

INTERVIEW WITH
General Hugh A. Parker

by

Dr. Maclyn P. Burg
Oral Historian

on

March 16, 1972

for

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library



Gift of Personal Statement

HUGH A. PARKER

to the

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This interview is being taped in the Hotel Palacio Del Rio in San Antonio, Texas, March 16, 1972. Present at the interview are Maj. Gen. Hugh Parker and his wife, Mrs. Parker. The interviewer is Dr. Maclyn Burg of the Eisenhower Library.

DR. BURG: Now let me ask you, General Parker, for the benefit of scholars that are going to be using this material later on, where you were born?

GEN. PARKER: I was born in Lavonia, Georgia--northeast Georgia.

DR. BURG: Lavonia. And your education then was in one of the Georgia state schools?

GEN. PARKER: I attended both grade school and high school in this little town of Lavonia, Georgia--I might add there was only about three hundred people--and later, of course, the University of Georgia and from there the cadet school here in San Antonio at Brooks Field, 1928.

DR. BURG: You entered the school in '28. Was General [William L.] Lee, Jerry Lee--had he passed through training here before you did?

GEN. PARKER: Jerry was four months ahead of me in the flying school. He was an upper classman.

DR. BURG: When you got here?

PARKER: When I entered, they called us "dodos." But he was four months ahead of me. They processed or entered students three times a year--every four months. And Jerry Lee was four months ahead of me.

BURG: What had your major been at the University of Georgia?

PARKER: Engineering and forestry.

BURG: Now what took you into air corps work?

PARKER: I had a cavalry officer as a PMS & T [Professor of Military Science and Tactics]. At least they called them PMS & T's in those days--who had gone to the flying school; but, unfortunately, he had washed out.

BURG: I see.

PARKER: I might add that he was a friend or at least an acquaintance of General Eisenhower because we talked about it in later years.

BURG: Do you remember that man's name?

PARKER: His name was Major A. T. [Archibald Toombs] Colley.

BURG: And how would that last name be spelled? Do you remember?

PARKER: C-o-double l-e-y--

BURG: All right.

PARKER: --if my memory serves me correct.

BURG: O.K., fine.

PARKER: I believe, as I recall, he was a graduate of the Military Academy in 1914 [sic, 1909].

BURG: I see. A year before the General's class.

PARKER: Right.

BURG: We'll be able to check that out. So, because of conversations with him, you were led to apply for flying training.

PARKER: He was quite interested in getting some of the students to take flying training. We had a pretty good military unit when I attended the university. We were one of the eleven schools, as I recall, on the accredited list. And to my knowledge--or as I remember it--he told me

there was no one that he knew of that attended the flying school as a cadet from the university. And he had talked to a number of us students about going to flying or appointment as a flying cadet. And it sounded good to me, so I did.

BURG: Now during your training were there any particular problems as far as you were concerned, or did you go through smoothly and easily?

PARKER: Frankly, I don't think there was ever a cadet who went through Brooks Field smoothly and easily.

BURG: Now Jerry Lee told us that there was one man who trained him, and he said that had it been possible he would have killed him. And he described the man's ancestry very briefly for me!

PARKER: Fortunately I had a very fine instructor, but some of the check pilots and instructors that you had to get by in order to complete the course--well, to put it in a few words, it was real rough. We had quite a number of washouts--better than fifty per cent.

BURG: I see. The reason I wanted to establish this is because within just a matter of a few years you yourself are training pilots in the Philippines.

PARKER: Yes. Almost two years to the day after I graduated I was ordered back to the training command, which at that time had headquarters at Old Duncan Field right outside of San Antonio adjacent to Kelly.

BURG: I see.

PARKER: And I completed the instructor's course which at that time was given at Brooks Field. And then when Brooks Field closed as a primary and basic training school, we moved over to Randolph which is only about fifteen, twenty miles out of San Antonio.

BURG: So then upon graduation you have your wings?



PARKER: Yes.

BURG: You finished all of the flying training. Did that still keep you here in this area?

PARKER: No. Prior to returning to San Antonio--upon completion of flying school--I was commissioned and ordered as Second Lieutenant to Ft. Crockett, Texas, which is near Galveston, Texas. I might add that Jerry was there also when I arrived.

BURG: I see.

PARKER: He preceded me by four months. And Jerry--at the same time I was ordered back to the training center--was ordered on the same order. We both came back to the training center at the same time to instruct.

BURG: Now let me ask you this: were you and Jerry fairly close friends at this time?

PARKER: Oh, yes.

BURG: You had met one another?

PARKER: Yes, we were very close friends. In those days I do not believe we had more than thirty-five or forty officers in the entire group at Galveston.

BURG: Yes.



PARKER: So you knew everyone quite well, not only the officers but the majority of the enlisted personnel as well.

BURG: I see. Now you trained then for how long? How long were you an instructor?

PARKER: From June of '31 until November, if I recall correctly, of '34. At that stage of the game I thought I'd had enough instructing, so I requested foreign service. Frankly, I did it because I was afraid they were going to send me to Panama, so I volunteered to go to the Philippines.

BURG: Panama looked that bad to you?



PARKER: Well, Panama, Hawaii, and the Philippines were our only foreign service stations for Air Force troops or officers. And I'd heard many stories about the Philippines from older officers who had been stationed there, so it sounded good to me. I wanted to travel, wanted to go to China and other places. So I volunteered. Within three weeks I had my orders and was on my way.

BURG: Now is it in this period that you married Mrs. Parker-- before you went over?

PARKER: No, oddly enough, Janet's father was a flight surgeon and was stationed there. He was senior flight surgeon at Randolph, and he was stationed at Randolph. I'd seen Janet, but just as an acquaintance. I didn't know her too well. I met Janet in Hawaii en route to the Philippines.

BURG: I would like to ask you, Mrs. Parker, how did that come about?

MRS. PARKER: Well, we had known each other. I was a little bit younger at that time. You know, the difference is not as great now. And so I went on the same transport, the USAT Grant--

BURG: Oh, yes.

MRS. PARKER: --to the Philippines, the same one that Lefty--as I call him: everybody does--was going on to the Philippines for station. And I was going on what we call a "joyride." I mean was going over to visit.

BURG: I see.



MRS. PARKER: And so, of course, we fell in love on the boat. As he says, he couldn't get off! I mean it was just too far.

BURG: A shipboard romance.

MRS. PARKER: But I returned to Hawaii and then went back about seven months later--in '35 I think it was--and we were married in the Philippines at Clark Field.

BURG: Now that delay--was that a conscious decision of yours to test this out, or was it parental?

MRS. PARKER: No, it was just to think it over.

BURG: You wondered whether a handsome Air Corps man on a boat was--

MRS. PARKER: Oh, well, he couldn't get very far away.

BURG: He had the cards stacked in his favor?



PARKER: And a war going on in China.

BURG: Yes, yes. So you arrive then in the Philippines. To whom did you report?

PARKER: At that time I reported out at Nichols Field. This was in December of '34. This was prior to the arrival of General MacArthur and the group of officers that came over with him. He came over, as I recall, in '35--

BURG: I think you're right.

PARKER: --as a military advisor. I was stationed at Nichols Field in the 28th Bombardment Squadron.

BURG: What were they equipped with at that time?

PARKER: At that time we had a Martin LB-3. Flew a cool eighty-five miles an hour.

BURG: Were these biplanes? Bombers?

PARKER: Biplanes. Twin engine.

BURG: And how much an hour?

PARKER: A cool eighty-five.

BURG: Wide open with a tail wind.



PARKER: Well, maybe you might move that up to ninety but not much further.

BURG: Were the aircraft at that time painted with the sort of chrome yellow wings and--

PARKER: It was a yellow and brown fuselage, usually, and yellow wings.

BURG: Olive drab. All right. And your first job, then, was with that unit? What were you assigned to do?

