Transcription: Stu Studak

Today is Wednesday, June 24th, 2009 and my name is James Crabtree and I'm interviewing Mr. Stu Studak. This interview is taking place in person at Camp Mabry in Austin, Texas, and this interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veteran's Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. Sir, thank you for taking the time today to share some of your accounts with us of your time in the service. Usually the first question we usually ask is just tell us briefly a little bit about your childhood, where you're from, maybe a little bit about your sibling, your parents, that sort of thing.

Stu Studak: First of all, I'm happy to say I'm a naturalized Texan, and I say that for the reason that my place of birth is Detroit, Michigan. There are several Detroits as I learned later in life. I am a third generation American of Croatian parents. My father died in '29. He was a machinist. My mother was a farm girl brought over by her two elder sisters to marry my father, typical European fashion. Due to the Depression, I became a street corner newsboy at age 10 selling papers on the street corner in the traffic. I did that for 8 years to keep myself in school, and while in Detroit, I was honored and fortunate enough to go to, and privileged to attend Cass Technical High School, which was an educational institution, a public school for forthcoming automotive engineers where my goal was to be hopefully to be employed by Chrysler's technology. Many others went to Ford, some went to General Motors, Burl's Adding Machine, but I had an appreciation for Chrysler engineering because they made tremendous automobiles. And when there came the opportunity in 1970, I bought a 1958 Desoto, which was a Chrysler product. Marvelous.

Do you still have that car?

Stu Studak: I sold it to my son for $1.

There you go.

Stu Studak: We're refurbishing that with ABL brakes, putting a new AC system since it came in with AC, and I'll be allowed to visit it. But to continue, I had one younger sister, and what I did was I had to drop out of school and went to work in the factories to put her because of the war, and to continue – well, at the age of 18 I got off the streets, not yet graduated. Cass Tech had only three grades – 10th, 11th, and 12th. We had extensive courses in math, sciences, two years of physics. I had calculus in the 12th grade in 1940. So it was quite extensive for education ___ my sister go through because the war was pending and it was no secret in Detroit because we were making all kinds of war equipment and it brought Detroit out of the Depression. My first job after quitting the papers, I worked for a lumber company, 25 cents an hour. I got tired of that after six months and went to work for Excello machine tool where I became a thread grinder, and the pay wasn't too good. A friend I made and me went over to Packard Motor where the pay was much better, and a lot more sanitary because I was working with a 50-gallon oil tank grinding threads. I got tired of production work which is monotonous at best, and I was able to get a job with a tool and die company making gauges. I found a little bit of employment in grinding gauges with another qualified tooling gauge, which I enjoyed thoroughly. My sister finished school, my younger sister, and I volunteered. I had to give up an occupational deferment because I was classified as critical for being a precision machinist grinding gauges. So I volunteered and in preparation, I saw this coming, I joined the Michigan Guard, so I'd be pretrained going into the service. I volunteered in '43, fall of '43, went to Camp

Sheridan, and did well I suppose. Then I was sent to Keifer Field, did well again. I was assigned to pilot training, but I went through Mackle Field which is a pilot preflight, and I was one of 200 that was selected out of this large group with high NAV scores, and by the winter of '43, '44 came there looking for more navigators and pilots. As a consequence I went to NAV school but it took quite a while because I was working between phases. I went to Walnut Ridge, Arkansas, one phase, and went to flight training and I came back and went to Altus, Oklahoma and went back in training again. They tried to set up this program for the 200 of us. We finally wound up at Summon Field Monroe, Louisiana, and we had the oddest number. We thought we were strange because we had a suffix which I just learned, I'd forgotten about it and it was challenged at one of my NAV reunions, said yeah it's right. 45NJ or something of that sort, 44 or 45NJ. And as a consequence of that, we did not graduate at Selman Field. We were sent to Ellington Field in Houston to fly the big airplane, the C-47, and there we met trans-Pacific navigators who became our new instructors and we did all the flying then out over the Gulf and night celestial exclusively. After graduating that, this is now early '45, the grade of flight officer came in, and the Army was very upset, where the Army Air Corps, the Air Corps had too many 2nd Lieutenants, so they invented this little grade and we called it the Purple Pickle because it was rectangular with rounded edges, purple centered with a gold rim, and as a warrant officer rank.

So it was a little bit below then a 2nd Lieutenant.

