

This interview is being conducted on Tuesday, March 15, 2016 at the home of John J. Duslak. My name is Fran Prokop, and I'm speaking with John, who served in the Air Force and is a veteran of the Korean conflict. John Duslak learned of the Veterans' History Project through me, and he has kindly consented to participate in the National Archives Veterans' History Project. Here is his story:

John, when and where were you born?

I was born in Chicago, November 29, 1931.

Did you have sisters and brothers?

Oh, yes. I had four sisters and two brothers.

And were any of the brothers in the military?

My brother Frank, was in WWII.

He was your older brother?

Yes. He was in there for – he was drafted right away when they started the draft system.

And he came home okay?

Oh, yeah, yeah, thank God for that. He was in the Pacific.

What branch was he in?

He was in the Army and he was in the telegram –

Teletype?

Teletype, something like that, yeah. Anyway, it was communications.

What were your parents' occupations?

My father really basically was a common laborer; wonderful man; and my mother was a housewife.

And what did you do before entering the service?

At that time I worked at Sinclair Refining Company. I was a Junior Clerk – just started right out of high school, which is a nice word for office boy.

That's okay. How old were you when you entered the service?

Oh, God, I graduated in 1950 –

You were born in '31 and went in in '51 so you were 20 years old.

How did you enter the service – were you drafted or did you enlist?

I enlisted.

Why did you choose that specific branch of service?

Because, basically my brother was in the Army and I was never impressed with the Army in itself. I wanted to do something technical and I wouldn't have had a chance to do that in the Army, although the Air Force offered you opportunities.

Was the war going on?

Oh, yes, the Korean War started in 1950. By the way, it was difficult to get into the Air Force.

Right.

I had to wait – I was on a waiting list.

Why was it difficult – did they want only pilots?

Well, they had so many applicants –

A lot of enlistees?

Yeah. I had already gone for my physical from the Army because we were gonna be drafted, and a friend of my mother's worked at the Draft Board. And what happened was she found there was an opening on 63rd and Western, there was an office for the Air Force Recruitment, and while working one day, I got a call from her – go down to 63rd & Western; you're in the Air Force. He was waiting for me, the Sergeant, and he signed me up and this, of course, was in December, very close to Christmas. And I didn't think that I'd have to go before Christmas but I was told that I'm going to leave next week.

Wow!

So I thought does he mean after Christmas? Anyway, we left here – I left home on the 23rd of December, yeah.

That's hard to believe.

And the snow was about three feet high at that time.

And where did you go?

We thought we were going to Lackland, but they kept – on the train they kept the shades drawn, so we had no idea where we were going.

Really!

Yeah, I don't know why. I told the guys we're just so ugly no one wants to see us. But anyway, when we did get off the train I thought I was in Texas and so did the other guys.

How long was this train ride?

Over night; and when we got off the train life had changed. You go from being a normal human being to being an Air Force Man, and you have to take orders.

So where were you?

I was in New York – Sampson Air Force Base. It no longer exists; it's a big park now.

What part of New York was that?

Uh, to be honest it's by Lake Seneca – up north --

Oh, that's north – very nice there.

Yeah because it was Navy - it's beautiful. And I went through basic there.

What did basic consist of? If you can, give me a typical day of basic –

Well, okay, first of all you have to learn to make your bed, how to put your clothes away and how they have to be done. What they did was they sent a troop from downstairs up to us on the second floor and they were showing us how to make our bed, how to put our clothes away and they did that twice – one day and then the next day. The next morning, reality set in. We found out that nothing fit me. I was so small that they gave me women's – WACS uniform. They had to tailor my uniform, and I didn't – I was too small for men's fatigues, so they gave me WAC's fatigues, which were a lot better than the men's. It had pockets and things, so that's what I wore all through basic school and that.

We went to different classes --

You had classroom teaching?

Oh, yeah, yeah. Basically 99% of our stuff was in the classroom.

What did you learn?

We learned about carbines, our weapons, and we had target practice with that. Then we learned all the different types of things that go on in the Air Force – the different categories of jobs; What they were trying to do was to test us to see where we would fit in – you know would you be a good mechanic?