PARKER: As I recall, I reported in, and shortly after I arrived they had an expedition. There was a Major General Frank Parker there who was department commander. And being a bachelor and what not, he wanted some pilots to fly three of these old bombers with a bunch of equipment and some people down to one of the southern islands--Mindanao--going down on some exploration trip. And, of course, being about the most junior officer in the squadron and a new arrival with no duties, I was selected.

BURG: We'd better ask you too, how much flight time did you have in on Martin Bombers at that time?

PARKER: I had just checked-out about two weeks before that.

BURG: I see.



PARKER: Very little time.

BURG: I see. You were a First Lieutenant at the time or Second?

PARKER: I was a Second Lieutenant.

BURG: A Second Lieutenant with about two weeks experience in Martins! I'm almost afraid to ask what kind of navigational aids

you had for this flight down to Mindanao.

PARKER: Oh, it was usually, most of it, dead reckoning under the circumstances we had to fly. We had little or no instrument flying, and it was usually dead reckoning from one island to the other. These planes did not have too much range; and, as I recall, we made one stop en route to Davao. We landed in a little place called Iloilo there on the island of Panay and serviced the airplanes. We had quite a load of all the gear that this party was taking in.



BURG: Right. And this was first line equipment for the Philippines?

PARKER: It was the only bomber they had there at that time in '34.

BURG: Let's see if we can put it in some kind of relationship with the bomber strength here in the United States. Was it terribly far behind?

PARKER: Not too far. They had some LB-5s, as I recall, here in the States; and shortly thereafter the States received the B-10, which was a monoplane.

BURG: Metal construction, if I remember.

PARKER: Metal, all metal.

BURG: Was this the Boeing? I know that Martin had a low wing or monoplane--

PARKER: Frankly, I do not recall who built the B-10, but it was quite an advancement over the LB series.

BURG: Right.

PARKER: It was much faster--about a hundred and sixty miles an hour--and had a much longer cruising range.

BURG: Had you had any kind of training for heavy bombardment or bombardment aircraft?

PARKER: None to speak of. I would say ninety-eight per cent of my flying experience was in single engine aircraft.

BURG: Were you in your own mind destined for pursuit aviation?

PARKER: Well, I had trained or specialized in attack and loved it.

BURG: I see.

PARKER: And I was going to stay with it, although they did not have an attack unit in the Philippines. But I certainly requested to go back to the 3rd Attack Group, my old unit, on my return from the Philippines. Yes, I liked the attack group.

BURG: Had the attack units gotten the Curtis Shrike at the time you left the States?

PARKER: No, they had--as you were--they did. They had what they called an A-11. I checked out on it doing air mail but was never called--

BURG: I see.



PARKER: --by the air mail. But I did check out in it. It was a low-wing airplane.

BURG: Is it safe then to say that in the Philippines they had done the best they could for you given the fact they had no aircraft and no units for your specialization? Putting you in bombardment was a reasonable thing to do?

PARKER: Oh, yes. I preferred it since I was stationed in Manila. We only had one observation squadron and one bombardment

squadron. Pursuit squadron was at Clark. But being a bachelor-- they normally stationed the bachelors in or near Manila, which in that case would be Nichols Field, of course. And I was delighted to get in bombardment and not observation. I don't know why, but I just preferred it.

BURG: After you had done a little bombardment work was there any thought in your mind of perhaps making that your specialization?

PARKER: No, absolutely not. I wanted to get back to the Attack group.

BURG: I see. Later on, after heavy bombardment became such a force in the world, change your mind then?

PARKER: No. Frankly I preferred single-engine airplanes, and on my return to the States--I think I mentioned earlier--I returned to what is now called the 3rd Bomb Group. Then it was the 3rd Attack Group. And it was single-engine aircraft that we had at that time, an A-17A built by Northrup. And, there again, that was exactly what I wanted.

BURG: All right, fine.

PARKER: It was later, during the war, that I moved over into



fighters.

BURG: Well, I asked Jerry Lee this kind of question. I was thinking of Curtis LeMay and some of the others who might have been thinking in terms of bombardment philosophies--the equivalents of "Bomber" [Arthur Travers] Harris in the RAF. And so I thought I'd ask you if your thoughts had trended that way or whether you'd gone a different route. Clearly you did. You had other things that interested you.

PARKER: It was a matter of preference and what you liked. I certainly had a tremendous amount of respect for the bombers; but I also felt the single-engine airplane, the attack or later on the fighter or fighter bomber, had a big role to play too.

BURG: Right. Let's go back then to your arrival. You fly this mission down into Mindanao. Was that fairly typical of the kinds of duties you did for a while?

PARKER: No, this was strictly to accomodate--I guess you would call it that--or to carry out the desire of the department commander, Major General Frank Parker. And there were only three Air Force officers involved. It was an exploration trip. At that time part of the southern islands had never been mapped.



BURG: Yes.

PARKER: And this, as I recall, centered around a volcano there, an extinct volcano, that had been sighted on previous flights. The general and some of his friends wanted to look into it a little more closely as well as to find out more about the natives that lived in that particular area. I, myself, was not active on the exploration trip. All I did was to fly these people down there and the cargo and drop them off. And, unfortunately, on the way back the general's aide, a fellow by the name of [?] Strobel, Lt. Strobel, cracked-up, and we had quite an experience in getting him out of the jungle or brush and back into Davao where a Chinese woman sewed him up.

BURG: One of these Martin's went down?



PARKER: He lost an engine on dragging the field to see if it would be a better place to pick up the party. The field that had been prepared by the Philippine constabulary up near this volcano just wasn't suitable. We were lucky to get in and out. We decided prior to takeoff that we'd better do a little exploring on the way back because it was, I would say, rather a hazardous operation. We were fortunate to get away with it.

And we sighted this location shortly after takeoff. He was doing what we then called--and still do--dragging the field to see if it offered any potential as a landing field or if it could be prepared to serve as a field to pick up the party.

BURG: So he was right down on the deck looking it over on a pass?



PARKER: Lost an engine on the way out and really folded it up.

BURG: Is it that he's overloaded, or is it that with one engine gone a Martin wouldn't fly?

PARKER: It was just that you could extend your glide a ways, but you could not fly on one engine.

BURG: I see. A pretty rugged situation then to be flying around in unmapped, pretty much unknown terrain. Well, when was it then that you went with this training mission to train Philippine flyers?

PARKER: Oh, sometime on my return from this trip and what not and picking up or salvaging this airplane and all. I guess it was roughly three weeks or so--on that order. I returned to Nichols Field and assumed normal squadron duties. As I recall,

my first job there was communications officer. But the first time that I was approached about going with the Philippine army was through the initiative of a Philippine major who was at Randolph when I was instructing at Randolph here in San Antonio. I had known him and had flown him on some "cross countries." He lived over in the bachelor officer's quarters where I did, and I had gotten to know him pretty well. He was a major in the Philippine constabulary taking flying training here in the States.

BURG: Can you give us his name?



PARKER: Zablan.

BURG: How is that spelled, sir?

PARKER: Z-a-b-l-a-n, as I recall.

BURG: All right.

PARKER: Zablan. And apparently he had written to someone there in the headquarters in the Philippine constabulary and told them that I was en route to the Philippines. When they started the flying school, he recommended that they contact me to see if I would be interested--or words to that effect. Zablan never mentioned this to me, but I was later told this by some of the

Philippine officers; that he had written and recommended me for the job.

BURG: I see. Now you were out there before Jerry Lee?

PARKER: Yes, I was. Correct, Janet? Jerry was not on the boat with us.

MRS. PARKER: No.

PARKER: Yes, I arrived--

MRS. PARKER: Well, I don't know.



PARKER: --in the Philippines several months before Jerry.

MRS. PARKER: O.K.

PARKER: That is correct.