Stu Studak: Yes, as a warrant officer enlisted rank, so many of us. And in '43, the Air Corps graduated 3,300 staff sergeant pilots, and the entertained service pilots which were civilian pilots, and flight officer became the name of the game. I faced a board, I went to OTU at Fairfield ____, today known as Travis. And I volunteered, oh, before that I was interestingly enough, while I'm here in Austin, I was at an overseas pool after graduation from Ellington in San Marcos, and I enjoyed it, and I enjoyed Texas. And I would come up here at Austin on the weekends, and I thought this was just a great place with the university and the capital city, not a factory smokestack in sight. This is for me, I never forgot that experience.

So you've seen Austin obviously change a lot over the years.

Stu Studak: Oh, it had a population of 85,000 something of that nature.

Sleepy college town.

Stu Studak: Yes it was, I never forgot it. I went to as I said to Fairfield ___, went through overseas training unit. They were looking for navigators to go to China and I volunteered. I went to China and was stationed in China, and stayed there until, well, we had a big cold war then, too, with the Chinese Communists. They were very upset with the American Air Force of '45, '46, and they were closing down all our northern bases and interior bases, and we wound up in Shanghai with the unit. Clare Chenaulte started CTC, Civil Air Transport Corporation radar squadron of people, CNAC, China National Airways Corporation of C-54's, radar squadron too, a lot of pilots and NAV's so they could fly to Minneapolis which was the northern route, the short bridge circle route. But I preferred to stay in the service. I wanted to see where this would lead me. I was com-, oh and that flight officer, warrant officer status, I was commissioned in China in April '46, and I kept that rank for some 29 months, no complaint because they were really decreasing the number of people and we wound up shorthanded. The Air Force had only 200,000 people left in it, and the Army was way down, the Navy was down. I think in the Marine Corps of course was down. There was totally a little over a million people total in the services, and I make that as a point because of what happened subsequently. I transferred over to

Anita at Subik first and Anita in Japan. I got to see Nagasaki and Hiroshima bombed out in '46, very impressed by it, what I saw and the damage ultimately, and I remember the name 509th because that would come up later in my life. And I was supposed to come home in late '48, '49, and I was assigned to detached service to the state department. I'd been flying for a lot of Asians and eastern Pacific. And I wound up flying from Tokyo to Philippines to East Africa, doing what we called the ambassador run, hauling people back and forth, personnel and equipment. It was a fireball route. We'd do 65 hours in five or six days, about a weeks' time, beg your pardon. But then the barreling airlift started, and I heard about that when I was in Azmare, East Africa, and sitting there in East Africa land, Azmare was just the northeast corner of Ethiopia. I said we can go from here, we can go to Welis Field, we can go to John Payne Field, Welis Field and then go to Germany no time at all. We were ready to fly but we had to go home, so we fireballed home, which meant one hour land at New Delhi, next one in the Philippines, then back, and it's in a C-54 which is a lot of flying time. And we flew with a crew and a half happily, which meant three pilots, two NAV's.

You could trade out a little bit.

Stu Studak: Yeah, trade out for some rest. Two radio operators and two flight engineers. So we got back to Tokyo and we stood down a little over a week, and fixed up the aircraft, pulled all the engines out, and then we left. Here is where I said about shortage. We had to strip the squadron to go to Germany and fly the lift. We took off with six pilots; three crews of two pilots; three flight flying engineers, two radio operators and one navigator. We were out of navigators. And I took off from Tokyo on Sunday night, went to Guam, to Collagio Fujiyatsa Island, finally got to bed at Hickham Field. I was tired.

Yeah, I bet.

Stu Studak: They put us in the hospital overnight for 12 hours. Then I took off and we went to Travis, Carnes, Westover, Ireland, and I got my sexton repaired and it was kind of corroded by this time, and we had 12 hours off, at least I did. Then we took off for Stephenville, Del Lagens, two Wiesbaden. So I flew 82 hours in five nights. As the only navigator, I had to stay up. Wiesbaden, we headed Friday morning. We took off Sunday night in Tokyo, landed Friday morning in Wiesbaden, in the same eastern hemisphere, which counts. And we flew to Rheinmain Saturday morning. We stayed at Wiesbaden for about two weeks and we took a half load to Berlin, and landed at Roll Air Force Station Fasswerk. We were just 50 minutes out of northern Berlin at Gallack, and so we flew about 30 days to UI. Now I've extended and we went 60 days, 90 days, 100 days, 210 days TDY because they just didn't have the people. They were recalling an awful lot of people for that, airlift pilots and engineers, mechanics, everybody. I have to say something about the Luftwaffe mechanics. They were outstanding. We didn't have the mechanics and the Brits rounded up a whole bunch of F190 radio engine mechanics and put 'em to work on our aircraft. Did a fabulous job for us. I flew to Teegle then, and later stationed on the 3rd of March. The 5th of March I got my orders to come home. Oh, I made First Lieutenant in Germany, I forgot. Pilot. Made $10 on that thing.

