

**FRANK DEVEREAUX**

**Interview 247a**

**February 9, 2012, at The History Center, Diboll, Texas**

**Jonathan Gerland, Interviewer**

**Patsy Colbert, Transcriber**

**ABSTRACT:** In this interview with Jonathan Gerland, Frank Devereaux reminisces about his life growing up in Diboll and attending high school in Lufkin. He also describes his time in the Army Air Corps during World War II and playing high school football in Lufkin. Although a resident of Diboll, Mr. Devereaux moved to Lufkin in order to play football at Lufkin High School for legendary coach Abe Martin. After a short time in college, Mr. Devereaux joined the Army Air Corps and became a bombardier on a B-25 in the 12<sup>th</sup> Air Force, 380<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron, 310<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group based on the island of Corsica and then in Fano, Italy. Returning home from the war, he finished his degree and became a teacher and football coach in south and southeast Texas in the districts of West Columbia, Angleton, and Huffman, eventually becoming a school Superintendent and retiring as the Assistant Superintendent of the Cleveland, Texas schools. He also mentions the racial integration of Cleveland's schools.

**Jonathan Gerland (hereafter JG):** Today is February 9, 2012. My name is Jonathan Gerland and I'm with Mr. Frank Devereaux today. We are at The History Center in Diboll and I'm going to talk to him mostly about his time in World War II as a crew member aboard a B-25 in Italy, I believe is where he was, and then maybe if we have a little time I would like to ask you Mr. Devereaux about playing for Coach Abe Martin at Lufkin High School. But maybe if we can begin maybe just state your name and when and where you were born and then we will jump right into World War II.

**Frank T. Devereaux (hereafter FD):** I'm Frank T. Devereaux and I was born in 1922, Friday on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, 1922 in Alto, Texas, Cherokee County.

**JG:** Alto, Cherokee County. And what was the month?

**FD:** October.

**JG:** October 13<sup>th</sup> on a Friday. And, where did you go to high school?

**FD:** I went to high school in Lufkin, Texas.

**JG:** Okay, you were born in Alto; was all your schooling in Lufkin?

**FD:** No, I went to school in Diboll some. I lived out at Taylor Powell's place. My daddy got killed in 1934.

**JG:** Okay, '34 so you were about 11 or 12. How did he die?

**FD:** He worked for the highway department and got run over between Lufkin and Nacogdoches.

**JG:** Oh no!

**FD:** Up there where the drive in and rest place is now.

**JG:** Yes sir, and did you have brothers and sisters?

**FD:** I had two brothers but both of them are dead, one younger and one older, Bill and Charles.

**JG:** Did your brothers; did they go with you? You said you stayed at whose place, the Powell's?

**FD:** Taylor Powell, my younger brother did but my older brother he didn't. He worked; he had all kind of machinery for his music design and jukeboxes. He had jukeboxes all over this part of Texas.

**JG:** Okay, and which brother was that?

**FD:** It was my older brother Jim Bill.

**JG:** Jim?

**FD:** Jim Bill.

**JG:** Jim Bill. And then your younger brother was Charles?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** Okay, let's go ahead and jump into World War II. I think you were a member of the 380<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron and 310<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group. Is that correct?

**FD:** That is correct.

**JG:** Was that the 12<sup>th</sup> Air Force?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** Okay, where were y'all stationed?

**FD:** Well, we were stationed overseas at the Island of Corsica and then we moved closer to the end of the war so we would be able to make two missions a day sometimes, over on Fano, Italy.

**JG:** How do you spell that?

**FD:** F-a-n-o.

**JG:** F-a-n-o. And I think according to your flight log, Mr. Devereaux kept a flight log, I think it was December 27<sup>th</sup> of '44 was your first flight as a crew member aboard a B-25. Can you tell about that first combat mission? What do you remember about that?

**FD:** When I flew the first one it was a gunner and I just really excited. We didn't see anything. We got shot at with flak quite a bit, but other than that it wasn't too exciting.

**JG:** What was your target?

**FD:** A railroad bridge up in Brenner Pass.

**JG:** For those who don't know what Brenner Pass is or was can you tell a little bit more about that?

**FD:** It's the only way the Germans had to get into Italy other than flying and we had them pretty well covered flying. We had all the bridges in Brenner Pass, railroad and highway because Brenner Pass was only about a mile, two miles wide between the two mountains. That is the only way they had to get in there and we had that thing cut in 52 places at one time.

