We had our basic training—

James: Basic military training?

Warren: Military training. You had rifle drill and you marched until you were blue in the face.

James: But you are assigned to an Air Force?

Warren: Air Force unit, yeah.

James: Ok

Warren: Then they sent me to—

James: A flying school?

Warren: No. They sent you to initial training school first, which was six weeks.

James: Where was that?

Warren: That was in Toronto.

James: That consisted of mainly book work?

Warren: Mainly book work, they gave you a little navigation. They gave you would be high school and maybe some first year college algebra. And that sort of thing, just to make sure—

James: Was there many Americans in your class?

Warren: Not too many. At that time—

James: And the class size was what, 30? 40?

Warren: Oh, it was more than that. Well there were 3 flights and each one was about 40. So in the school there were probably 150 in all.

James: But there was just very few of you Americans.

Warren: Yeah, I would— Well, by the time we got to flying school about 20 percent were Americans, and most of them from Texas.

James: Did you know Jack Miller from the west side of Madison?

Warren: I knew him, yeah.

James: Yeah, he did the same thing as you.

Warren: I tried to get in the US Air Force in the end of 39. And I didn't have two years of college at the time. I was working.

James: That was a requirement at the time?

Warren: And that was a requirement at that time. And, so they turned me down. Then after the initial flying school we went to an elementary school. And the one that I went to flew the old Tiger Moth.

James: And where was this now?

Warren: That was at Oshawa.

James: Oshawa?

Warren: Ontario.

James: I'm not sure where that's near.

Warren: Yeah, that's just about 60 miles east of Toronto.

James: Oh, ok.

Warren: After I finished there, they sent me to Hagersville.

James: And wait, wait a minute. We haven't finished the Tiger Moth. I'm in no hurry here. What was that like? That was your first experience in flying, right?

Warren: Well I had. I had been flying out at Four Lakes Aviation, with Louie Willenmeir. I don't know if you knew Louie, but—

James: No.

Warren: He'd been flying for years.

James: So, you were soloing?

Warren: Yes, I'd been flying some. He charged me 6 dollars an hour and furnished the aircraft on the gas and that was it. [Warren laughs].

James: And he also taught you how?

Warren: Well, for a little bit more when it was duo. I think it was 9 dollars an hour and 6 dollars when it was solo.

James: So how did you like the Gypsy Moth [Meant Tiger Moth]

Warren: Fine, it was easy to fly.—

James: That's what everybody said that I've talked to.

Warren: It didn't have any dirty characteristics, and uh. I really enjoyed it.

James: That was pretty basic, now?

Warren: Very, very basic.

James: You needed something a little harder.

Warren: Needed ball and air speed. Gas— [both laugh]

James: You been outside for a real long time.

Warren: Gas on, wings on. Let's go. And then they sent me to Hagersville, Ontario which is probably 60 miles west of Hamilton. If you know where Hamilton is, right up there. [James interrupts. Unintelligible] And I got my wings there, a twin engine aircraft.

James: Oh, they moved you to twin engine at this time.

Warren: Yeah, right about.

James: Was that a choice? Or did they just—

Warren: They just arbitrarily said—

James: Lined everybody up, "You go this way. You go that way."?

Warren: That's just about it. Then they kept me there—

- James: And when was this that you finished that roughly?
- Warren: That was the latter part of '41. And then they kept me there, as kind of an assistant instructor for just a little while. Then they sent me to flying instructor school at Trenton, Ontario.
- James: What were you flying?
- Warren: Avro Ansons, Cesna, UC 78's.
- James: I don't know that one.
- Warren: They used to call it the bamboo bomber. [Warren laughs].
- James: But these are just training machines?
- Warren: Yeah, then I went through flying instructor school at Trenton, Ontario. They sent me out to Centralia. And they were flying twin engine Avro Ansons at the time. I only graduated one class and they called me back to flying instructor school at Trenton. So there I instructed in the flying instructor school. There's a certain amount of patter. I mean, you know how to fly. But when you get up in an airplane it's kind of hard to explain what you're going to do, what you're doing, you do it. Then tell them what they did afterwards. You had a regular patter book that you learn to a certain extent so you knew what to say when you got up.
- I instructed for one year there. Then they put me on what they called a visiting flight. Every pilot in the Royal Canadian Air Force had to have a test flight at least once a year. I was on a visiting flight, we had four test pilots and we'd go into various bases. And every pilot had to take a ride with one of us, and we'd evaluate them. Because you get, just like you're driving habits, you get careless sometimes and you get bad habits. I was on that for one year, not quite a year. They brought me back to central flying school and flying instructor school.
- James: But this is well into '42 then?
- Warren: By the time I got back on my tour. It was into March of 44.
- James: You hadn't thought about coming back to the United States and changing?
- Warren: I did, I got reprimanded a little bit for a little aerobatics one time, so I wasn't getting promoted very fast.
- James: In the Canadian?