What were your thoughts during the Berlin airlift? I mean you understand how crucial that mission was?

Stu Studak: Well, I mentioned China in the first instance. We were chased by the Chinese Communists out of northern China, out of Manchuria of course, and I mentioned CATS and CNAC. They were the only ones who were allowed to come up north of ____ for example.

Chun King was put out of limits, so was Kun Ming, we were no longer able to go there either. And so it was my first experience with the Chinese Communists. And while I was in the Pacific, and of course I said '47, yes, President Truman's point four program came to support Greece against the Communists incursion to take over Greece, but Greece was an anchor point. It was due north of Suez, and a checkpoint over the Straits of Dardanelles. So it was strategically geographically very important and we knew something was stirring and the incidents were beginning to increase. So and then the incident I was embroiled in there was actually my third excursion shall we say confronting the Soviet empire and/or Communism or Chinese Communism. 3rd to 5th of March, I was on the boat the 7th of March. Docked the 12th of March. I put in for Mobile, Alabama and instead I wound up in Roswell, New Mexico Walker Air Force Base 509th Bomb Wing.

Were you there in '47?

Stu Studak: No, in '49. This is 9 days after docking. And I asked for a little overseas leave and they said no, lieutenant, you're going overseas. We're going TDY next month. So I was stateside five weeks. I'd joined up with a B-29 crew. No bombardment training at all, had to OJT it myself, which I did, along with my bombardier and radio operator. So we went 90 days and extended another 30. So by the time I came back in October, I had something like four years. Well, relatively peace time duty one might say. And when I was there at Roswell, John D. Ryan was Colonel Commanding. He later became of course the head of SAC, Strategic Air Command, and Commanding General of the Air Force, and a lot of our commanders did, so our commanders did well for themselves. I volunteered for B-47's in 1952, was assigned to the RB reconnaissance bomber. It was a six-engine jet bomber, and it converted. The only thing you could do with photo reconnaissance, you had to get there. I don't want to say anything more. And in 1957, I was so happy I got married. I saw a beautiful Air Force nurse, married her and we're still married 58 years later.

Where did you meet her?

Stu Studak: At Randolph when I was instructing. Now one of the things I did, I'll admit it and I'm sorry about that, because of my experiences flying all over, I wound up as a long range navigation instructor in the 509th for transoceanic work, and I thought that was rather prestigious. I thought it was nothing, but many of these people were what we call DR navigators and radar navigators, had very little experience in transoceanic work. I was picked to be an instructor at Randolph. I saw my wife and met her there. Cut her out of the herd and we're married and we had three kids. All three are doing extremely well. I'm very proud of them.

When was it that you finally became a Texas resident?

Stu Studak: I'll get to that. I was on a mission on a double refueling and we lost an alternator. We had an RON at Lauring, and when we finally came back to my home base of Blackburn, Columbus, Ohio, the wing commander met me. He said Studak, you're leaving. You're going to B-52's. And the Chief of Stanboard pilot and myself were the first to go. And I guess we were just picked because we were rather competent shall we say. And I led the wing and bombing navigation in the 26th Wing. So I guess he wanted, Colonel Ming wanted, the later General Ming wanted to send some competent or lucky people. Air Force life. We lived in a place in Columbus called Turkey Flats because it was by a creek. The developers built a complex of houses and we all lived in there. Everybody was renting and we just couldn't stand it anymore. So I bought a house and my poor wife, we bought furniture and we bought a new

stove and refrigerator and all that happy nonsense and drapes, and before I made my first house payment, I got transferred. I was, had to offload that thing. And what'll you do, and in the Fall of '57, the B-52's, and I met my old gunner, top turret gunner Leo, and he said sergeants run the Air Force, sergeants run the services, believe me. He said captain, when I saw your name, that's where I'm gonna go. That's the crew I want. And I was like I said, I was nonplussed by it, because one of the things that did, we were, when we were at TDY, we had no transport service and we had to be self sufficient and we had fly away kits in our B-29 bomb bays and all of us had additional duties, and my additional duty was Provo Marshal. And I'm happy to say that 120 days TDY, nobody got hurt.