Yes.

Well, I wanted to go to – I wanted to be a control tower operator; I really had my heart set on that; I thought it would be a good career afterwards, you know. What happened was I was supposedly not told about my physical for that. So I eventually did get a physical for it and it would have been approved; there was only one problem – I knew how to type!

And I was a speed typist.

Oh, wow!

So when I said that, that was the end of my career –

Right, they always looked for typists –

And then I was put into Teletype – and while we were at Sampson we learned so much about the Air Force itself – the history and the different departments, so actually it was not a bad choice.

Do you think you would have been approved? Were your eyes good enough?

Oh, I was fine but they just didn't need anybody in air control probably. So I ended up going to teletype school in Wyoming – I guess that was Francis E. Warren –

So that would be considered advanced training?

Oh, that was complete training.

Advanced training – after basic training

Oh, much so, yeah. After you left there – when I left there I could do everything that they did at Western Union. I could have walked into a Western Union Office and worked there. And that was at Francis E. Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming – Cheyenne, Wyoming.

I never heard of these bases –

The last time my wife and I were there it was a Ballistic Missile Center.

Oh, ICBMs –

All the barracks were gone and all the ballistic missiles were in the ground and it was not the same. By the way, people in Cheyenne did not like us - military men – they always had military people there, from Day One, the Army and that – and they found that people came in and they would say, “Oh, this place is crummy town.” – the ceilings, the natives were not receptive at all.

Other than that, how did you adapt to military life – the physical regimen, the barracks, the social life, the food.

Oh, I loved it; everything; I was fine with it. This one girl had a car, she was a WAF, and we used to go up to Denver and to Colorado Springs on weekends. We went to school six hours a day –

That was your Teletype school.

Yes, That consisted of different classes and then we used to drill for about an hour and basically when I finished there, I was a telegraph operator.

And where did they send you? What did you do with that knowledge?

Well, before we left there they sent us to fight a forest fire in the Roosevelt National Forest. A fire had broken out and they asked for some troops. So we went down –

You volunteered –

Yeah, well, it wasn't so much volunteered – they just sent us. So we went to the forest fire; it was really fascinating to see - a whole mountain burning. But what we did was after the fire had burned through, we would go and put out the small embers. This is a funny story now – there was a creek that ran through the small area that we were sleeping in where we had some tents. The water looked so clear and that so we all felt it was okay to drink it. Well, one day I and one of my buddies took a walk down this creek and we found a dead cow laying -- a dead steer laying right across the creek. So we came back and said to the Officer, you gotta see this and don't let anybody drink this water. We didn't know how long – it was probably the forest fire that did it, but anyway we don't know how long it had been there, but water was no longer fit – although we had been using it for a day.

No one got really sick from it?

No, no. We were there for about 3-4 days. We were sent back to the base and immediately got our orders. My orders were to go to Narssarsarwak, Greenland –

Wow, I never heard of that.

Oh, it's one of the worst airports – it's in southern Greenland and it's beautiful.

You must have heard of Goose Bay, Labrador --

Oh, yeah, yeah, I was there. Actually coming back on leave I stopped there. This was my first time in the air. I had never flown before. Well, they took us by boat to Brooklyn – the Navy Yard there and they put us on a merchant marine ship that carried passengers also. And I was sea sick for five days.

Wow ! Where did you go?

From there we went to – our first stop was Newfoundland, St. John's, Newfoundland. We were taken from there over to the Naval Base on the opposite side of the Air Force Base of Newfoundland, and it's where Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin met – I'm trying to remember the name of it but I can't – by the way, we were in St. John's for about two weeks before we left to go to the other side. And that's when I found out how close the war had actually been to the United States. They have – it's very mountainous at the – in the beginning – as you come into the fjord, and it's a small town – it was at that time, I'm

sure it's much larger now. WE had to do duty; they wanted to keep us busy. We were working inside the tunnels that they had cut into the mines –

You're talking in Newfoundland –

Yes, St. John's. There was paint in there in 5-gallon cans and I guess they were getting rid of it; they had us putting them on these – like little railroad cars – flat cars. And we'd put like 6 or 7 of them on and then one of us would go out to the front and get rid of them. And of course, we found a lot of anti-aircraft guns and things like that there. That's how they actually protected the port; and it's not unusual for them people there to see a German submarine – and German ships.