**JG:** Talking about the transportation routes right?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** So, y'all were mainly bombing railroads and bridges, things that would have taken a long time to rebuild.

**FD:** The only thing we bombed was the bridges. We didn't mess with the roads or anything.

**JG:** The bridges, didn't mess with the roads, okay.

**FD:** We had to be awful careful because the towns were all around the bridges and narrow like that. We were careful we didn't bomb any towns.

**JG:** What was a typical bomb load that the B-25?

**FD:** Four thousand pounds.

**JG:** Four thousand pounds.

**FD:** Four bombs.

**JG:** Four bombs, okay. I think according to your flight log sometimes y'all would carry 8,500 pound bombs. Did that vary much?

**FD:** No, just very seldom. That was a long delay bomb.

**JG:** Okay.

**FD:** We set them where they go off six, eight, or ten hours after they hit the ground, gives the Germans or people time to go to work before they started blowing up.

**JG:** Were all of them pretty much like that, delayed, or just some of them?

**FD:** No, very few.

**JG:** Were there, and I know I guess you ultimately flew 50 missions is that correct?

**FD:** No, I flew 60 missions?

**JG:** Oh, 60 missions okay. We will get to that a little bit later but in general just tell us more about some of those runs that you made. You were telling me one time before about the elevations that y'all flew at. What was the typical elevation that you flew?

**FD:** The maximum flight that we would make would be ten thousand feet because we didn't carry any oxygen equipment with us and if you get above ten thousand feet you had to have some oxygen.

**JG:** I think you told me once before you generally flew between twelve and thirteen thousand and it was fourteen thousand was about the max.

**FD:** Yes, fourteen thousand was the maximum.

**JG:** Okay, how many planes would be in your group? Would you take off in a squadron or...?

**FD:** It would be boxes of six, flights of six and sometimes it would be 24, 30 and it would be all depend on what we were going to do and how many planes we had available at the time.

**JG:** In your group was everybody in B-25's?

**FD:** Yes, all B-25's.

**JG:** All of them were B-25's. Did you have any fighter escorts?

**FD:** No, none.

**JG:** You were telling me once before that the Tuskegee Airmen might have flown.

**FD:** Yes, we had very few missions with them.

**JG:** How did those missions work out? Were they at your base or did y'all meet up in the air?

**FD:** No, they met us and we got into Italy they joined us.

**JG:** Okay, so y'all met in the air then.

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** Were those missions... were there German fighters that attacked?

**FD:** We didn't see any German fighters.

**JG:** Never saw any German fighters, okay. Approximately how many missions would they have accompanied you on?

**FD:** Oh, I would say eight or ten at the very most.

**JG:** At the very most, okay. So, you never had any direct contact with them other than seeing them in the sky?

**FD:** That is all.

**JG:** And, what kind of planes did they fly?

**FD:** They liked the P-47's.

**JG:** Did they later fly P-51's that you knew of?

**FD:** I didn't see any.

**JG:** You didn't see any, okay. Let's see, tell us about the flak. How was that?

**FD:** The flak was terrible, especially me being in front of the plane, and I had to crawl up to get to my position and had to crawl back to get back out of there and that flak was something terrible. We could hear it going off, exploding, and you probably, after reading this little book here, you noticed there were very few missions that we flew that we didn't have flak. [He is referring to his flight log.]

**JG:** What you were telling me about the size of the shells that they shot?

**FD:** It was 88 millimeter and 105 millimeters that they went off.

**JG:** Now, your first mission you said you were a gunner. Where were you positioned in the plane?

**FD:** Upper turret gunner.

**JG:** Upper turret. How was that?

**FD:** It wasn't good.

**JG:** How many missions did you fly in the upper turret?

**FD:** About four or five at the most.

**JG:** And those were your first ones right?

**FD:** That is right.

**JG:** Did you ever shoot?

**FD:** No.

**JG:** Why was it bad to be up there?

**FD:** Just uncomfortable to straddle a little bad seat and all looking up all the time.

**JG:** How was your frontal vision, could you see much out front or just up above?

**FD:** Normally from your face up.

**JG:** Face up, pretty much your line of sight upwards.

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** Then eventually you moved up into the bombardier correct?