BURG: Now was he already identified with this flying movement when you joined it or when you were assigned to it?

PARKER: No, I do not--in fact, I can't answer that. My memory doesn't serve me that well. But I do know that when Jerry was approached about this he contacted me and said that I was under consideration for this job and wanted to know what I thought

about it. And I told him it sounded good to me. I was willing or something of that sort. Frankly, I just do not recall all the details that came about. One day I received some orders to report to the military advisor whose office at that time was down in the walled city. I might add too it was the first time I'd ever been under air conditioning, and I damned near froze to death.

BURG: I see. Now the military advisor--

PARKER: Was General MacArthur.

BURG: --was MacArthur. He was there by this time.

PARKER: Right.

BURG: So Eisenhower--

PARKER: This was in '35 or '-6. I've forgotten when.

MRS. PARKER: It was in '36 that Ike came to the Philippines.

PARKER: I guess it was 1936.

MRS. PARKER: We married in '35--in September.



PARKER: Right. It had to be in '36. General MacArthur came over there in '35, and then they were organizing their staff and getting set up and what not. He had his headquarters down in the walled city near the old 31st Infantry, which was the U.S. Infantry at the time.

BURG: Eisenhower was there, and Jimmy [James Basevi] Ord was there.

PARKER: Jim Ord was there. Eisenhower. Davis--Captain [Thomas J.] Davis--

BURG: That's T.J.?



PARKER: And I've forgotten the little engineer's name. I'll think of it in a minute. Started with a U. But General Eisenhower and then Colonel Ord and Davis were the people that I knew the best.

BURG: Who talked to you when you went there after you were ordered to report?

PARKER: General MacArthur.

BURG: And that was your first meeting with him?

PARKER: Yes.

BURG: How did he impress you?

PARKER: A second lieutenant talking to the former chief of staff of the U.S. Army! It was mostly "Yes, sir" and "No, sir." But I certainly was impressed. Now I don't know whether he had briefed himself on what was involved in establishing a flying school and the curriculum and what not, but I was certainly impressed with the amount of details or knowledge he had.

BURG: He had you there by yourself?

PARKER: Yes.



BURG: Jerry Lee wasn't there?

PARKER: No, I reported to him as an individual.

BURG: The tone of his conversation with you--he was very knowledgeable. Was he also very kind? Did he put you at your ease? What kind of a reaction did you have in this regard?

PARKER: Oh, yes, he was very pleasant to talk with and what not. I must have been twenty-five or thirty minutes in his office. And again, as I say, he was certainly well briefed or certainly knowledgeable. I was surprised that he knew as much as he did on the problems that would be confronting us and just what we'd be up against in trying to get something of this sort started.

BURG: Now did you talk to Eisenhower on that visit?

PARKER: No.

BURG: Were you introduced to him at all?



PARKER: No.

BURG: Didn't see him on that one. All right, what were you told you were going to be doing, General Parker? What were the instructions or the basic outline that MacArthur gave you?

PARKER: I was told that there would be two Air Force officers on detail not assigned to his office--we would be attached to his office--that my immediate superior or boss would be Jerry Lee, and that we would take the normal channels in obtaining the necessary materials and what not to get a field going--get our

troops organized. And actually we started from scratch. I'm sure Jerry can tell you more of this than I can, but that field out there was actually started with a Fordson tractor, a few cases of dynamite, about a hundred Bilibid [prison] prisoners, and some guards.

BURG: Would you believe me when I say that I have seen motion picture film showing that tractor and those prisoners and the lot of you scrambling around building that thing? Do you remember Jerry taking motion pictures of it?

PARKER: Yes. He was always taking pictures of something.

MRS. PARKER: He was always taking motion pictures.

BURG: That's right. We've got that film. It was 8 millimeter film. We had it made into 16 millimeter film, and we took I forget how many feet of it for our own purposes and then had him give us, with Bert's [Mrs. William L. Lee's] help, a running narration of what we were seeing: some of the awards' ceremonies that you all attended, parties that you had, reviews out there at the field, flying scenes of your aircraft coming in and out--
Stinson Reliant appears in some of them.



PARKER: Yes.

BURG: So I've seen that Fordson. There's one shot where it's plowing across this Godforsaken expanse, and you can see the prisoners breaking their backs with sledges and picks out there working on it. So we have a pretty good picture of what a primitive setup you had when you opened that place up. Now you didn't even have any aircraft I understand.

PARKER: No. Later on there was quite a bit of discussion between Lee and a civilian by the name of [?] Jimmy Lambert who was working with us and who formerly worked there at the Philippine air depot. He was going to be our technical advisor to get these Filipinos lined up and check out our aircraft and supervise the maintenance and supply and just about everything that went with it. As I recall, an agreement was reached through Air Force-- then Air Corps--channels that we would put our order in for our aircraft--would tail an Air Force order just to cut down on the cost. The Air Force, for example, ordered a hundred from the Stearman factory. We'd tail their order with the number that we wanted which, I believe, was three at first.

BURG: I see.



PARKER: But then they were an exact duplicate of the aircraft that was at Randolph prior to my departure from Randolph--exact duplicate.

BURG: Now these aircraft when they arrived were painted--dark blue fuselage, yellow wings--

PARKER: No, they were red and kind of a dark greenish brown--I guess you'd call it olive drab--as I recall. I have some pictures of them at home.

BURG: Olive drab fuselage--

PARKER: And red wings.

BURG: And red wings!

PARKER: Right. And they had the Philippine insignia on the wing.

BURG: That blue white diamond--

PARKER: Right.

BURG: --effect?

PARKER: Right.



BURG: Do you remember whether they carried the insignia of the Philippine Army underneath the wings? Or Philippine Air Corps under the wings? I think your Stinson did, but I'm not sure--

PARKER: I'm sure it did because our job was made a lot easier for us by just following some of the procedures that were already in existence in the U.S. Air Corps. And we copied almost verbatim many of their technical orders and their systems of marking and serial numbers and things of that sort.



BURG: I see. So you think the odds are fairly good that you did--

PARKER: Have the Philippine Air Corps--Philippine Army--painted on the wings--the exact duplicate of the U.S. Air Force.

BURG: All right. Now you went ahead, and you picked cadets. Jerry indicated that at times you stretched the rules a bit, that you again tried to follow U.S. Air Corps procedures and physical standards but that in some cases the standards were bent a bit.

PARKER: Yes, necessarily so. Now this was in '36 when, I guess, we first started grinding out the first hours. We had a flight surgeon by the name of--what was his name? He was a

mestizo.

MRS. PARKER: Very fine man. I can't remember his name.

PARKER: He was a Chinese mestizo whom I had known previously because he had gone to the flight surgeons' school at Randolph Field. I knew him only casually, but on his return to the Philippines he was assigned out there as flight surgeon. It was his job to process these cadets through their physical and what not. And there again he just had graduated from the U.S. Flight Surgeon School.

[Interruption while cassette is changed]



PARKER: There was no doubt we had to deviate from the standards that were set up here, but we adhered to them as closely as we could.

BURG: Well, let me ask you as I asked him--physical standards and education standards?

PARKER: No, most of the people there had had at least a minimum of two years college.

BURG: I see.

PARKER: Your eyesight, coordination and stature and all-- sometimes they had to give a little. In looking back on it, it was quite a step because one of the first questions I used to ask these youngsters when they checked in--I think it was five or six students I had in the first class--was, had they ever driven a car? And only one out of the original five or six--I've forgotten--had ever driven a car. The rest of them had ridden a bicycle, but none of them could drive a car other than this one individual. So they were handicapped in that respect. They had no background--mechanical background--or anything that would give them some idea of speed and distance. You know what I mean.



BURG: Yes, yes.

PARKER: And we used to kid. I do not say this in disrespect, but many times I told Jerry: "You look around and get some students, and leave those that are on top of a carabao [buffalo] alone. I don't need any more of those. I need some others."