- Warren: In the Canadian.
- James: How could you do acrobatics in the twin engine?
- Warren: Well that was in the single engine still. I ended up on both single and twin engine. Whatever was available to fly, AT-6, Prairie Battles.
- James: They had AT-6's up there? That was a pretty good airplane.
- Warren: That was a very fine plane. That eliminated a lot of fellas. When you could fly the 6, I think you could fly most everything.
- James: I notice going up to the EAA [Air show in Oshkosh, Wisconsin] so many of those AT-6's. They're very, very popular among all the recreational pilots because they're so stable. And reasonably inexpensive and all that.
- Warren: At central flying school, which is incorporated in this flying instructors, they brought chief flying instructors back from out in the field, to give them the latest techniques that were being taught. I mean things had changed since '41-42, I was a first lieutenant and the first students I had one was a major and one was a lieutenant colonel. In the air they'd say, "Yes sir, no sir." On the ground I saluted them. [both laugh].
- James: Reversing
- Warren: In fact, one of my first students came back from overseas and he was a captain had the DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross]. I said, "How'd you get--?" He said, "I survived." [both laugh]. In about April I decided I'd transfer back if I could, I asked for a transfer.
- James: Back to the United States?
- Warren: To the United States Air Force.
- James: You contacted the Air Force in America somewhere?
- Warren: Actually, the Canadians did practically all the bookwork for me. I went into the Agent office, and they made all the arrangements. They sent me to Mitchell Field in New York. And I was only there long enough to get a new uniform. Then they sent me down to Dover, Delaware. And they had P-47s there.
- James: Oh, there's a new airplane. You hadn't flown yet.
- Warren: No.

James: How'd that go?

Warren: Oh, beautiful. The finest aircraft of World War Two. Nobody believes it but—

James: Well the people who used the fly them believe it.

Warren: They brought you back.

James: They were a very solid airplane. Yeah, they really enjoyed them.

Warren: And actually, I thought it was easier to fly than the AT 6. You came in faster of course, it stalled out. Stalled at 106 so you had to come in faster, but it didn't have any dairy characteristics, I didn't think. After I did my gunnery, transition and a little bit of gunnery they sent me overseas in the latter part of October, first part of November.

James: Of '44?

Warren: Of '44.

James: Where to?

Warren: To England. And of course, by that time the invasion had taken place and they assigned me to the 406 fighter group.

James: That's just what I was going to ask next, what were you attached to?

Warren: The 514 squadron.

James: Of the 406?

Warren: Of the 406, yeah.

James: Where was that stationed?

Warren: Loublande, France.

James: You weren't in England very long then?

Warren: No, I never flew out of England.

James: Yeah, cause they were already across the channel and they were over there.

Warren: I got there in time for the Battle of the Bulge. At that time we were at Norma la grand, which is near Reims.

James: I know where that is. I been there. Ok, now. I guess we've answered everything I need to know about the 47. You said the transition is nothing?

Warren: Nothing, not bad, no.

James: And you enjoyed flying it a great deal more than anything you've flown before?

Warren: Oh, that was a great airplane.

James: You flew in large groups in or small groups?

Warren: There were elements of four.

James: You were in fighter bombers at this time. As the war evolved [both talk at the same time].

Warren: That's what we ended up doing, close support most of the time.

James: Because it couldn't handle combat with other airplanes as well.