**FD:** That is right.

**JG:** And, where was that position?

**FD:** In the nose of the plane naturally.

**JG:** The B-25 had an all glass nose correct?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** So, you could see a lot more that way.

**FD:** Oh yes, you would see too much. (laughter)

**JG:** I guess under your feet was actually glass wasn't it?

**FD:** No.

**JG:** No, it wasn't. Just in front of your feet then.

**FD:** Above my head and the sides of it.

**JG:** Okay, that is right. The very bottom was covered.

**FD:** To exit, the only time you could exit up there on an emergency exit was when the plane was on the ground and the engine was not running because the left hand side was the emergency exit and when you jumped out you jumped into the left engine. Of course, that picture you can see that.

**JG:** Yes, yes. So when...so how did everybody get in? You had to crawl into your spot directly huh?

**FD:** I didn't get up there until just before we got on a bomb run.

**JG:** Just before a bomb run, okay.

**FD:** As soon as they dropped the bombs and closed the door I got out of there.

**JG:** Well describe that. Describe what the job of a bombardier is and what you did.

**FD:** Well I didn't do much of anything. I helped navigate and helped get the bombs in the plane right and that is about all I did, drop the bombs. We, not being from bombardier school, I had to do what the guy was doing ahead of me. He opened his door, I opened mine. When that bomb came out I hit the switch. We had an intervalometer machine up in the bomb department.

**JG:** Say that again.

**FD:** Intervalometer, it had the number of bombs, you set the number of bombs and how far you wanted to drop them apart. All you had to do then was hit a button after they came out of there they would be that away, lined up in the bombardier.

**JG:** So, the lead plane then would pretty much dictate when to drop the bombs correct?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** Were you ever the lead bombardier in a group?

**FD:** No, no, I never was the lead bombardier. I was always following somebody.

**JG:** How did that come about? How was the lead bombardier chosen?

**FD:** He graduated from school. I don't know how he got to be lead bombardier.

**JG:** Was it always the same one you flew behind?

**FD:** No, no, different ones.

**JG:** Different ones, okay. Tell me about any particular missions. I know you got the Purple Heart. Can you describe what happened on that mission?

**FD:** Well I got hit just as soon as I got the doors closed.

**JG:** The bomb bay doors.

**FD:** The bomb bay doors closed and I hollered real loud that I had been hit and the pilot said "who is this" and I said "Frank Devereaux up in the nose" and they sent a boy up there to help get me out and drag me back and they put a towel over my hip. I got hit in this hip.

**JG:** The left hip.

**FD:** They put a towel over it with a belt around it to hold the pressure on it to keep it from bleeding so bad. As soon as we hit the ground on the runway the back Corsica they had a doctor and two nurses there to pick me up. The next day they flew, they took me to the emergency room and the next day they flew me into Rome, Italy to the hospital.

**JG:** Did it...was there any shrapnel or anything still in your body or just the wound that it made?

**FD:** Just the wound that it made, everything came through.

**JG:** Everything came through. How much time did you miss?

**FD:** I missed about two and half, almost three months.

**JG:** Three months. What mission was that?

**FD:** The twenty-second mission.

**JG:** The twenty-second mission.

**FD:** I think it's in that book there.



**JG:** Yes, I meant to review all that before you came, but I didn't do my homework, did I? What about the weather? How did the weather factor into what y'all were doing?

**FD:** Well, it seemed like it rained quite a bit on us. We had a lot of snow.

**JG:** I guess your first mission being late December, you would have gone through the winter months and into spring, I guess.

**FD:** We were on the 22<sup>nd</sup> mission and on the 24<sup>th</sup> it looks like February 24<sup>th</sup> of '45.

**JG:** February 24<sup>th</sup> of '45, yes. Brenner Pass we bombed...

**FD:** And, the left engine got knocked out at the same time.

**JG:** Your entry in your diary says Brenner Pass we bombed, I'm not sure what that word is... Lavis...

**D:** Lavis, yes.

**JG:** ...Lavis Railroad. I can't make that. Flak was heavy I was hit in the hip, one cylinder was knocked out of left engine. And, your bomb load was 4 one thousand pound bombs.

**FD:** That is right.

**JG:** So that was February 24<sup>th</sup> of '45 but it looks like you were flying again on March 3<sup>rd</sup>. Is that right?