BURG: Yes. So Jesus [A.] Villamor was really an exception in that group.

PARKER: He was Chinese.

BURG: And he had trained himself. I guess he had taken flying lessons?

PARKER: They had several little flying schools around in the Philippines at that time. I believe Villamor--and who was this later lad?--the name skips me now--he was killed shortly after World War II--he had had some flying experience from one of these civilian schools.

BURG: But that was exceptional in your experience?

PARKER: Definitely exceptional, yes.



BURG: Now when it came to training them, did you feel that they picked up the skills reasonably fast in comparison with American students you had had here?

PARKER: Well, in all fairness to them, if you take their background into consideration, I think they did quite well. And my instructions were "Get them through but I don't want anybody killed," particularly in the early days--to get it started.

BURG: Who gave you that instruction?

PARKER: I think it was second hand from MacArthur to General Ike.

BURG: I see.

PARKER: They didn't want anybody killed out there because this was something new, and they didn't want to start off on the wrong foot or cause any apprehension amongst the applicants. We were trying very hard to get the best that the Filipino Islands had to offer in the way of cadets or student officers. I might add that we did have some student officers that graduated from their Military Academy, and as I remember they were third lieutenants. They came right out of school as a third lieutenant. They started as third lieutenant rather than the second lieutenant.

BURG: I see.



PARKER: And they were fine boys. They just hadn't been exposed to anything of this sort, and it took quite a while just to get them accustomed to moving this fast. And also the language barrier wasn't too bad, but it was there. I mean--

BURG: Neither you nor Jerry spoke Spanish?

PARKER: No. Our orders read that all our instructions were to be in English; and I believe that was the case with the Philippine scouts, which was the U.S. side of it, and the constabulary.

There's forty-some-odd dialects, but the major dialect there was Tagalog--major language was Tagalog. And to get it across and explain to these youngsters what a tachometer was, what an altimeter was, what an oil pressure gauge, what this was and that was and the other--I mean you had to repeat it day in and day out just to even get them to look at the dog-goned instrument rather than interpret it and know what it said.

BURG: Now you had given them ground school instruction of some sort I suppose?

PARKER: Yes, they had some ground school instruction. They knew what an aircraft engine was and how it worked and all in theory and this, that, and the other; but to get them to apply this knowledge they picked up on the ground while you were in the air--to watch that altimeter! what is that oil pressure? and what is the oil temperature? where is your gas gauge and what does it read? and this, that, and the other--it took quite a bit of doing.

BURG: Let's see if we can put it statistically so a researcher can see the difference. Do you happen to remember about what the average time was to solo an American student at Randolph



and what it was for you to solo one of your Philippine students?

PARKER: Oh, yes. Out at Randolph we had a very select group of cadets and student officers, and usually I'd solo them in seven hours.

BURG: I see.

PARKER: And the cutoff line--unless there were exceptional circumstances, he had to make it by ten hours or out.

BURG: I see.



PARKER: I have soloed some of these youngsters out there with previous training and what not after three or four hours.

BURG: ;But seven would be reasonable.

PARKER: I'd say it would be a reasonable figure. And for a Filipino student--run of the mill--it was usually twelve to fifteen.

BURG: I see.

PARKER: Now there's more to that, though, than just their ability to get this airplane off the ground, round the field, and back on

the ground. The field that we worked in was extremely short. Our accident rate I'm sure would have been far less had we had a field, say, that was three times as large or as long as the field we working on. And I might mention that when I was in the southwest Pacific during the war one of the first things I looked at when I flew over Luzon was this field in operation. And the Japanese for one reason or another had not used it. So it wasn't the best flying field in the world you might say.

BURG: They hadn't even used it at all.



PARKER: They had some old ammo bunkers out there and what not, but they had not used it as a flying field. Of course, they had Nichols and a civilian field and Clark and several fields up there--up the valley--that were far superior as a flying field.

BURG: And ultimately you had expanded that field, that is, you had enlarged it after it had been in operation for a bit, if I remember.

PARKER: Yes, they were still constructing the field when I left there in '37. They were still working on expanding it and enlarging it and lengthening it to the extent they could. They had started in at one end of the field, and the other end just

ended on a draw over this river--you know, a very steep bluff.

BURG: Yes.

PARKER: It had its built-in limitations: I'll put it that way. And without criticism to anyone I often wondered why they ever selected a field of this sort. It was on high ground and not subject to flooding and water take-over as such. You could use the field year round, rainy season and all. I guess that influenced the situation. But the field was definitely limited in dimensions. It was just going to be so long, and that was it, period.

BURG: Which, as you point out, makes it a little tougher on your Philippine students--

PARKER: Right.

BURG: --having to learn on a field such as that. All right, let me ask you, when is the first time that you make the acquaintance of Eisenhower?

PARKER: I am sure I met him socially at one of the parties or something prior to this time, but the first real recollection I have is when he showed up out at the field one day.



I might add by that time my official designation by Jerry was operations and training officer. Jerry, of course, was acting as chief of the Philippine Air Corps. And General Eisenhower, then Colonel Ike, was asking me various questions and talking about the problems we'd have and how we intended to solve them and what we were doing about this and that and the other. And at that time all I knew about Colonel Ike was he was more or less the G-3 on General MacArthur's staff and that we would look to him in the majority of our problems. And one day he indicated that he might like a ride, and that was fine by me. I know I didn't know how to spell his name the first time I took him up. I didn't know whether it was h-a-u-e-r or h-o-w-e-r, so I just left that part of the form one blank till I got in the office there and looked it up. But I had not known Colonel Ike other than I probably met him socially prior to that time.

BURG: And this flight was merely a routine five, ten minute hop?

PARKER: Oh, no, no. Once he got in that airplane, he wanted to stay there a while.

BURG: I see.

PARKER: He came back and thanked me for the ride and said he'd like to come out again sometime. And, of course, I said, "Well, any time. Be glad to see you out." And he said, "Well, what time do you usually finish with your students?" I don't know whether this was the first or second time. I told him around 11:30. We started to work out there about six o'clock in the morning. And so from that time on quite often I'd land with the last student, and here would be Colonel Ike ready to go. And off we'd go.

BURG: Did he ever put it to you or to Jerry that he wanted to be taught to fly, or was this just sort of something that happened?

PARKER: He never once, as I recall in my early association with him, said, "Look, what about setting me down here and telling me what this is all about and teaching me how to fly." It was just that we gradually went into this thing knowing that he was our-- you might say--immediate boss and that the better we sold him on what we were doing--at least, I thought--the better or easier my job would be.

BURG: I see.



PARKER: He became interested because he was showing up out there two or three times a week or whenever he could get off. Quite often we worked six days a week. But then I am sure after the first or second ride I would turn it over to him. And when he became interested and was doing so well, why I had a helmet fixed up with Gosport tubes--

BURG: Right.

PARKER: --so I could talk to him. And as I recall, I either had an extra pair of goggles or I chiseled one from Nichols Field and brought it over so he could have his own helmet and his own goggles. And I turned them over to him. But we had not been in operation but just a few days or weeks till he was out there, and after that first ride or two he was there every opportunity he could get.

BURG: Now you had done so much instructing. I suppose it was fairly natural for you to fall into this pattern: if the man seems to be interested, first thing I'm going to teach him are figure eights or whatever it is that you put him through. I imagine you just let him run the syllabus. In effect, he was **learning the same general things in the air that the Philippine cadets were learning.**



PARKER: Oh, same way I taught a student right out here at Randolph or the Philippine student started out.

BURG: But he didn't have the ground school?