Yeah, they were closer than we thought.

Oh, yeah, very much so; I was surprised.

So are you saying that you went by boat –

We went to Argentia – the other side of Newfoundland – and that's where Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin met; that was a naval base.

Are you saying that you went by ship from Brooklyn to Newfoundland, and then Newfoundland to Greenland.

Yeah, right, well around Newfoundland and then up to Greenland.

By Ship?

Well, no, we flew from Newfoundland to Greenland, to Narssarsarwak Bay.

So what was your job in Greenland?

Well, when we got there we found that the class that graduated after us had actually got there before us. Well, the forest fire had something to do with it. So they didn't need teletype operators. A few of my friends did get into communications; they handled the telephone system and that, and we were a defense warning system.

Like a NORAD base.

Yes, exactly. They had this mountain we used to call Marilyn Monroe because it was two of them, you know –

Twin peaks, ha, ha.

And inside there it was secret. I don't know what they had there, plus –

You didn't go in there?

We weren't allowed in there.

So it was off limits.

Yeah, and we couldn't -- we were only on a two-mile by three-mile area that was flat. The rest of it was mountainous; and on the other side of the mountain was the glacier. WE were on the glacier once; it's very dangerous.

Did it have a name, that glacier?

No, I don't remember. We were right across from Karsiarsarwak -- that was a little village -- it's still there -- saw it recently on television.

Wow!

There was a -- We were not allowed to go to the villages because we couldn't get there. There was a fjord between us. And even if we could get there, we weren't allowed because of disease. Well, they didn't want us to bring disease to the native peoples. I didn't know this, but tuberculosis, TB, was prevalent at that time among all the New Foundlanders because they don't get enough sun, and the food they eat is -- they don't eat the vegetables and stuff like we do. They used to take boatloads of them back to Denmark for treatment.

Really!

Oh, yeah. We had a port right at our base, a small one, because we used to get ships coming in through the fjord. By the way in the fjord were ships that had been sunk in the water.

You mean they were sunk in there?

Yes, they were sunk in there --

German ships? American ships?

We didn't know how many were German or how many were American --

Oh, both; so they had sunken ships.

Yeah. And that's because at the beginning of the fjord as they come in, there is a little flat area where they had -- we had a radio -- warning system there -- and you had to be hand-picked for that -- because there were only, I'd say, ten people there and it was very lonely and so on. Luckily I --

How many men were there -- in the whole area -- American troops I mean.

In the whole area -- I'd say we had about 200.

That's all? So they were all warning or defence men.

Yes. Actually what we were basically -- first of all it was found by Lindbergh and his wife when they were surveying, looking for a place. At that time they didn't have the refueling

systems that they have now, so the jets would go from - would fly from America to either Greenland or Goose Bay, Labrador, and they would hop. We were one of the hop stations; we were a refueling base. Now, if there was bad weather, we would get private company aircraft come in. By that I mean American or Northwest Airlines –

You mean commercial airlines.

Yeah, commercial airlines; that was the days before the big jets – prop planes.

How much time did you spend in Greenland?

A little over a year. I love it. I would have – in fact I got to know the Danish liaison officer who was a very nice gentleman and grew the only rosebush in Greenland. He was kind enough to invite me into their home and also to take me over to the Danish – there was a hotel. Now, when you go into the hotel you think you're back in the States or in Europe. It was very modern; that was for when airplanes got stuck then the passengers would stay there. It was called the Danish Hotel – and the food was excellent. Although we weren't allowed to go there to eat; officers were, but we weren't.

Oh, I see. Did you get your stripes then?

I had missed out on a stripe because of the forest fire. I came in second in my class – in Teletype Class – just by about five letters.

I want to repeat what we said – that you served in Greenland for over a year.