Warren: We did a little bit of support.

James: Flying cover for the bombers?

Warren: Yeah, but mostly—

James: You didn't have the range to go that far.

Warren: No, but of course we were close to the front at that time. But we'd meet mainly the Marauder, the B-26.

James: You'd fly them in groups with that?

Warren: Yeah.

James: But that was also a fighter bomber so you're going to have to explain to me the difference [both talk at the same time].

Warren: Well, that was mainly a bomber, the B-26. It was a twin engine.

James: So they didn't do any dives or anything?

Warren: No, it was level bombing.

James: Low level, just like the big guys upstairs. So how would you coordinate? They would cross other first and you would follow, or vice versa?

Warren: No, we'd get airborne. And at 9:25 you're supposed to meet them at Reims and we hoped that they'd be there in time because our gas was going down. And then we'd fly there one squadron above and one on either side. We'd generally have 12 planes around them.

James: Cause they could fly as fast as you could.

Warren: They, they made us gulp gas like mad.

James: That B-26 there that was one hot airplane.

Warren: That's what made us mad if we had a circle and wait for them. Because we knew we were going to come back on the fumes.

James: But they weren't at your base, right?

Warren: No, no. They were another base. But most of our missions were close support.

James: So, a mission like that would be what, a couple hours there.

Warren: Yeah.

James: A lot of time spent waiting. I suppose.

Warren: Yeah [laughs].

James: And you carried what kind of armament?

Warren: .50 caliber, eight of them.

James: Four on each side?

Warren: Four on each side. And that's what, if we were doing close supports, or if you were going to escort we'd probably have a belly tank for gas.

James: And in the bombing mission, what'd you carry two 50s?

Warren: Two 50s or a 500 pounders, I've even carried 1000 pound, two 1000 pound.

James: You got up with two 1000 pound bombs?

Warren: 1000 pound bombs, yep.

James: Boy, that's a load.

Warren: You staggered for a while [both laugh].

James: You must have gulped trying to get that thing in the air. You need a lot of runway for that.

Warren: Yeah—

James: I just didn't think it could pick that kind of a load up. I thought two 500s would be the limit.

Warren: Two 500s would be normal. And a lot of times we'd have frag bombs, I didn't like to carry those.

James: Because?

Warren: Sometimes they'd rattle off as you were going down the runway. Then you lost your tail. Because they were instantaneous.

James: On contact?

Warren: On contact, yeah.

James: Napalm?

Warren: Yeah, we used napalm quite often. In fact, I'm sorry to say I ended up taking that big H hospital. It had a red cross all over it, but it also had tanks right by it. We had that napalm that day, and one of them hung up. So I went down and used the manual release and it hit right on one of the H's on the hospital. But everybody was shooting too.

James: Right, I understand it was hard to experience. Did you encounter many of the German 109s?

Warren: Pardon?

James: Did you encounter many German fighters?

Warren: Not too many, by that time—

James: They'd run out of airplanes.

Warren: They hadn't run out of airplanes, they were making airplanes as fast as they ever had but they didn't have any pilots.

James: Yeah, that's right.

Warren: And the pilots that they had—

James: Were inexperienced. Did you ever see a 262?

Warren: Once, and if I'd depressed my nose I could have given him a squirt. But he didn't see us and I didn't see him. It was in hazy conditions between two layers of clouds. And he came right—

James: This friend of mine out in the west side of Madison shot one of those down with his P-47.

Warren: Is that right? No, he came just. In fact he was a little bit lower, if I just depressed. But I didn't realize what it was until it was gone.

James: I think a lot of those that they tallied were ground swatted. Because once in the air you could never catch them. You couldn't keep the gun of them long enough.

Warren: No, they were gone.

James: Well, anyways. And how many missions did you have with that.

Warren: 50.

James: 50, and that was the standard at the time?

Warren: No, no. We just kept right on going.

James: They didn't say that you could go home after any particular time?

Warren: Oh no, no.

James: Early in the world they used to. But towards the end they just were—

Warren: Well I knew the flight commander had 152, and he had. Well he hadn't, aircrafts assigned to him, we lost 7 of them. I think 2 of them were his that he didn't repair after he got back.