PARKER: No, he didn't have the ground school. But I would say he picked it up fairly rapid. The biggest trouble I had with Colonel Eisenhower--General Ike, of course--was eyesight. He was farsighted. As I recall, that is the way he expressed it. And I know when we got around to just takeoff and landing he never had a bit of trouble with takeoffs--he was right down the line--but the first lesson or two in landings he just could not find the ground, which is not abnormal at all. A lot of people are ground shy on their first few landings and all. I used to fly him and land him over by the hangar. And I'd tell him to come down: "Now when you look out of this airplane and you see the top of that hangar over there right down level with you, you're getting pretty close to the ground." So it was just a little aid that would help him, but he did have an eye problem. And I believe that he told me he was nearsighted but that--

BURG: Not farsighted?

PARKER: --didn't stop him.

BURG: Farsighted or nearsighted?

MRS. PARKER: Near or far?

PARKER: I frankly do not recall; but he could shoot a rifle pretty good, so he couldn't have been nearsighted--I mean farsighted.

BURG: Wasn't using glasses?

PARKER: No, he did not use glasses when we flew.



MRS. PARKER: He mentioned in that letter that he would be safe with his problem of the landings or something.

PARKER: I do not recall. But that was his major trouble if you want to call it trouble. And its being a very short field and what not is why I went over and over it. And since my instructions were not to kill anybody, I sure didn't want to start with him.

BURG: No, indeed not. How was he in the air as far as a pupil and his relationship with you? Quick to do as you suggested he do?

PARKER: Yes, yes, He had a memory like an elephant. You tell

him something, and you didn't have to repeat it.

BURG: I see.

PARKER: And his coordination was quite good. Ike rode a horse pretty good, and I've always maintained--a lot of people might disagree with me--if you're a good horseman--it takes a lot of coordination and sense of balance to ride a horse--same way with an airplane.

BURG: Yes.



PARKER: And the methods we used then certainly are different from what they use now. But Ike right on through used his coordination and ability to remember and what not. I know I used to kid him and give him forced landings--just reach over and chop the throttles to see what he'd do. And he wouldn't sit there and hold the nose up to look around. He'd go through the "One, two; all right!" *Course there was no place to go except a rice paddy, but you had to go somewhere.

BURG: The "one, two"--would you explain that?

PARKER: Keep that nose down, keep that flying speed up.

BURG: I see, yes. And meanwhile, while you're doing that, you're looking to see where you're going to put it.

PARKER: Where you're going to put it and find the wind direction and try to land into the wind and all. But that was one thing that was peculiar to the Philippines, that was different, quite different, from here. There were just no auxiliary landing fields. If you had an engine failure, you would pile it up in a rice paddy--period--unless you were close to a field.

BURG: He'd never flap when you'd chop that--

PARKER: Oh, no.



BURG: --throttle? I mean he knew what he was doing and how to do it.

PARKER: He reacted quite well. And I guess that it was just kind of a mutual understanding between the two of us because I don't ever remember him telling me, "Look, I want to fly this bird, and I want to learn to fly it well enough to solo." I don't think he ever told me that. But it was just a mutual understanding: "I've gone this far. Let's keep going."

BURG: I see. Well, that interests me too. Naturally, it does. We wondered how all this came about and the whole process. So it was never openly voiced as far as you're concerned?

PARKER: Oh, there was never any doubt in my mind that he wanted to fly, and he used to talk me at times about it. He became interested in the Air Corps, but for various reasons he did not take flying training. I do not know whether the eye problem bothered him or whether that would have--

BURG: I believe the in-laws--I think it was the Douds who indicated that they didn't want their daughter--

PARKER: I know that he said that.



BURG: --married to some nit of a flyer.

MRS. PARKER: Right. Mamie--

PARKER: And I don't think Mamie was ever too happy about this whole thing, but she never voiced any objection to it.

BURG: Never said anything to you? Never said anything to you either, Mrs. Parker?

MRS. PARKER: No, but I knew that. I think that Ike must have indicated it some way or other.

BURG: That she wasn't happy about it?

PARKER: Right.

MRS. PARKER: Well, she was unhappy about it--

PARKER: I don't think she wanted Ike to enter the Air Corps. I don't think she wanted that.

BURG: Yes. 'Course he's a man in his forties I think at the time this occurs.

PARKER: This was 1936. I have to back it off--when we started out there with Ike flying and all.

BURG: Now when it came down to the solo, who brought that up?

PARKER: I had left the Philippines, and he soloed. I know I was tempted a time or two to take him over to Nichols Field and turn him loose 'cause there was no doubt about it, he was good or better than any Philippine student I had. But he never said, "Let's go over there and get going." So I left and came back to the States. While I was on the boat on the way back, which was

[?]
quite a ride, we went up by Ching Wan-Chau, Ike soloed. Jerry took him over to Nichols Field, I believe, one afternoon or after they closed down flying at Nichols, which is an unsurfaced field. It was about four times longer than Zablan.

BURG: I see.

PARKER: It was later renamed Camp Zablan I believe after World War II, but we called it Camp Murphy at the time.

BURG: Right. Your field was Camp Murphy.



PARKER: But I guess I was in the Philippines in 1946 the last time. They called it then Zablan. They had a bunch of army units out there at that time. They did not have any Philippine Air Force units there.

BURG: But you had actually left the Philippines by the time he solo?

PARKER: Looking back on it I'm sorry I just didn't say, 'Well, I'll go on over and turn him loose.' But I don't know whether Jerry talked to Nichols Field authorities or not. There were several things there why I didn't do it you know. If Ike'd have piled up, ran through a hangar or done something wrong over

there, there you are. I'm sure I could have asked the commander at Nichols if he'd mind me soloing there, but we had never done so with the Philippine students because of this liability that we would have. Say a Philippine student let the airplane get away from him and he ran through two or three American aircraft sitting out there. 'Well, who's going to pay for this,' you know what I mean.



BURG: Yes. You had an idea of what lieutenant in the Air Corps might be paying for it the rest of his career.

PARKER: Right. 'What are you doing over here?' I know Ike and I used to land over at Nichols, but I used to be with him and what not. I'd know when it was convenient I'd pick him up over there rather than him come all the way out to Camp Murphy.

BURG: Now Jerry indicates that he flew him and Philippine Army officers various places in the islands during this time period, did you do that too?

PARKER: Very seldom. I took Ike out on a trip or two but very seldom did I take Ike anywhere in this, what the hell did we

call that little bird we had, Stear--, I guess it was--

BURG: You had a Stinson--

PARKER: --Stinson.

BURG: Stinson Reliant.

PARKER: Stinson. Frankly I did most of my flying six days a week. One year there I flew over eight hundred hours in an open cockpit. When it came to the weekend unless Colonel Ord, Colonel Ike wanted to go somewhere I was happy to stay home.

BURG: Yes.



PARKER: I just about lived in that bird.

BURG: Yes. With the strain of training students too.

MRS. PARKER: Really it was a tremendous strain.

PARKER: Yes. I left the Philippines with almost five thousand hours flying time. That of course accumulative total from here in the States and there which is quite a bit of flying time for a junior first lieutenant to have.

BURG: Yes, yes indeed. Now because of this flying experience the two of you, Mrs. Parker and you, General, have a social

relationship here with a lieutenant colonel and his wife that you might not normally have had?

PARKER: Oh, definitely so. That close a relationship, yes. Colonel Ike was quite a fellow though. He knew a lot of the Air Force people and he was very much of a gentleman and easy to meet and make friends with. He knew many of my contemporaries there. I introduced a lot of them to him. He was interested in a lot of people. He, I think thoroughly enjoyed himself at some of the parties with just young Air Force officers around.

BURG: I see. Did you tend to hold your parties separately as Air Corps and Army or were they frequently joint affairs?

PARKER: There was some intermingling but by and large the Army would have a party and the Air Force would have a party. All the despedidas and going away parties and all would be strictly branch parties.

BURG: You wouldn't invite others from outside?