What was the highest rank that you achieved?

When I was in Greenland I left there as an Airman 1st Class.

Did you go anywhere else? First of all, how long was your entire enlistment?

The whole enlistment was four years. And I'd only been on regular duty on two air bases – Narssarsawak and then going back to the States, they sent me to Ellsworth Air Force Base, to the Fighter Squadron. That was after Greenland; that was my next command.

Do you know when that was?

That would have been about oh, probably in '52 –

You were in school for a year –

No, six months –

Six months, and basic training –

Yeah, about a year, I would say.

And then little over a year in Greenland – so you were in two years –

My time was done.

When you first went to Greenland, was it understood that you were only going to be there for a year?

No, originally it was a year and a half, and they changed it to a year about one-third of my way through. I didn't care whether it was a year and a half – I loved it up there.

What did you like about it?

Well, everybody thinks that Greenland is ice. It isn't really. It's beautiful in the Spring; you've never seen so many flowers in your life. The weather was warmer there in winter than it was in Chicago because of the Gulf Stream. In fact, I came home on leave – coming and going – that's an exciting story in itself –

Tell me about it – service related.

I went home on leave – I was the base commander's babysitter. Scottie was about seven years old and one day my commander said to me "Where are you going tonight?" I said "Where can I go? Probably going to the theater with Trigg, one of my buddies." And he said, "You're going to Colonel Frink's." And I said why – he says they're having a party for the Colonel and his wife at the Officers' Club and they just want someone to stay with their son." So, what could I do. Well, it came in very handy - I'll tell you why. They fed us K-rations and the eggs we had – 60% were spoiled because they were too old. We had stuff that they used in the last war and luckily Mrs. Frink and I became friends. He was an Eagle Colonel – full Colonel – very nice man and his wife was very nice.

We had dependents on our base. The higher up NCOs and the Officers had dependents. We also had a Naval Liaison Officer, Commander Coe. Well, they had three children, so I spent a lot of time babysitting between Commander Coe and Colonel Frink.

Commander Coe's kids were good, but that little guy – anyway -- I took care of the kids for them; these were not little kids. The nice thing about it is that Commander Coe, when a ship would come in with supplies and that, he and Colonel Frink, with their wives, would be invited on board ship for dinner with the Captains, and they would get hams, turkeys, eggs and food as gifts. Then, Mrs. Frink and Mrs. Coe would have me over for decent food. So I got to eat regular food. Plus there was a little bit of, shall I say – I had a bit of fame, I guess, for being the babysitting of the base commander. And I was lucky enough to fly over the North Pole with him one time. He was going on a flight with some other officers.

What was your basic duty there in Greenland?

Well, duty was I became Payroll Clerk and also did all the other reports –

Because you were typing them –

Typing, payroll, promotions I worked on – all basic office procedures – I was what you might call the assistant Office Manager, until the other Manager left and then I became Office Manager. And that's where I met my friends, and we're still friends.

Who is that?

John Trigg – T-r-i-g-g.

And you're still friends today.

Oh, yes. He lives somewhere in Oregon. They were living in some kind of housing there and they're not living there any more so I'm kind of doing a search for them right now.

Are you computer literate?

Oh, yes, I'm computer savvy. Anyway, I ended up getting my third stripe there. And I also ended up, like I say, learning all of the different office procedures. Never did get into Teletype – after all that.

So you never really went into combat or witnesses casualties –

Oh, no, no –

Or destruction of areas --

No, no. Occasionally a Russian plane would fly over and I remember putting up some posters for the squadron about "Watch the skies" – it only happened once when I was there.

So your entire base was one of the early warning sites –

Yes, early warning and gas refueling site.

When your term came to an end at the station there, where did you go after that?

That's when I went to Ellsworth Air Force Base.

And where is that at?

Rapid City, South Dakota. Wonderful place.

What did you do at Ellsworth?

At Ellsworth I came in as the office clerk; handled everything – I was office manager and below First Sergeant. When our First Sergeant retired, I became First Sergeant and I got my Staff Sergeant Stripe.