James: So, your unit was pretty safe most of the time? Except ground fire I guess was your only real problem.

- Warren: Actually, the close support boys were having a rougher time than the escort as the flak was just, you could get out and walk on it.
- James: That was your biggest danger there.
- Warren: Yeah, we had very little aircraft. In fact we'd go over and beat up their air domes.
- James: Yeah, I was going to say. Was the German airfields one of your common targets?
- Warren: Well, mostly close support for Patton's troops. In fact in one of the books, Patton described us as "red nosed bastards" the 406 fighter group.
- James: They didn't like it too close?
- Warren: He liked it. In fact, twice he sent back a truckload of champagne that he'd overrun, get ready to go in the morning. [both laugh]
- James: Yeah, because he wanted you all about a mile ahead of him.
- Warren: Well. Actually I remember within a hundred yards of front line troops. We'd be stopped.
- James: And how could you discriminate? Tell me about that.
- Warren: They would have panels, and change everyday. And then they'd put colored smoke in the artillery.
- James: So you knew where not to go.
[both speak at the same time. Unintelligible]. So they pointed out targets to you?
- Warren: Yeah, so you had the target. They had these 88s dug in some place.
- James: So you would be flying in this situation in a group of what four? six planes?
- Warren: Normally we flew twelve planes to a mission.
- James: And all twelve of you would hit the same spot then?
- Warren: Yeah, they'd have one group of four at high cover. And twelve, we always be in groups of four, that's the way you flew. And the red flight would

probably go in first, blue the next. Those two would go up, and the yellow flight would come down.

- James: In those instances did you have an opportunity to use the .50 caliber machine guns?
- Warren: Oh yes.
- James: You went in with the dive bombing mode with the guns ablaze?
- Warren: And a lot of time the guns were blazing, yeah. Trying to intimidate the—
- James: Right, well it keeps their heads down certainly. Did you think that the dive bombing your group did was very effective?
- Warren: Very. In fact, I was at a conference at Colorado Springs one time and they said the fighter bombers did more good and damage than the heavies did—
- James: For the infantry.
- Warren: Because we took out the roads, the bridges, and the—
- James: Trains?
- Warren: Planes and the railroads. And the heavies would go after the marshaling yards. And after they got finished they'd get these crews out and they'd have trains. But if we took out a track 20 miles down the line, well then they had to go out.
- James: That's right, all the equipment was not there. Did you have free time in this space or did you fly every day? What was the routine, tell me about that.
- Warren: We had rather unique. We flew 12 days, then we had 2 days off.
- James: What would we do with our 2 days? [both laugh]
- Warren: Well were out in the boondocks there wasn't a heck of a lot to do. I did go to this place called Ash, Belgium. It's changed its name by now. I got to know Albert who ran little hotel. He had been, very interesting, he had parachuted in as a spy for the British. He was Belgian, he escaped in Bretton and they parachuted him in at least twice that I know of, and then got him back out for information. And this is a family hotel, in the little town of Ash. And I'd go in there and sit and talk to grandma, cause was the only warm place was in the big kitchen they had. She couldn't

speak any English, and I couldn't speak any. And I'd bob my head when I thought it was appropriate [both laugh]. She'd nod hers.

James: But she fed you?

Warren: I ate there, yeah.

James: There was no entertainment?

Warren: There was no entertainment, no. We never, in fact, I never saw the Red Cross.

James: Nothing came to your base?

Warren: Nothing came to our base.

James: No USO troop?

Warren: Never a USO troop. The only one I saw was after the war, Bob Hope and his troop were at Cucsaben. In fact, their planes flew into our base in Germany.

James: But you had a decent mess hall on the base, food was not a problem.

Warren: No.

James: Mail?

Warren: It'd come in batches, but it wasn't too bad. We had one cook who had a reputation of being a great fish man in Boston, and he had his own place. And when he was on, his 24 hours the food was good. The other guy must have been a mechanic [both laugh] because the food was greasy.

James: You never had a chance to go to Paris or any other on the leave time there?