**FD:** It might have been.

**JG:** So, you were only out about a week. Is that right?

**FD:** I thought it was longer than that.

**JG:** According to this it was March 3<sup>rd</sup> you were back flying again.

**FD:** I went to Rome.

**JG:** Looks like you flew most of March '45. But, so how did you...you are pretty much bombing by sight, is that correct?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** And how were y'all able to determine how effective your bombing runs were?

**FD:** Well, they made pictures made of it.

**JG:** Okay.

**FD:** Of course the lead bombardiers had the bomb sights with them, you know. They used that and we had, at the end of the war, we had radar shooting lines across it. The pilots could fly this with the help of the bombardier. They would shoot across the target and all we had to do was follow those lines in. Before the mission started the bombardier, the pilot and the co-pilot went to a meeting. We knew where we were going, what was there and what to expect to see and our other crew members, three of them, went to our plane and got it ready and all to make sure everything was adjusted and this and that.

**JG:** So, the pilot and the bombardier got the official orders then?

**FD:** Yes, we knew all about it before we left the meeting, see all that was handed to us.

**JG:** How many crewmen were there, five or six?

**FD:** Six.

**JG:** Always six.

**FD:** Had a tail gunner, radio operator, and an upper turret gunner and then we had the bombardier, the pilot and the co-pilot.

**JG:** Was there ever anybody else in your plane that was hit?

**FD:** No.

**JG:** You were the only one huh?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** Did you pretty much have the same crew throughout or did you change crews some?

**FD:** Pretty well, pretty well.

**JG:** Pretty much the same crew. Y'all all started and ended about the same time?

**FD:** Well, what happens when you go over there they take one of you and put with an old crew and after you fly a few missions they get you all back together again and be back with your six members that you trained in the states with.

**JG:** So, like when you started off as a gunner then you went down to bombardier was there someone that you already knew who took your place in the top turret?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** What happened to the one in the bombardier seat when you took over?

**FD:** He got sick and left. I don't know what they did with him.

**JG:** Okay. Now, did you know these men before you got there?

**FD:** Oh yes, the ones I flew with I did.

**JG:** You trained then together.

**FD:** Oh yes, we flew all over the state of Texas.

**JG:** Where was your...where did you train?

**FD:** We trained in San Antonio most of the time.

**JG:** In B-25's?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** Did you every fly in any other planes?

**FD:** No.

**JG:** Just B-25's okay. Were there others in your outfit it was all made up of B-25's or were there heavier bombers?

**FD:** No, all B-25's.

**JG:** Y'all never flew with any other types of planes then huh?

**FD:** No, they had another group over there which was B-24's. They are the ones that flew to Ploesti Oil Fields [Romania] and all that oil business. The Germans were there.

**JG:** That is where Gayle Cruthirds was in that outfit.

**FD:** Yes, they were in Southern Italy, way down south of us.

**JG:** Okay. And, you were telling me in your diary, your flight log, you stopped after your 37<sup>th</sup> mission you stopped recording it. Why was that?

**FD:** I was told to stop making a record of it in case we...there was a rumor going around that the Germans might be ready to invade Corsica and some of my people didn't want their names on a piece of paper in case the Germans did and we had damaged some of their families somewhere along the line and get back even with us. All we had in Corsica

was a tent to sleep in and we had a fox hole beside each one of our beds and we didn't have a lot of stuff.

**JG:** Just intense then huh? You didn't have much protection?

**FD:** In Fano we had a hotel. (laughter)

**JG:** Oh, in Fano you had a hotel huh. (laughter) How did you keep up with your diary? When did you write in your diary, after each mission?

**FD:** After each mission.

**JG:** Okay. Typically what time of day were your missions?

**FD:** Normally we would fly pretty early in the mornings.

**JG:** Dark or light?

**FD:** No, no.

**JG:** You never flew in the dark?

**FD:** I don't remember any of them no.

**JG:** So, you took off around daybreak or shortly after?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** How long was a mission time wise?

**FD:** It was about three and a half to four hours, four and a half hours was maximum.

**JG:** And that was there and back?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** So, distance-wise what would be, say what would be a four hour trip there and back?

**FD:** Well, there and back would be six or seven hundred miles.

**JG:** Wow, six or seven hundred miles. That is round trip or one way?

**FD:** Round trip.

**JG:** So, as far as where you were your target was say three hundred miles then was about an average trip?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** And, your plane had plenty of fuel to do that?