That's good. I understand you're still pretty close to a lot of the veterans that you served with in the ATC, some that I've interviewed. And you guys still have reunions and that sort of thing?

Stu Studak: Yeah. And I was stationed at West on B-29's, and then I was picked to go to the Dyess in Abilene, Texas, the _____ of a new B-52 Wing, and I stayed there and until I'm retired now. I want to say something about the military service that people sometimes overlook. The opportunities that exist – I had to take a couple of courses while I was enlisted to finish high school. I got my high school diploma when I was in China, and by the time I finished stateside duty with SAC, I had 88 college hours. Wherever I went, I went to school. As a consequence, when I retired in '67, I had just did a fall, spring, summer session and graduated, made an honor society. We were curb busters. Vets were terrible on these kind of places.

Yeah, vet.

Stu Studak: And I was interviewed by Austin and I was employed by the Austin school system to teach high school. I came down here and UT, into the Graduate School of Government, got my MA, International Affairs, taught school which I enjoyed.

What school did you teach in?

Stu Studak: I started at McCallum teaching electronics.

That's where I graduated from high school.

Stu Studak: Yeah, I was the first one, and I got my degree and my MA. They had nobody to replace me. And I went to Johnston for 10 years, 11 years, where I led a class and we won a national award in my sociology class called Project Mystery. We had a control group and a sway group, and we reduced the absentees by 64%, among elementary students. Johnson still has the award. Then on the integration thing, I moved with the kids to Anderson High School where I taught and finally retired in '88.

So you retired from the Air Force and then you retired from AISD. Yes sir.

Stu Studak: I did and one of the things that was beneficial as a dad being a teacher, but I was going to school also while I was in the service, and I tried my kids around the dinner table, they were doing their homework right with me.

That's good, yeah.

Stu Studak: The thing is, I was a model unknowingly. And the children did I think to their success. My eldest, I had three kids, three years apart. The oldest one moved into ____ now, a 10-year professor at the University of Illinois. The middle child was a writer and is married with a co-writer she met in Dallas, and he's very successful as an advertiser ____ got a partner. And my son is an engineer at NASA where he's been honored for his work, and I first taught him how to use high-end tools before he could use a power tool.

Are they all Anderson High grads?

Stu Studak: Only, no, I had one at Reagan, the eldest at Reagan; the middle one was at Lanier, and the other was at Anderson.

OK, so they were spread out across the town.

Stu Studak: You could see the town grow. IBM was the big instrument in Austin's growth.

When were you at McCallum from? What years?

Stu Studak: Fall of '68 to Spring of '69. Then '70, they told me they wanted to raise the level of the teacher qualification at Johnson, and it was a lot, a number of people with Masters degrees at Johnson High School were working and doing what we could. But as I said, the integration, I moved with the kids and it was a good thing I did because I could stand out in the hallway by the door of the room and I knew the kids, talked with them all of the time so they wouldn't feel alone. And they were very shy when they moved over. And everybody, it was uncomfortable for some of the kids, integration, and you could see that in the lunch rooms.

Now having grown up in Detroit, you were in a pretty integrated city as a child, right?

Stu Studak: I lived in what's called a neighborhood. You name it, we had it. I never forgot Coonnie Zimmerman was Jewish, he was my best friend. I'm a Croat. We had a kid we called the hillbilly. He came from Tennessee. You know, everybody. Italians, Turks, Serbs, and the Croats and Serbs never get along except the women did real well, and the men couldn't do it.

Were you in Detroit when they had the famous race riots?

Stu Studak: Yes, I was in it. I served it. I think it was '43, I went in '43.

Tell us what that was like because I think history has kind of forgotten the Detroit race riots.

Stu Studak: The first one in '43.

What was it like as someone that was born there, had grown up there, and the war was going on, and then your city is having riots?

Stu Studak: Well, it was difficult. And it rather angered me and something that was puzzling, oh, I'll have to go by the newspaper boy days. One of the things I did on Saturday afternoon is I'd shine shoes and clean block hats for Aram the Arab, and George Washington was a colored guy thing. And there was no disrespect, anyway, this was just the neighborhood, this is what it is. And George taught me how to shine shoes and how to clean block hats. And everybody was,

we had Pollocks and you name it, we were there. It was a puzzle to me. I had no grievance with anyone, and of course I was called to duty, obviously, and -

Because you were part of the guard -

Stu Studak: The guard, right, and we worked at night. The guard with shotguns rode trucks and patrolled the streets, and when it was over, and they had a unit from the 2nd Infantry Division, other to support there, had the big union patch on their shoulder. I remember that group. Fine group of soldiers from everywhere. Then after that blood settled, I got my sister through school, I went in the service. Air Transport Command for years, SAC for years, and I was grateful to the service for the opportunities because I had no desire to return to Detroit. I saw the world and I saw the United States.