Warren: No, I should take that back. I had damage, and had to land in kind of an emergency field. And some French picked me up and took me to Le Petit Chapeau which was owned by one of the Rothschilds.

James: You had to crash land?

Warren: I landed it, but it was shot up so bad. Then they took me into Paris so I could get back to my—

James: You weren't wounded?

- Warren: No, I was very lucky.
- James: Yeah, I was going to say, if they shot up your airplane that much.
- Warren: Well, I had another one shot up. I strafed a train and they estimated that 42 cars came up at me. I was right down on the deck—
- James: Oh, you were too close there? What did it do to your airplane?
- Warren: Well it ruined it. Believe it or not, the pistons that shot the top of the solder was out in the air, just that far. And I came back 72 miles before I put it down.
- James: You obviously knew something was wrong. There was some coughing and sputtering.
- Warren: Oh, it was vibrating like mad.
- James: So you thought one of these seconds it's going to quit, and where I'm gonna go right?
- Warren: And holes right up through the wing. There were holes going right up through the wing.
- James: So you dumped that airplane then.
- Warren: Yeah, I landed it at a RAF emergency field right behind the lines. A Limey came up and said, "If that was a Spitfire you would have never gotten back". Because with a liquid cooled engine you got about five minutes before the engine seizes up. But, they flew me back to my field and Miles Master and the crew went over to take a look at it and they didn't do anything they just left it there.
- James: Were they surprised to see you come back? Or they probably assumed you were shot down dead.
- Warren: No, no they knew.
- James: They knew where you were?
- Warren: One fella got on my wing, and I couldn't see. And you always wrote down on your wrist a safe course home. So, I was going there and he got on my wing and he knew what direction you were going out and then he'd call a contact on the ground. Because we had ground controllers, most of them pilots who were up in what we call a cleat track and they'd be up with a

radio and you'd get up and say, "Basher leader you got a target for us?" We'd go out sometimes out of the target assigned. Normally the armor would be up there and he'd be with the armor and he'd say, "Yes."

James: You say up there? Up there in the tower or up there in a small plane?

[End of Tape One Side One]

Warren: No, he'd be on the ground. And we'd get up above him.

James: Oh, I see. I didn't know if they used any of the light aircraft for directions.

Warren: They used it, but we never did.

James: Probably more infantry used them for the artillery purposes.

Warren: Yeah. But our group followed Patton right from the invasion right on up until it was all over.

James: So, when did you find out that the war was going to be over? What were you doing then?

Warren: We were flying up, well I only flew once, up to the Elbe and you'd patrol the Elbe and come back that's where they said to be. The demarcation line.

James: But you knew well in advance that things were done?

Warren: About a week, I mean you always figured it would be over. We were still looking for targets of opportunity up until a week.

James: Did you have a chance to fly to Berlin?

Warren: I flew over Berlin, but I never got into it. Russians were very unhappy about the flight of Americans coming over Berlin.

James: Sure, they were so xenophobic they were afraid of anyone within fifty miles of them. [Both laugh].

Warren: One day three of us decided that when the war was over, got all the numbers and the highest one would be reprimanded. And we just made a quick sweep, it was sure beat up. The only place I saw beat up worse than that was a place I called Wesselis, Wesel, you see, right on the—oh that was terrible. The heavies hit it, we hit it, the artillery hit it.

James: There was absolutely nothing left?