PARKER: Oh, if it was a private party, yes. You had the army friends, I mean, infantry and artillery and cavalry and all,

yes. They used to have welcoming parties for boats coming in,



for new arrivals. And that would usually be Air Force or Air Corps, army and artillery or Stottsenberg and McKinley and what not.

BURG: This is going to be difficult to do I know, but thinking back, what was the general impression of Eisenhower in the Philippines when you were there among let's say your own peers, other young Air Corps officers? How was he viewed?

PARKER: Well, from my contemporaries, I'm sure you mean young Air Force when you say young Air Force, he was quite popular. I know we used to see him quite often out at the house and out at Jerry's place. And of course our associates were young Air Force people, and he was quite well liked.



MRS. PARKER: One of us.

BURG: He was one of you?

MRS. PARKER: Yes.

PARKER: Oh, yes, very much so. And always retained his dignity and what not. But he was not standoffish. To put it in other words, he was popular with all the people he knew.

BURG: That would include the Philippine officials that he came in contact with so far as you know.

PARKER: Oh, he was quite popular and very highly respected by those people. Very highly respected.

BURG: You were a very young officer at that time did you look at him with any feeling of 'there's a man on the way?' Or did you think of such things?

PARKER: Well, to be quite frank about it (I told this to Janet and I've discussed it with Jerry) Colonel Ike would say 'come on down we're going to have a briefing on this, that and the other this afternoon' and I would go, of course. He said to, he suggested it. Didn't pay too much attention, hell, I'd rather been out playing golf or something. But the mere fact that he was on General MacArthur's staff and had been with General MacArthur when he was Chief of Staff of the Army, I knew that he was one of these select people or General MacArthur would not have had him on his staff. I mean I thought he was going to go places, yes.

BURG: So even then as a very young man yourself you figured he had been singled out and the probability was he was going to

have quite a career.

PARKER: Well, I should say indirectly. General MacArthur drew a tremendous amount of attention and had a tremendous amount of respect in all branches. And the mere fact that he was on General MacArthur's staff indicated to me he was a selected officer. 'Cause he and Ord, both, and I do not recall, I think Davis had been with General MacArthur when he was Chief of Staff of the Army back in Washington. I had a tremendous amount of respect for Ike, but for me to sit down and say, 'that'll be the future Chief of Staff of the Army,' no, I didn't say that. You just didn't project it that far. But I had a tremendous amount of respect for him and knew that he was going places. There was no doubt in my mind about that.



MRS. PARKER: I think there would be no surprise as to anything that happened, I mean, his advance. I think that's the way you'd feel about it, don't you, Lefty? And I know that I think that as a very young wife and struggling along they were really an inspiration in many ways. I know that I talked to Colonel Ike often. Particularly when riding horseback on Sunday mornings at the Carabou Riding Club. And I do remember that there were many, many fine qualities and I think that you expressed it, Lefty,

I mean--

PARKER: Oh, yes.

MRS. PARKER: --that this is an outstanding man.

PARKER: He was one of the finest officers I ever worked for at the time and I'm glad I knew him.

MRS. PARKER: This is not because of his success you know, but it was the feeling that you had to really look up to both of them. Without any feeling of awe or anything like that at that time. Because you felt they genuinely had your interest at heart too.

BURG: Just they were likeable people.



MRS. PARKER: Just they were, just very genuine lovely people.

PARKER: I think they were real nice--

BURG: You would include Mamie in that--

MRS. PARKER: Oh, yes--

BURG: --very clearly?

MRS. PARKER: Yes.

PARKER: Don't get the wrong idea. Colonel Ike could be very firm.

MRS. PARKER: He was firm which we admired though.



PARKER: And I'll say this, I did my level best not to ever cross him, but to only do what I was told and I was supposed to do. I distinctly recall one night at the Army-Navy Club. I don't know whether it was after the Army-Navy football game or some big party that he showed up at the field a day or two later and he said, "Say, young man I'd like to be spoken to particularly after you step on my feet." I said, "Yes, sir, what's that about or why?" He said, "Such and such an evening at the Army-Navy Club you walked right over me, stepped on my foot and didn't even bother to say 'pardon me.'" I said, "Yes, sir, I'm sorry about that." And another thing, shortly after the time we started in the flying training, Colonel Ike and Jerry and myself were talking over some of our problems and some reference was made to General MacArthur's office. Colonel Ike said, "Now look, MacArthur operates this way. He would never tell you anything he doesn't believe that you could do. So if he ever tells you anything to do, the answer is 'Yes, sir, I'll try.' Or just 'Yes, sir.'" Well, it didn't take me long to figure out that

that's exactly the way he operated. And if he ever said, "I want it done this way or that way," I never argued one iota or I never offered any objections, I usually answered, "Yes, sir." or "I'll try." But when he told us about General MacArthur, the way he operated in that particular respect, well it was a very simple matter or at least I thought so and later proved to be correct.

BURG: Did you ever hear Eisenhower speak of the names of any officers that he had consciously patterned himself upon, men whose quality and work was such that he was imitating in a sense he was emulating them?

PARKER: If he did I certainly do not remember it.



BURG: General Leonard brought it up yesterday and there were a couple of names or at least one name that he thought of that fell in that category and I thought I would ask just in case you had--

PARKER: He could very well said so but I do not recall it.

INTERVIEW WITH
General Hugh A. Parker

by

Dr. Maclyn P. Burg
Oral Historian

on

November 6, 1972

for

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library



Gift of Personal Statement

HUGH A. PARKER

to the

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library

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Let me introduce this--this interview is with General Hugh Parker at the Palacio del Rio in San Antonio and the interviewer is Dr. Burg, Eisenhower Library staff. The interview is being conducted on November 6, 1972.

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DR. BURG: When we were talking before, I'd asked you and your wife about Ike's popularity and how people regarded him, and you remarked that he was very popular with the young Air Force officers. Later on as I looked back at it, I was wondering had you meant to single out the young Air Force officers and distinguish between them and the older officers?

GEN. PARKER: No, no, that wasn't my intention at all, but they were certainly in the majority and, being my contemporaries and Jerry's. Also, I am sure he had an opportunity to meet more in that age bracket rather than some of our more senior officers.

DR. BURG: Right. Well I wondered about it and I thought I would ask about that. Now you also described, both you and your wife, the Eisenhowers as "genuine, lovely people." Then you indicated that Ike was firm, and you went on to say that you did your level best not to cross him. That you felt you'd better do just what you were told to do and supposed to do. What I wanted to ask you was, when he was teed off, what form did it take?

PARKER: Oh, he didn't fluster and bluster. He just let you know what he thought and where you were wrong and that was that, and he expected you not to make the same mistake again. Fortunately I didn't make many, I guess just because of my efforts and because I carried out his instructions. But I thought he was a real fine, if I can use the term, boss or commander.

BURG: Pretty understanding of your problems?



PARKER: Yes, I think that he had a good understanding of people, and he would never tell you to do something that he didn't think that you couldn't do or that the task itself was feasible. I think I mentioned to you earlier too that he told me shortly after I started working there that if I ever received any instructions from General MacArthur that I better get caught doing it because I wouldn't have been told to do that unless the General thought I could. And it didn't take but one step further than that to figure he operated on the same type of instructions.

BURG: Right. What kinds of things tended to make him angry or firm him up a bit? Just nonperformance or slipshod?

PARKER: No, I don't think he could ever criticize me for slipshod

work because there was no one to lay the blame on other than myself. I was it. The only time he ever really acted as if he was displeased with what I had done was, can you turn that down, that thing off a minute and I'll tell you and we can go back and check it out?

[Interruption]

BURG: That illustration that you've given me I think, I think we do have on tape.

PARKER: Yes.

BURG: From the previous circumstances and that one is good to have, I'll check it and if we don't have it, I'll ask your permission to put it on--

PARKER: Sure.



BURG: --on the tape. O.K. Now let me ask you this. You left the Philippines in what year?