Have you ever been back to Detroit after leaving there?

Stu Studak: The last time was October of '49.

Wow, so you have not been back since '49.

Stu Studak: I have not been back. Family was most upset. I wouldn't come out. You've got to understand European families. It's a cultural group.

Yeah, tight knit.

Stu Studak: You're tight knit and you live across the aisle from one another, and you married within the clan. And if you married outside the clan, you were ostracized, and I saw a lot of that in my neighborhood. People and a lot of the Europeans could not stand to have different cultures married with another culture, and the children were thrown out, families.

Did you keep up with what was happening in Detroit over the years, and like even with Chrysler now in the news?

Stu Studak: Oh, I felt, well the only thing, I know this. The engineers in Detroit are great. They'll make any car you want according to what they're told to do, they'll give it to you. The machine is outstanding. An example of that is when I worked for Packard Motor, we built the Rosewood S. Marilyn engine. We got 300 more horsepower out of it just due to American manufacturing processes and specifications, our ability to fine grind and find the tolerances. We were very efficient. The PT boats, Packard engines in PT boat is a marvelous thing. You never hear of failures of those things. You never hear it. And so we could build anything, and the only thing I have to say is that I have a saying. When greed is your guide, you get stupid, and that's why horse players die broke. And when you get greedy in manufacturing, you hurt yourself, and just seeing the number of automobiles and they're built as lemons, they're lemons. Those that are constructed well are constructed well. The '58 Desoto of mine, outstanding. I also drive a '66 Mustang.

Oh wow.

Stu Studak: I still have it to this day, straight 6. Yeah. Detroit was building their own cars according to engineering specifications. And they're marvelous vehicles. Everybody around the world wanted 'em.

Yeah.

Stu Studak: When you start cutting corners like with the Edsel. Case closed.

One question that we always try to ask going back a little bit is about Pearl Harbor. Can you tell us, can you remember where you were that day?

Stu Studak: Yes I do. I was working solo machine tool, and I was working afternoon shifts, and we worked six days. I woke up a Sunday morning, from 1 o'clock, had coffee, with my mom and my sis, and the radio was on, the Japs had bombed Pearl Harbor. Well I wasn't surprised. I say that because when I was a street corner newsboy, just down the street was a big junkyard. I would see Japanese come down there and they'd buy engines and scrap parts, bodies, frames, etc., just clean out the junkyard. Now remember 1938, President Roosevelt had an embargo against the Japanese. That's an act of war, the economic embargo. So and in 1936, I was reading about Hitler, Stalin, in the daily newspapers, Detroit News and Detroit Times, what the Japanese were doing, in China, Manchuria first and then China. There was a whole -

Besides were selling newspapers, you were reading it and you were right with the current events.

Stu Studak: Yes, and I remember Mussolini bombing Ethiopia and denigrating the Ethiopian warriors, called them Fuzzy Wuzzy because of their hairdo. Ridiculous. These men were fighting with bows and arrows and spears, and with a heartfelt commitment. And I was living in that as a teenager, and I knew it was fraught with something happening. I remember they came to recruit in Detroit, World War I veterans where the Abraham Lincoln Brigade to go to Spain to fight.

During the Spanish Civil War.

Stu Studak: Yeah, we were making $300 a month which is a magnificent salary, wage in those days. When you consider a man making $25 or $27 a week was well off in Detroit, believe me, that was a tremendous amount of money. So I was reading and walking the pages on what was happening in Europe and Africa and in Asia. So I wasn't surprised. When I worked for the factory's sake, we were producing war equipment.

Yeah, the arsenal democracy.

Stu Studak: Absolutely. But first thing was the old P-35 which was a radial engine for the P-40. Ford came with an Allison inline, and of course they built that then that made war efficient. And the whole town was geared toward the war industry. In 1938, '39, who's kidding who? And then there was a song "You're in the Army Now." They were drafting men, my neighbors from 21 to 27 for one year, and I knew some of them.

So it wasn't at all a shock to you.

Stu Studak: No, it wasn't a shock to anybody.

Did you have any doubt during the war, especially when you were serving, that the Americans and the Allies would be victorious?