Being that you were not overseas, how did you stay in communication with family and friends at home – was it strictly letters?

Oh, letters, just letters, in fact Maryanne, a friend of one of the girls I used to go out with years ago, we were at a party and she brought some letters that I sent years and years ago – they were downstairs somewhere and she found them.

So it was strictly letters.

It was basically letters, yeah –

No phone calls – phone calls were very expensive at that time.

They were and even though – see, I went on separate rations – because being an NCO I could do that. But I had to pay for my meals if I ate in the mess hall. Well, I did a stupid thing. We had our own wing; we were the Fighter Squadron and in our building, the second floor contained a little “hamburger joint” that we put together and when I was on separate rations I ate up there. I’d be eating hamburgers and chili and hot dogs. So what happened to me was I got malnourished – what do they call it – they thought I had diabetes - -- I wasn’t eating the right foods or getting the right vitamins. What happened was they made me eat at the hospital for the next three months because I wasn’t getting enough vitamins and stuff –

So on your own diet you were pretty bad –

Oh, yes. I loved chili and hamburgers.

Chili, hamburgers and hot dogs is not a good diet; you didn’t eat vegetables,

Yeah

And the condition corrected itself.

Oh yeah, yeah -- malnutrition – that’s what it was. I was suffering from malnutrition.

Wow! Not eating the right combinations of food.

I was pretty well known on the base. I got some things changed – for instance, this happened when I first got there. I went to the mess hall and I was still hungry – before I got my promotion – and you could not go through the line twice to eat – you know, cafeteria style. Well, one of the guys in my squadron did and he said I just put a new tray on top of the old tray. Well, I decided I was going to try it but for some reason, I always get caught. Well, I got caught and the sergeant was chewing me out. And then they made the mistake of putting me on K.P. and I found out how much food was wasted at the end of the day. For some reason the Warrant Officer in charge of the mess hall

decided to have a meeting with the airmen who were on K.P. he asked some questions about the food and that – well, I said to him that I had an uncle who was a Senator from Illinois – now I don't, but I told him that. I said that I'm going to write him a letter because I found out that you sell all the extra food that's not eaten to pig farmers. And I want to ask my uncle and find out why I can't go through twice – and the food goes to pig farmers. Are the pigs better off than we are? And who's getting the money for this?

Wow – ha, ha.

Well, I'll tell you, right then and there everything changed. The Warrant Officer took me on the side – “Don't write to your uncle; that will never happen again.” And then he asked me what did I think would be good – I said there's a table where the trays and the silver ware as we go in – put one tray with all the food they're serving that day on it and if I don't want the applesauce I can pass that up, and so on, instead of wasting it. and the next day in mess hall – it was a big base – there was a tray there and you could also go through twice.

Wow! So it was your doing –

Oh, I did a lot of things. I also – this goes back a bit to my first day in service – the night that they took us from the bus to the barracks – Captain Scharno was the head of our squadron, this was at basic, and that was at New York, Sampson. Well, he said he wants that floor white, clean! So when he left, having always had to help at home cleaning, I said to the guys do they sell bleach at the PX. One of the guys said they must. So we got money together, we went out, got bleach, came back, mixed it with water, and we washed the floor. It turned white – real light. And Captain Scharno almost fainted when he came upstairs to look at it. What did you do?! By the way, I was bitchman for my squadron – I said you wanted it white, sir, this is as white as we can get it! so then we had to take shoe polish and make it all brown again.

Oh my God!

That's just one thing – there's other things. I was very independent in the service. And when I was asked one of the reasons why I wouldn't re-enlist, they wanted me to, and I would have gotten my Master stripe, Colonel Fairbrother, full bird colonel again – when I went in for my orientation talk about leaving – they both thought I'd make a good career of the Air Force but I told them no. The reason why is with my luck and with my big mouth and the way I am about wanting to put things right, I would probably be one day

out from getting out of the service and I would rub somebody the wrong way and I'd lose everything. So, no.

You weren't married at the time?

No, that's another reason. I said I'm not married and I have a family and friends I want to go back to a normal life. I think I could make something of it.