PARKER: '37. Went over there in '34 and left in '37. And I have looked and looked trying to find Ike in this particular picture but I cannot do it. This was something that Janet dug

up for me the other day. And he's there at this particular formation and ceremony, this is graduation of the first class just prior to my departure.

BURG: I see. Now maybe we, if we scan it carefully we might be able to see the--

PARKER: I have looked at it even with a magnifying glass and I can't pick him up. He was never a person to center in a picture. He was usually on the sideline or out of it completely.

BURG: O.K. That's a very good shot. Let me ask you this then. When you left there in '37, what was your next assignment?

PARKER: Barksdale Field, Louisiana then 3d Attack Group, called 3d Bomb Group now.

BURG: And your duty assignment there, do you remember?



PARKER: I was flight commander in the 90th Attack Squadron.

BURG: Now was there anyone in that squadron who later made a name for himself in World War II that you recollect right offhand?

PARKER: Oh, we had a number of general officers that came out of the squadron, I'll start with one, Killer Kane, on that raid.

Medal of Honor winner.

BURG: Poleste or Poleshte--

PARKER: Poleste raid--

BURG: --depending on how you want to pronounce it.

PARKER: --B-24s or B-24 group, I'm not familiar with the details. And we had a major who was squadron commander who later had some troop carrier command in UK was a Major-General. "Pud" Mundy or George Mundy became a Lieutenant-General. Herb Grills who was a contemporary of mine, both he and George, became a Major-General.

BURG: Now Mundy is M-u-n-d-a-y?

PARKER: M-u-n-d-y.

BURG: And how about Grills?

PARKER: Grills, Herbert Grills. G-r-i-double l-s. We were all there in the 90th squadron during the time I was at Barksdale. Not all at the same time but during that period. But Major Williams was my squadron command there. And then, of course, we started the expansion program and the squadron split



in half initially. I fortunately got one-half of the squadron, and I believe then Major Williams kept the other half for a short period of time.

BURG: And it was still Attack?

PARKER: Still an Attack squadron. We moved to Savannah shortly thereafter.

BURG: What were you equipped with at that time?

PARKER: We had A-17As. They were built by Northrup. A very nice airplane to fly. Tactically it wasn't too much, but it was all right for its day I guess. It didn't have too much of a bomb load, not too much armor, six machine guns, four forward, two to the rear. And I believe it had a 300-pound bomb capacity, may have been 500.

BURG: What was your rank at that time?

PARKER: First lieutenant. I later was promoted to a Captain and exactly ten years to the day in September of '39.

BURG: Now did you stay in Attack? You had that squadron when the expansion began--

PARKER: Right.

BURG: --and it stayed an Attack squadron or did they redesignate?

PARKER: It received a different number. It was the 17th squadron, and later on it was transitioned into dive bombers. Then later we went into an airplane that was initially built for the French Air Force, the A-20 built by Douglas, twin-engine airplane. But it was designed primarily for an attack aircraft, low altitude. And later it was called a light bomber and they pushed it on up in the European Theater, eight to twelve thousand feet. But they still used the same airplane but different armament in the southwest Pacific as an attack plane, low altitude.

BURG: Now let me ask you this. Was that pleasing to you? That is, you stayed in an Attack?

PARKER: Yes, I asked to be returned to the Attack group. The Attack group had moved from Galveston. When I was in the Attack group it was stationed in Galveston, Texas, old Ft. Crockett, Texas. In about 1935 while I was in the Philippines it moved from Galveston to Shreveport, Louisiana, Barksdale. Yes, I liked it. I thoroughly enjoyed flying at the low levels.

BURG: Now when it became pretty obvious that there was going to be more and more heavy bombardment you did not want to move to that kind of airpower?

PARKER: Well, no, I guess I can say no because I certainly made no effort to get into it.

BURG: I was thinking of Curtis LeMay and those men who went that way. I wonder if there would have been an even better chance for promotion with heavy bombardment units or did you even give that any consideration?

PARKER: Wasn't too concerned about it in those days to be frank with you. See at that particular stage we had not gone into this terrific expansion program and rapid promotions and things of that sort. And I guess the first promotion I got out of the war efforts, you might say prior to the war, I was made a Major. I was Captain at the time but I was given the rank of a Major but no pay with it. But promotions at that time didn't concern me or too many other people too much I don't think. At least that didn't bother me.

BURG: So you were happy with the kind of work you did. Let me ask, did you study attack doctrine in any way?

PARKER: That portion or small part that we had and it was usually in the tactical school, yes, it was centered there, the Air Force Tactical School then Air Corps Tactical School which moved from Langley down to Montgomery, Alabama, Maxwell Air Force Base sometime around the mid-30s. But don't quote me specifically on the date. But it had moved to Montgomery, Alabama, Maxwell. In tactical school in theory you studied the doctrine of the attack aviation as well as then they called pursuit now fighters and bombardment. And reconnaissance. But usually, if my memory serves me correct, we developed our own training programs and what not locally. Of course they were approved and accepted by then the Chief of the Air Corps. But we did have a well defined training program, such as it was. Looking back on it it wasn't the best in the world compared to the training programs we have now. By that I mean we had so much gunnery, so much low altitude bombardment, so much night flying, so much formation flying, and so much navigation and on and on. But you had to complete that portion each year. And they kept very accurate charts on it to see that all the people that came in attained or completed the training program; and, of course, pushed them and tried to get them to keep their gunnery training and bombing training as best they could, as

accurate as they could.

BURG: Now was any of this work that you did with an eye to close support of ground forces. How much did you cooperate with the army on the kinds of missions that you trained to do?

PARKER: We did some usually on maneuvers once, twice sometimes three times a year or what not. But we did not term it or call it then close support or what not. It was usually in support but it could have been indirectly by going and getting the target or whatever that would ease the pressure on the ground forces. But compared to what we call close support now it wouldn't compare, not in my opinion.

BURG: But you did do close support work later on.



PARKER: Yes, yes. One of the last exercises I was on was one of the big exercises down in Louisiana, but at that time we were flying light bombardment. This was during the transition period. It was when General Ike I think had command of the forces there in southern U.S. and Louisiana.

BURG: He was Chief of Staff to one of the armies.

PARKER: Right. I do not remember the details. But also just prior to that we were working on what later became known as armor. We went up to Ft. Riley, Kansas and stayed up there about a week or ten days working with the cavalry post, mounted troops. They had horse cavalry then as well as some light tanks.

BURG: And you were in support of, of that kind of activity.

PARKER: Yes. We layed down smoke screens, did some strafing. I don't think we dropped any bombs there, no, just strafing and smoke screens.

BURG: And there was no chance for you to get in touch with General Eisenhower during the Louisiana period?

PARKER: No, I always thought of General Ike, and there was no one I liked or admired more, but if General Ike wanted to see you he sent for you, usually. But if you made a point to go see him he was always glad to see you. But he was a pretty busy man even at that stage of the game.

BURG: Now right after the Louisiana affair we went to war. What happened to you?

PARKER: This is quite a story. I went to the Douglas plant in California. I believe it was in Santa Monica, or wherever the Douglas plant was located at the time, and picked up the second or third A-20 that we were being equipped with. I had a flat tire in El Paso, Texas, Bipps Field. A nose wheel. I think we cracked up an airplane with a flat nose wheel shirred the gear off. We had a regulation that if you had a damaged tire you had to replace the tire, particularly on the nose wheel. While there I received the message, waiting for this tire to come in, from my commander, a general officer by the name of Brereton who was commander of the 3d Wing at that time in Savannah asking if I would accept an assignment to Argentina. This was in '39 some-time. I'd been there I think two days waiting for this tire. So I sent the message back, just addressed it to the commander of the 3d Wing, "Yes, go anywhere, get me out of El Paso," or words to that effect. Well, they wasn't kidding. When I got home I had orders. So I packed up and went to Argentina. This was prior to, I think it was in '39, just shortly after we had moved to Savannah.