Stu Studak: None. It's faith in the country, faith is ability to produce. I think we had a different attitude of a work ethic, and very strong work ethic and an appreciation for any job we had. It was a terrible time everywhere across the country to be a teenager. And in the mid-30s, am I gonna go to high school? What am I gonna go do? Where am I gonna get a job? Because the economics was a big factor. And I remember the WPA, people might poke fun but it put food on the table. Don't knock that. I remember the CCC, triple C, Civilian Conservation Corps and we had guys all up and down the street and one brother at a time would go and he'd send $18 a month home to the family. Out of the 21 to get three in, and you had to send $18 home, and sometimes you'd hear about the quality of the work these men did, these young men did. So there was nothing wrong with the ability of the Americans, and the wrongs we saw. Even as a kid you could see what was going on overseas, reading the paper.

Did your family have any connection to the old country, the families that were back where your parents had come from?

Stu Studak: Well, I know no grandparents, and hadn't called "the old country." On language, I have to say this, clinging to language is sometimes clinging to something that never was. For example, Hamtramick, the Dodge main plant built engines say, the only thing in the blueprints that was English was the numbers. All the Polish kids went to Kent spoke Polish. When the world broke out and Hitler emitted, Poland, they couldn't speak English. So they went across the river to Winsett and enrolled in the Polish army. A number of them did from Wisconsin or other places as well. So it's a great deprivation not to be lingual, particularly the American-ease, and you go worldwide today, the English language is the language of business, and if you're going to succeed anywhere, you're gonna have to know English. And it tore my family. One of the older sisters had sons, but everything was in Croatian. They were 4F, couldn't speak English. The middle sister had two sons who were multilingual, English and Croat, and I was basically English. And just bearing to an ideal is what I call it, maintaining that old touch that had no relevance in the new country and a new way of life.

So when your parents and their family came over, they were like we're Americans now and there was no, they cut all ties -

Stu Studak: No, they didn't James. They built what they called a hall, and all the kids had a kind of Sunday school there. Their schools, the languages, the dances, the literature and all that. And they had their own insurance company based out of Pittsburgh for example. It was a cultural cult, it's a cult, deeply immersed and saving what they had in the New World. And I think they were in denial because they had a much better life here in this country. When you hear them talk, the opportunities and the living quality of life was superior to what they had, it had to be. And the thing shows how abysmal people can put their hands in Fadists for example, Croatia, aligned themselves with Hitler because he promised them they'd have their own kingdom. Shoot, he sent the infantry divisions out to Stalingrad to get massacred. He was all those people the Croat and Romanians and etc., and saved his own German troops.

Exactly. I was just curious if you -

Stu Studak: These were kinds of impressions that I had. These were desperate times.

I was just curious though if your parents not having a connection to their parents, your grandparents, was that a conscious decision on their part though, do you think –

Stu Studak: Well, during peace time I would imagine that they would write back and forth. The only reason I say that is because somebody came back and told me that they set up a Studak village of engineers in Europe, in other words, somebody went to university in Berlin somewhere and started a little thing around one of the towns, Calibach or something like that. Gone are the name, I don't know, whatever it is, and I had land, my father's land, his farm was deeded to me and I gave it up because it was under Tito's Communist control.

Yugoslavia.

Stu Studak: Yeah, and I wanted no part of it because I was on active duty so I just signed it off and got rid of it, offloaded it. I'd forgotten how many hectors of land there was, and I think what was happening was that he was buying land to add to it, the farm, and this was not unusual because many of the immigrants did not take post World War I immigrant worked in the steel mills, saved their money, and bought land in Europe, and thinking that they would become farmers again, that old cultural tie again, that was self deprecating, self defeating sometimes. You got to change, you have to change. If you stay static, you can't do it.

Sure. And another question we usually ask, too, we ask about Pearl Harbor. Do you remember where you were when the war ended?

Stu Studak: Oh yeah, we digressed, I'm sorry about that. Yeah, I had late breakfast, got up late, heard on the radio the bombing of Pearl Harbor. I was not surprised because of the things, the events that I witnessed and read about. And remember this, the Fox Movietone news was bringing these pictures of Nan King, of the slaughter, and blowing every clandestinely, surreptitiously go ahead and pull out, and bombing of Shanghai, the international settlement. So this didn't surprise me, didn't surprise anybody.

To jump ahead to the end of the war, do you remember the day, do you remember where you were when you found out that the Japanese had finally surrendered and that the war was over?