Did you leave from Ellsworth Air Force Base?

Yes, I left from Ellsworth; actually we were all crying in the car; we'd been there for two years. I mean we had such a wonderful time there.

So you really had a great experience in the service.

Oh, yes, the Air Force – I tell the kids, the Air Force is wonderful; the life was good; the food was good; training was good; I can't complain. We were young. I had a friend who was going home. He was going to join the paratroops and that, I told him I can't go up in tall buildings, I'm not going into the paratroops and I said to him, "Bobby, are you sure you want to do that; you're a kid; don't get emotional." He was a little more mature than most – I really don't know what happened to him. No, I felt that I wanted a career and I felt the best place I'd get one is in the Air Force. And it worked out fine; it was terrific for me.

So you spent four full years in the Air Force.

Yes.

How did you get home?

From the time I went on leave, going and coming was really nerve-wracking. We landed in Labrador. The airplane we in – a truck ran into it by mistake, so we were stuck there. This was coming home. Then something happened -- from there we went over to -- we came back through, a base in a northern city -- anyway, going back, we were on the plane about 200 miles from our base and the right engine caught on fire; luckily it went out. Air Rescue – when you see Air Rescue planes coming beside you, you know there's something wrong. We all had parachutes, but I said I'm not jumping – I know I'm not jumping; I'm going down – but luckily the pilot got us in. the Control Tower was part of my squadron – I was Air Base Squadron – so I was in the barracks and one of the men working in the tower came up to me and said you know, you were almost dipped into the ocean. The pilot had to make a decision; an he decided to get in and lucky you made it. Very Lucky.

So where did you land - where did you get discharged from?

Ellsworth – I spent all my time at Ellsworth.

So everything was done at Ellsworth. How was your readjustment to civilian life?

No problem.

How about contact with fellow veterans over the years?

When I went in, I was in with a bunch of Chicago men. But as time went on, my friends were from New England, from Arizona, Nevada, Oregon – in fact my best friend was from Oregon.

How about today – do you have a membership in veterans' organizations?

No, I never did get into any of that stuff; there was so much going on in my life. My mother and father had been in debt and I started working –

Where did you work?

I went to work back at Sinclair – the old story about they're supposed to give your job back – what they did was put me at a desk with nothing on it right in front of a clock.

I would come in every morning, look at the clock –

You had no work to do?

No, no. I would beg –

But they gave you a job just to sit there –

Yeah, just to sit there, and of course they knew I was going to leave. I stayed for three weeks; I couldn't take it any longer. I'm a person who likes to work.

But you had office experience –

Well, you know, first of all there was some kind of angry feeling in that office. I did not know this at the time but they were thinking of moving everything down to Atlanta, so in a way it worked out fine for me that I didn't stay there. From there, I went to Sound Studio to work – it's no longer in existence. The building that it was in is now – they just redid it – it was an office building redone as a hotel; it's right off Michigan Avenue – it had a gold top; it was a company that took over it -- some kind of oil or something like that. I can't remember, it's been so long. Anyway I worked there for about a year. The reason I left is I couldn't get any raises or anything. (end of side 1)

During my working life I met a lot of famous people, actors and movie stars; they would come in to do over talks for commercials –

Voice overs?

Yeah, um-hmn. And sometimes I had to spend an hour or two with them and I found out something about celebrities – I'm glad I'm not one. It's hard to be a celebrity –

Oh, sure, yeah.

I don't know if you remember Fran Allyson –

Yes, Kukla, Fran and Ollie – yes.

She was the sweetest gal in the world. She came to do radio commercials – she came in in the middle of June, with a mink coat. And I said why are you wearing your mink coat? She said you know I don't live here any more John; I live out East – I come in just to do commercials now. If I left it at the hotel it would have been stolen; but she was a real sweetheart; wonderful person. Everybody that I met, all the celebrities loved her.

Do you remember Dan – who was real tall?

Dan Dureay?