- Warren: I would say, well like the Capitol Square here, you could have walked right across throughout Berlin, it was just flat. There was nothing there.
- James: So, when the war was over did they send you back home right away? Or did you stay in Germany for awhile?
- Warren: No, I was the only man of the group with a lot of twin engine time so they brought a C-47 in, so we'd take leave personal and take them down for a week at the Riviera. So I flew that. And if those were going to England, I'd fly them to London.
- James: But you still were based in?
- Warren: Nordhulz, Germany at that time. About the 1st of July my CO had gotten kicked up to 9th Air Force and he called and said he'd need an operations officer and I just volunteered to go to the Pacific. So I went to Frankfurt and got a new assignment and I was down in Marseilles on the way to the Pacific when that folded up. I had to stay there for awhile because they gave me all high point people who were going home. And sent the low point people that we had there, I had 168 points but I was still going to the Pacific. Then we came back, we got back November 13.
- James: Oh, you were there quite awhile? You were getting pretty stir crazy by that time. [Warren laughs]
- Warren: Well, what was griping me more than anything else, you weren't getting any flying time Camp Lucky Strike and places like that.
- James: But you were around Marseilles though, should have been a lot of things to do down there.
- Warren: Most of the troops got in trouble, in those days that was a tough city, that was rough.
- James: I'm sure. Were you married at this time?
- Warren: Yes.
- James: When you went overseas you were married then?
- Warren: Yes, I was married and one youngster. She was very tiny, and my wife lived with me in Canada for a little while. So I always tell her she's part Canadian, my daughter [Warren laughs].
- James: That's right, well she was born there.

- Warren: No, she was born here. But, my wife came back here and she was born here.
- James: She was very nice, she's the one who gave me your name.
- Warren: Oh yeah, I always kid her she's part Canadian.
- James: She's very nice, very nice girl. Then you got out of the service rather promptly after you came back?
- Warren: Yes, I stayed in the reserves but I got out very promptly. As soon they got me to Camp Shanks.
- James: Right, as soon as they got you to the United States they sent you out.
- Warren: You were gone.
- James: Did you join any veteran's organizations?
- Warren: I belonged to the American Legion, the P-47 pilots association, and the 9th Air Force association.
- James: Are those still active?
- Warren: Very active, yeah.
- James: They are? Yearly meetings?
- Warren: P-47's every year.
- James: No kidding?
- Warren: They just had one that I missed, my wife hasn't been right up to stuff and so I didn't go.
- James: Yeah, 'cause this P-47 pilot lives in Madison, you must know him. He lives on the west side, I wish I could remember I just don't remember his name. You don't recall anyone that lives in Madison that—
- Warren: No, I—
- James: He went on to Korea. He fought also in Korea.
- Warren: I just missed Korea by the hair—. They had assigned me to Scott Field to the Air and Airways communications squadron down there.

- James: As a reserve?
- Warren: As a reserve, and they were assigned one pilot. Well, Secretary of the Air Force Johnson came along about 1950 I think. He decided they didn't need a pilot in the squadron; they had one at the wing but no squadron. Well, they never took me off the roster. Well here I am a 1055 fighter pilot here. So they scooped everybody out of the squadron practically, except one full colonel and sent them off to Korea. And a friend of mine, Connie Stollin, a Madison boy, he wrote to me said, "Your name went over my desk." He had a ground job said, "Expect to come in about three weeks to three months." And he wrote me in about three weeks said because of the wrong MOS they had no place for me. So I didn't volunteer [Warren laughs]. But it looked like I was going to go. It was just a mix up, if would just transferred me to my proper slot, I probably would have gone because I was ready reserve.
- James: Certainly, so how long did you stay in the reserve?
- Warren: Let's see, it must about '74 that they finally discharged me. I was very fortunate, up until 1954 I was on flying status, then they dropped me because I wasn't getting enough time.
- James: I was going to say, what were you flying?
- Warren: I'd go down to Scott Field and they'd have either an AT-6 or a Beachcraft twin engine.
- James: Just putting in hours then?
- Warren: Just putting in my time.
- James: Making circles in the sky.
- Warren: One year I flew home for dinner, then flew back [both laugh].
- James: Serving your country, right?
- Warren: One day they were tuning up for the Indianapolis race, every day I'd go over there and watch them tune up, then fly back. [Warren laughs].
- James: Oh, that's nice. Did you keep up flying after you became a civilian?
- Warren: I did for a short time, but it's too expensive unless you can charge it off on something. I had a friend of mine who was an A&E mechanic and he would repair Cubs and whatever and then he'd call me up and say, "I've

got one for sale. Would you come down?" And the two of us would go up and fly because he wasn't a pilot.

James: It's an expensive hobby though.

Warren: Oh, it is.

James: Cliff Bower that's his name.

Warren: I've heard the name but I can't remember.