Stu Studak: Well, a sense of relief basically that it was over, that was the big thing. It's over. But my studies in international events, I covered a lot of goodies that went on, kinds of agreements that went on, and what do you do? And one of the things that came about in our classes at the high school was the failure of the League of Nations, and it was so obvious, and Woodrow Wilson tried to immiterate that of course, and we had the people that wanted to be isolationists. The airplane was here. You couldn't deny it. Radio was here. You could take pictures and in 24 hours you could fly it across the Atlantic Ocean and show them in theaters. So the world was changing from that point in time. The world was changing rapidly. And the Instant News and the Armed Force's network was relaying information to us and we were getting daily briefings as cadets, too, of what was happening overseas and the ETO, Africa, as well as in the Pacific NCBI. So what is gonna happen? I think that the greatest sigh of relief I had is when Truman came up with the United Nations in San Francisco. That was a step in the right direction, to really get the U.S. involved now because I remember Senators Blora and Johnson in the 30s screamed and then hollered that isolationists do not, quoting George Washington about staying away from European affairs and nothing but trouble. Well it got us into a lot of trouble, too because the isolationism defeated our efforts of the peril which was forthcoming, when you consider how poorly we were equipped and when they talk about putting trucks and put, riding a tank on it, the blue and red games I was in, that was true. Broom sticks for rifles. That was true. We just didn't have the equipment because we weren't ready for it because there was that fast program of isolationism in an international world which we could not

deny and you can see that today in Iraq with the cameras they have and whenever they shoot, they fly over those things in a satellite. And my old 509 bomb wing now is B-2's. Stealth bombers, just great.

Which is amazing, yeah. Spacecraft.

Stu Studak: Yeah. And clone the drones, too, and I think that's where the Air Force is going, believe me.

Yes sir. Well I know it's an honor for me to be able to interview you and I know that Commissioner Patterson is a veteran and I'm a veteran, and a lot of people at the Land Office are, and so to us this is really something that means a lot to us to be able to interview someone like yourself and your story of service and one other question I usually ask at the end of the interview is, because we're gonna save this and archive it and our hope is that generations from now, long after you and I are gone, people can still hear this story and hear your personal account of your time in the service, and is there anything that you'd want to say to them or impart to them, just any wisdom or advice or anything along those lines?

Stu Studak: Oh good Lord, there's a number of things I could say. Have a plan. Don't amble through life. You're going to get older. I say this all seriously. You've got to prepare for something. And my crystal ball is still cloudy. I can't tell what's going to happen tomorrow, and I don't have that many years left in my crystal ball to go to, and you young people have years and years and years, so you've got to be prepared for any eventuality, and to this, I suggest a rounded, well-rounded education, and I say that because you should never stop learning. If you stop learning, you're not growing, and if you stop growing, you're not visiting the present to be able to determine what may be my future. And you've got to be prepared. And I've had a number of jobs for which I was not trained, but I was trainable because of education, and the Air Force offered me the opportunity while I was on duty to go to school and get my hours. From not being a high school graduate to being just a couple of courses, to 88 hours, and that prepared me for my next stage in life. Now for the next stage in life, I never stopped learning. When I was teaching school, I was still going to school. I expended my total GI Bill of Rights. I have now something like a total of 260 hours, I really do. And I found the more I learned, the more I needed to learn, and that allows me to expand my vision, and this new horizon for me compels me to go to book stores and I'm still learning about things. And about human conduct, national conduct, national conduct involved in international affairs, and if you don't know this, you don't understand it. Sound bites are terrible. They lack knowledge, they lack the knowledge of understanding and it's your individual responsibility if you want to understand what's going on, you're going to have to indulge yourself in a program of self education, and I say this in all seriousness. And I'm reading a book right now and I just finished a book by Fariz Akeria, and one point, America's Next 100 Years. I'm reading a book by an Iranian of his version of how we got America and the international community got involved in the Middle East. More information is coming out for me to understand, the skullduggery so to speak, and nations always scheme to protect themselves. They have to because it's called survival. And between the individuals, one on one, two people together, I've always sensed there is a struggle for the superior and inferior, that's manifest within the human quality to try to be better than someone else because that's your Dr. Feel Good, and who does not want to feel good? But don't hurt anybody in the process, that's the thing. You want to walk away feeling satisfied you've had a good exchange of information, or that guy's a klutz.

I'm amazed, too, you seem like you're in great shape. Do you work out and that sort of thing? Or how do you, I mean I would never guess your age by looking at you.