No, Dan Daily – I was stuck with him for two hours. I found out all about what happened at MGM through him. You know they got rid of all the contract players; he was one of them and he told me what life was like for them when they worked for MGM – how wonderful it was, and now it's all gone – it's dog eat dog. He was telling me about a new television show he was going to do and also he was appearing on stage in the Odd Couple. He was waiting for another person to do the commercial; she finally showed up. So you get to meet people like that.

Where did you go after that job?

After that C.O. Henriksen Co., in the neighborhood; they did fire brick masonry – which means relining furnaces – and then the American Gunnite Company, one of our subsidiaries, and that's when you see swimming pools and mountains at the zoo – it's all concrete blown on through wire mesh; it's big in Florida for swimming pools. And I worked for them on and off – that was my basic job.

What was your job there?

I started out in payroll, and typist – when Jean left I took over the office. Harry was a junior accountant. I was going to DePaul University at night taking accounting. My mother had a stroke and I had to give up the accounting. I also worked for a packaging company, that no longer exists, a “flunkie job” I took it due to my mother's stroke – and after eight months I was the head salesman and head designer and estimator. Then I went to work for a box company; that was Capital Container, in the ghetto, a terrible place

on Lake Street; I left there because it was too dangerous; people getting shot and mugged; they told me to get a gun and I said no, I can't do that.

So you retired from American Gunnite?

Yes.

Looking back now, how did your military experience affect your life?

Oh, it did affect my life. I learned so much about so many different things, you know, with office procedures and different jobs available and so on. I found that you don't have to be tied down to one job; if you don't know the job, you can learn it, and that's what I did. I also think that they were four of the happiest years of my life because the people I came across – the guys and even the girls we went out with, and the officers were the nicest people in the world.

And they were from all over the country.

So what are the life lessons you learned from military service?

I learned that it's important that you do your job right; emergencies arise that you learn to handle. I stopped a riot – during Tech School – classes were six hours long – from 6 pm, to 12 midnight. Across the street was another flight school -- their school was in the morning classes; so we'd be coming home at midnight, to our barracks making noise and waking them up – always, luckily, when I was on CQ – Charge of Quarters – all these guys from the other barracks were out on the street and I was on Charge of Quarters with a little Italian guy from Brooklyn – he comes running in – “Dusty” – by the way, everybody knew me as Dusty –

Dusty – your nickname – okay.

He said, The guys are gonna fight us, so I went in the middle of it, and me being short, I said “Who's in charge on this side?” Okay, you come here. I knew who was in charge on the other side, my side, so then I talked to them, and I said “Tell us what the gripe is.” And then I turned to my guy, and I said, “Okay, now you all know – no more noise; we're gonna let you guys sleep.” Are you satisfied? By this time the little Italian guy called the Air Police and you could see them so v-r-o-o-m – everybody scattered.

So that definitely was while you were in the service.

Oh, I did a lot of things. One of our teachers had make-up classes in the afternoon. And she saw me there and said, “What are you doing here?” And I said, “Look out the window,” The building for the make-up classes was right across the street from our

squadron. Well, they would drill for an hour. I would to make-up class – I wouldn't have to drill. Ha, ha,

Ha, ha.

So, I told her, that's why I'm there. I was what you call a con artist. I didn't see any reason why we really had to really drill. In fact, when we were in Greenland, I remember Trigg saying to me, "What would we do if they attack?" We don't have guns or anything – we'd have to throw our typewriters at them. Ha, ha.

Ha, ha.

I was very, very lucky in that I was never put in harm's way, and it also put my Mother and Dad at ease.

Right.

The rest of the guys – no one ever died that I know of from the neighborhood or anything; they all came back –

You were fortunate. You had a good experience.

Oh, I'll tell you, I'm happy to have those four years.

I'm surprised you didn't re-enlist.

If I had been married, I think I would have re-enlisted. And I got married late because of my mother's stroke – personal story not transcribed –

Well, John, is there anything else you wish to add to your story?

No, I think that covers it.

Well, thank you, very much for this interview and thank you for your service to our country; it is appreciated.

It was a wonderful experience.

John J. Duslak

13751 South Ironwood Drive

Plainfield, IL 60544

815-886-3004