James: Yeah, he was very big in the Wisconsin National Guard, he was in Korea, he was in WWII, he fought P-47s.

Warren: Well, I was on the road when I first came back. When I finally got off the road I went down to the National Guard to see if I could transfer to the guard. But I had too much rank and he says I can't take ya.

James: No spots for you. Did you use your GI Bill?

Warren: No.

James: You went right into business?

Warren: I went on the road, I came back I worked for First National Bank. And I came back because they asked me to come back, they were so short for a little while. And as soon I looked around I went to work for the old Wisconsin Supply Corporation on the road as a salesman. My dad had been in the wholesale bakery [?] business, the wholesale bakery [?] business. When he had a heart attack, I said I'll take over until he got back, well he never got back. And that's what I ended up doing for almost 40 years.

James: And then you retired. Do you attend the 9th Air Force reunions?

Warren: I have attended, yeah.

James: Pretty big?

Warren: Quite big, I mean you got everybody there from B-29, 51s, even one squadron of 38s. I didn't know the 9th Air Force even had 38s, but they had 38s.

James: You always think about 38s in the Pacific. There were some in Europe too. Where does your P-47 squadron meet? And how often?

- Warren: That's every other year, and next year it will be Atlantic City. Last year it was in Nashville.
- James: A big organization too I bet?
- Warren: We're doing pretty well, although they're dropping fast. A fighter group will have about 1200 personnel.
- James: Any of those people you knew from [inaudible].
- Warren: Oh yeah. Of course I knew headquarters but I didn't know 2 of the squadrons very well. But our squadron the 514th.
- James: What about those guys in the Royal Canadian Air Force?
- Warren: I missed, and I didn't know about it. I didn't ever join any organization up there, and they had a big celebration at Trenton, which is the number 1 air station, about 10 years ago. And I missed it. I wish I would have gone up there because I was there long enough.
- James: Do you keep in contact with anyone up there?
- Warren: No, I'm ashamed of myself. I'm a very poor correspondent. Quite a few of them aren't around.
- James: Sure, everyone our age is gone or going.
- Warren: My old roommate, he was killed overseas. Probably my best friend in Canada, he was killed in a training accident. I kind of lost track of some of them.
- James: Sure. Ok, I can't think of any other questions to ask you. Is there anything you missed telling me?
- Warren: No, I didn't think so.
- James: You moved right along, you were very busy.
- Warren: Most of my career wasn't very exciting, rather mundane you might say.
- James: Well, flying a P-47 is not mundane.
- Warren: But, I spent so much time in the training command.
- James: What awards did you win?

- Warren: I got the Air Medal 4 times.
- James: DFC?
- Warren: No, I didn't get the DFC. I thought I was going to get it.
- James: You annoyed your commanding officers?
- Warren: Then I got the, I can't remember the name of the darn thing, the Belgians gave me one. All it is is a rope around. I can't remember it wasn't the quadegere but—
- James: Have you been back to Europe at all?
- Warren: Yes, I was back on the 40th celebration.
- James: Did you find your old air base?
- Warren: Yes, it was amazing we stopped at every air base that we ever were at.
- James: Dragged your poor wife along. [Both laugh]
- Warren: Yes, she was very tolerant. They were in Ashford, England and Kent which is a beautiful part and then we went to everyone of them. Amazing they almost declared a holiday every time we were there.
- James: Some of the [inaudible] were still there.
- Warren: Nope, no. Everything had been cleaned up, in fact. Where we had hard stands and what not that had been pretty well plowed up in most places.
- James: You recognized the air base any more.
- Warren: The only one that you could really recognize was Mormelon-le-Grande. And that's now a French army base. They let us on there and took us all around the hangar. The hangars still there that we used, the outside privies, you didn't spend much time there reading the Sears Robuck catalogue or something. [both laugh]. It was built originally by Napoleon III in 1854 or something like that. That was an army base then. They had walls that were 2 feet thick, just plaster and stone. Their still using them, just modernized them a bit. But otherwise every place we went, we went into Germany. That air base was gone, we didn't get up to Cuxhaven, I understand that's still being used as a Navy base up there in northern Germany. Munster air base was gone.

[End of Interview]