Stu Studak: No, I'm a very temporary 86. I'll be 87 next month. I was always on my feet selling newspapers, and working in the factory I was on my feet working a machine. When I got my last job at qualified to engage, I'd run and in the service at Maxwell Field, I would, the Burma Trail, they called it the 4-mile run, I sort of laughed at the squadron, my goal was always to be the first because I enjoyed running.

So you were running well before that was fashionable to do.

Stu Studak: Yeah, but I enjoyed it and it was a stress relief, too, you might say. And then when I was stationed in Abilene at Dyess Air Base flying B-52's, a game came out called racquetball and I fell in love with it and my first competition was in SAC, racquetball. And to this day, and when I came down to Austin here at UT, I signed up for racquetball. I remember the guy in charge was a handballer, he hated that. But eventually racquetball grew and because the girls learned they could take PE credit with a racquet in a nice, air conditioned gym, and the boys would follow. But when I finished, I joined a commercial club, the first commercial club in town that played racquetball and I joined a tournament in Houston in 1970 at the national Y, and to this day I play racquetball three days a week at the North Y up at Redland and North Lamar, and I was in a tournament in April, a Memorial Day tournament in Houston.

That's impressive.

Stu Studak: And I find it very therapeutic and at that point, I found it when I was teaching class or going to school, that it was great therapy for me. A whole change of venue to play racquetball and your mind would rest from all these other things that would clog your mind, and concentrating on racquetball was refreshing, and as a consequence of that, I found I was more efficient. If I played racquetball after teaching class all day long with teenagers, you know, and they were smarter than the average park bears, you just ask 'em, I played racquetball and I'd come home and do my work, grade papers, or ___ prep, I was much more efficient.

That makes sense to me.

Stu Studak: Truly. Well I had to sacrifice today for the racquetball for you, too.

OK, well I appreciate that.

Stu Studak: No, no, I'm certain that it was the type of meeting that if we kept talking on it, I could recall more of my incidents in the service.

Well if you think of any, just feel free to call me, but I really, I'm honored that we had a chance to interview you today and save this and like I mentioned, we'll make copies of this to send to you that you can –

Stu Studak: And on this thing about worldwide service, flying transports and education, you've got to know geography. Geography makes a nation. Japan has no natural minerals. What does it do? It has to go out. There are island nations. There are nations that are land islands. They have to reach out like in South America, two of those ___, nations that have to be, produces, nations that have a bottom economic system like Arabia and Russia is moving into that today,

and you're living in a global world and you've got to know these people, and one of the courses I would suggest strongly is cultural geography, to learn about these people. And I was in Berlin last month and I met, my wife was with me and a woman came up, she had three little girls and we were chatting back and forth, and this little girl was German, English, she wants to learn French next fall. 10 years old.

Yeah, that's impressive.

Stu Studak: But think of the opportunity she's laying for herself, and the education, and the kinds of people. And I finally got a good contact for a pen pal here in Austin, another 10-year-old girl, what a great little thing to really happen, this kind of thing. And even in that pen pal exchange is gonna be an educational content, it's gonna be valuable and measurably valuable, and I'm really impressed with the technology that we have today, cyberspace, and it's reduced this world to a nutshell. You cannot escape it, and it was Muhammad Ali said "float like a butterfly, sting like a bee, and you can run but you can't hide in this ring." You can no longer hide, fortress America. You can no longer hide behind the idea that America is critical to the world. It is not. You cannot hide that America is superior to these other nations in education. It is not. Finland is number one. It's graduating engineers and exploiting them. America is 24th. It was in *Time* magazine about a month ago, they had 'em right, we were 24th in the world. This is not good from a world that is competing. India is right, they wanted to produce automobiles right now. China, there's a thing called the smiley curve, I don't know if you're familiar with economics, but the top of one curve, one arm of it is engineering and brilliance of thought concepts and the processes, then you come to the bottom by the smile and it's the production of it, the manufacturing, then you come up, it's the distribution and the financing. This group at the bottom, they're not gonna stagnate there at the bottom. Why can't we be the thought innovators? Why can't we market the products we produce? I'm thinking of China right now. So education and knowing these other people and their abilities, what you must do to match their abilities, and you think of the PhD's, engineers, the vast majority of them are not American.

No, that's true. You see that on the UT campus, completely.

Stu Studak: Absolutely.

Well sir I'll go ahead and turn the recorder off –

Stu Studak: I'm digressing…

No, I really appreciate it.

[End of recording]