**FD:** Yes, at the end of the war, just after the end of it when we went to Fano it was a lot less than that because we were just over one mountain from the battle because, some of our missions at that time, we flew against and dropped bombs on anti-personnel bombs which was a small bomb on a troop, German troops.

**JG:** You were dropping them on troops then?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** And again just so I understand it right no enemy fighters ever attacked y'all?

**FD:** We had two attacks is all I remember.

**JG:** Two attacks, okay.

**FD:** In fact there is a picture of it in here.

**JG:** Tell about that. Tell about those attacks. What do you remember?

**FD:** The only thing I remember is that they attacked us when we were gone. We were gone on a mission and when we came back our runway had been bombed.

**JG:** Oh okay. I was meaning your group, you and your plane. Was your plane ever attacked by fighters?

**FD:** No.

**JG:** No, okay. But your base was attacked while you were gone?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** Did it keep you from landing or not?

**FD:** No, we had metal strips we used, we landed on but they could move real easy and the land was real smooth joining our runway and we landed off the side of the metal strip. They had that metal strip that locked.

**JG:** It was meshed together. What is that called? There is a word for that.

**FD:** All we used was runway.

**JG:** Just the runway okay. And so, describe the base a little bit, say Fano base, who all was there? The people that kept the plane running and that kind of thing, can you describe that?

**FD:** Well just before the war was over when the Italians quit fighting, some of them moved in with us and worked.

**JG:** The Italians did?

**FD:** Yes, you know, they quit before the war was over, they quit fighting. They never did do much anyway.

**JG:** So what did they do on your base?

**FD:** Well there wasn't much for them to do on our base. Best I remember our boys took care of all that. We only had one runway. We landed one way or the other and that was it. We didn't have a choice and we only had a highway between us and the water to take off.

**JG:** So y'all would be back in time for lunch huh?

**FD:** Oh yes!

**JG:** You would eat breakfast, go do your mission and come back and have lunch huh?

**FD:** Yes, if we were going to be gone during lunch time we carried it with us.

**JG:** So, then after your mission I guess you ate and then were y'all debriefed or had meetings after the missions?

**FD:** Oh yes.

**JG:** How did that go?

**FD:** All we did was report what happened and what we thought about as the results of the bridge or if we saw any damage, you know. When the weather was pretty we could see where the bombs hit the bridge but if it was the railroad trains on it or what we could give a pretty good report on that.

**JG:** Did you ever have to go back and re-bomb anything you had bombed earlier?

**FD:** Oh yes several times.

**JG:** Why was that?

**FD:** Sometimes we missed it and they got...they had sections of railroads and things on railcars that they moved up and down and got them in there in a hurry.

**JG:** To replace what you damaged.

**FD:** Yes, they replaced what we bombed real hurry except for them big bridges and they were in trouble there.

**JG:** Yes, on the big bridges, the big viaducts and stuff.

**FD:** Yes, yes.

**JG:** So, I imagine y'all tried to get those as often as you could huh?

**FD:** We sure did.

**JG:** Now were you ever high enough, well not high enough but low enough I guess, especially when you are in the nose and stuff there looking down could you kind of see? How well could you see what was going on down on the ground?

**FD:** Well we could see highways. I could see highways, cars and things running up and down them. The thing that you'd see more than anything else is the big Po River was something else and we crossed it every time we left the ground and the boats and things that was on the river. Of course, we never did try to bomb a boat or nothing and we had a lot of bridges. That is where we were going most of the time. We kept the Germans from coming in there.

**JG:** Was there a railroad bridge across the Po?

**FD:** Oh yes, several of them.

**JG:** Did y'all bomb those or did you keep those open.

**FD:** We bombed them.

**JG:** You bombed them.

**FD:** When the war, my last mission, when the war was right at the end they were about a mile and half strip between two clouds of dust, the Germans retreating and the Americans after them.

**JG:** Now you were telling me what your last mission was and I guess you said you flew 60 missions, correct?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** What did you drop on your last mission?

**FD:** It was paperwork telling the Germans how to surrender and what to do and be sure and get rid of their guns and ammunition and all.

**JG:** No bombs, just the papers. How was that distributed?

**FD:** In sacks.

**JG:** In sacks okay. Were the sacks opened or just dropped as whole sacks.

**FD:** Just dropped the whole sack.

**JG:** Just dropped the whole sack. And, I guess you could go up to 4,000 pounds of pamphlets huh? A lot of toe sacks huh?