BURG: Did your wife go with you?

PARKER: Yes.

BURG: And what was your duty in Argentina?

PARKER: I wish I had a set of those orders, they were written by the State Department, I was directed to report to the Argentine Minister of War. That was the instructions I received, and I did. But the background of this is we had had a mission there commanded by then Colonel Cannon. We had sold them some patent rights and some airplanes, I've forgotten now, I guess they were Northrup, that were originally set up to go to China. But when the situation developed as it did over there, these airplanes were sold to Argentina along with some patent rights and what not. They were sending down some Air Force officers for familiarization in training in this particular type of equipment. But it was basically an attack aircraft, very similar to the A-17^s since it had a fixed landing gear on it.

BURG: And they presumably had picked you because you had had previous training and experience in dealing with cadets or pilots from a Spanish speaking country, the Philippines?

PARKER: Might have been part of it, that plus the fact that I had a number of years with the 3d Attack Group.

BURG: Now how long were you down there?

PARKER: Two years to the day. That's what the contract called for. They asked me if I wanted to extend; and, of course, I said 'no.' And an interesting sidelight, you remember Peron?

BURG: Yes.

PARKER: Well, this is prior to the days of Eva, but Peron was involved in the flash revolution they had when I was there. He was, I don't know what, but it was taken over by the army. I've forgotten the army general's name that was at that time running the country, but Peron was somewhere on the staff pretty well up. And I could not get air passage out of there. My contract called for water transportation. So the Argentine Air Force had sent some officers up to this country for familiarization. Relations were not too good, but we had managed to get some officers up here. They were interested in what was going on; and, of course, we were trying to curry favor with them for their support whatever it might be. So I couldn't get air passage out of there on Pan American. They only had one airline flying. They were DC-2s or DC-3s, I've forgotten which. But I had known Peron: when I was stationed in Mindosa about six hundred miles

in the interior just up next to the Andes between Buenos Aires and Santiago. He was a lieutenant-colonel at the time. When I knew him, and also at the time that he was involved with the this military junta or whatever they elected to call it, that had taken over the government. So I went by to see him, wanted to say good-bye, and also to see what he could do about getting me out of the country. Talked with him a while, and of course we were pretty good friends. I told him I was having difficulty. He asked me if I had been over to the Embassy, and I told him 'yes' that they would not give me priorities to get me out. So he called over to one of his aides and said, "How did our officers go to the U.S.?" And they said, "By air." "Get him a ticket." I was out the next morning.

BURG: I'll be darned!

PARKER: So a lot of people here have criticized Peron and maybe, as a ruler, he might not have been the man that I knew. But I always had a little soft spot in my heart for him. He was a wonderful fellow to be out on a party or on an asada or on a hunting trip with. But he didn't waste any time so off I went.

BURG: How would you compare him with that other lieutenant-

colonel that you knew so well in the Philippines? They were at similar stages in their career, and you knew both.

PARKER: You know Peron was extremely nationalistic and, of course I'm talking about way back when, this was prior to the time that he took over but he had a lot of courage. There was one general started and he fell by the wayside and another general took over from him, this was the same revolution, and he fell by the wayside. And out of this shuffle came Peron and he later became the dictator that we knew that married Eva and all the things that happened subsequent to that time. I don't know whether there was much comparison or not.

BURG: Was he highly regarded among his own military colleagues?

PARKER: At that time, yes. He I believe had been educated in Poland and Italy both. They sent a lot of their officers to the European countries for study and school, military schools.

BURG: Do you remember was he from middle class background?

PARKER: He was a graduate of their academy and I frankly do not know that much about him. He was a lieutenant-colonel when I knew him in the mountain infantry regiment or mountain regiment

that was stationed in Mindosa, a little town up in next to the Andes there.

BURG: But at least at that time when you did know him he struck you as being a very competent, intelligent officer.

PARKER: Very, very much so. Well you can figure where he went. From a lieutenant-colonel. And I guess what happened to him happens to all dictators. They get further and further out on a limb. How much influence Eva had I do not know. He was a soledaro, a bachelor, at the time I knew him. Quite a man about town.

BURG: And well liked as well as respected by his military colleagues but well liked by people.

PARKER: Oh, yes. I had another very good friend, a lieutenant-colonel by the name of Mehia, who was a great friend of Peron's, he was Air Force.

BURG: Do you remember how he spelled his last name?

PARKER: M-e-h-i-a, as I recall it, Mehia. And he visited me once while I was in the War College, Washington, D.C. He called me while I was in class ^{there}. They called me out of class and I

answered the telephone and here was Claudio, I believe that was his name, Mehia, on the other end speaking Spanish. Of course, by that time I had forgotten most of mine. This was '47 or '48. But as soon as school was out I went down to his hotel and checked in with him.

BURG: Well you know it strikes me that you had a very unique opportunity: you knew two men both of them at about the same stage in their military careers, both at least superficially sound like fairly similar types, and both men rise absolutely to the top in their two countries. But your big trouble was you didn't stay there to see what happened to Peron to what what happened when he did achieve power.

PARKER: No. Well as you know the leftist element was his major support, and he kept getting further and further out on this limb. But it's kind of routine there. You check your history they have a revolution about every ten years. A good one. I hadn't been there three weeks till I had my name in the paper. They have some form of revolution, and at that time we had to do so much flying every three months or lose our flying pay. So I checked in at, not with the Minister of War but the headquarters there in Buenos Aires, and told them my problem and

they said, "Fine, you can't fly our airplanes but if you can get an airplane have at it." So I borrowed the Naval Attache's airplane. All the Argentine airplanes were grounded. But I was out flying the Naval Attache's airplane and I made the papers.

BURG: Our Naval Attache's?

PARKER: Right.

BURG: And what did you make the papers for?

PARKER: Well, the airplanes were grounded because of the revolution, but this Americano was flying around in an American airplane over Argentine soil.

BURG: And they didn't care for that too much?

PARKER: The paper didn't. The Argentine officers didn't care much. So to get around that they just made me an honorary pilot in the Argentine Air Force. Still have the wings, my wife wears them, they're beautiful wings.

BURG: I bet they are. Well when you came back up to the United States, it was just before the war?

PARKER: No, I came back after the war started.

BURG: Oh, it had actually begun.

PARKER: Right. Ambassador Armour was the ambassador, and he wanted me to stay down there but I would have no part of it, and I'd served my contract. In fact I've often wondered, I made I guess quite a mistake by accepting this assignment. Whether I could have gotten out of it I do not know, 'cause I had said 'yes' when I was in El Paso. But as it turned out it worked out all right for me. I came back and was assigned in the, I guess you'd call it the Operations Section of the Headquarters of the then Army Air Force in the Pentagon. Stayed there exactly thirteen months and one day; and, through the good graces of Gen. Kennedy in the Southwest Pacific, he got me out of there and I ended up in Nadzab.

BURG: Where?

PARKER: Nadzab, where I reported in to the Far East Air Force to go to the 5th Air Force.

BURG: What do those initials stand for?

PARKER: Nadzab, I don't know, it's on an island there in the Pacific, New Guinea.

BURG: Oh, it's the name of a place. Nadzab.

PARKER: Next stop, Hollandia, next stop, Owauai, or Biak. And then about that time the Philippine invasion took place, and I ended up in Leyte.

BURG: Combat flying meeting--

PARKER: I was assigned to the 5th Fighter Command. I did not do too much combat flying there 'cause, I guess, I had a lot of information right out of the Pentagon. And because of my seniority I was assigned as Chief of Staff, 5th Fighter Command. I hadn't been there two weeks till I was briefed on the next landing.

BURG: So you couldn't take much part in operations.



PARKER: No, not actually. Not over enemy territory anyway.