**FD:** We didn't have to go far to drop those because we were in Fano then, just over the mountain.

**JG:** Just dropped them down huh?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** That was pretty close to the end of the war too wasn't it?

**FD:** Oh yes.

**JG:** Were you shot at on that mission?

**FD:** No.

**JG:** What about the missions leading up to that? How did that go? Were they easier missions toward the end?

**FD:** Oh yes, it got real easy!

**JG:** Got real easy.

**FD:** Wasn't much to it.

**JG:** Now, you also got another medal for bravery I think. Tell about that and you fixing the fuel leak on one of the wings.

**FD:** It was down in the bomb bay area.

**JG:** Down in the bomb bay, okay.



**FD:** The water and gas was sparking out there pretty good and I cut the tongue out of my boot and wrapped around it, of course I had just long...all of us wore boots and I had...

**JG:** Lace up boots?

**FD:** Yes, and I had a long string and I wrapped the tongue around it. It didn't cut it into it just cut it half in two and I wrapped that boot around there and put the string on it and got it tight enough and put a towel where all the gas would have to just drip from that. When we first started the gas was squirting out.

**JG:** Just squirting out huh?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** And that was the main fuel to the engines huh?

**FD:** Divided between the two engines.

**JG:** Oh, between the two okay.

**FD:** And we were all ready in case we didn't make it back and ran out of gas we all had our parachutes on anyway, we were ready.

**JG:** Ready just in case.

**FD:** I couldn't understand why, I asked the pilot twice to land that thing someplace. I would rather be a prisoner than a dead flyer. (laughter)

**JG:** But he kept on going huh?

**FD:** Yes, we made it back.

**JG:** What rank was the pilot? What was his ranking, was it colonel?

**FD:** He was captain.

**JG:** Captain, captain, okay. And, now how did the fuel leak happen, was it because you got hit or just something wrong mechanically?

**FD:** No it was flak.

**JG:** Oh flak did that.

**FD:** From an 88 millimeter.

**JG:** An 88 millimeter got it. But no person was hit?

**FD:** No.

**JG:** Were there any other times, I know when you mentioned your Purple Heart one of the engines was hit, any other instances where the plane was damaged, the wing or...?

**FD:** Usually every trip we were on we were hit someplace.

**JG:** Someplace huh? So that was part of getting the plane ready again was taping it up huh?

**FD:** Yes, the crew members, our crew on the ground was ready; when they got the plane there, they fixed it.

**JG:** What color were these B-25's, were they green or silver or gray?

**FD:** Kind of grayish, yes, all of them were the same.

**JG:** All of them the same on the bottom and the top. The whole plane was the same color huh?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** Kind of a gray color?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** And did you fly in the same plane pretty much every time or did you switch around?

**FD:** Oh yes, we were in the same plane.

**JG:** So that was y'all's particular plane then.

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** I think there is that photograph of you. I think it says "the terrified togglier."

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** Who painted that on the nose of the plane?

**FD:** That was one of our ground crew members.

**JG:** Did any of the planes in your group have a lot of nose art?

**FD:** Yes, a lot of them did.

**JG:** Okay, like pin up girls and stuff like that.

**FD:** Oh yes, girls were more popular on the plane. (laughter)

**JG:** Did y'all's ever have any of that?

**FD:** No.

**JG:** I'm thinking if there is anything else I can ask. Were there any targets, you may have already answered this, but you were saying pretty much you always bombed railroad bridges and things like that, were there any, and of course you dropped the pamphlets at the end of the war, any other types of missions?

**FD:** Not the section that I flew, I don't remember anything except the road, the railroad and the highway bridges because that is one thing we were informed do not drop any bombs into any towns and things.

**JG:** To not hit the towns huh? How many towns would you have to fly over to get to your target?

**FD:** It's a bunch of them. Italy is pretty crowded. The Leaning Tower of Pisa we flew by it nearly every mission when I was on the Island of Corsica we could see it, and every meeting we left before we went on the mission we were told not to drop anything close to it.

**JG:** (Laughter) didn't want it to fall all the way over.

**FD:** It was already leaning. (laughter)

**JG:** It was already leaning, so that was kind of an unofficial point of bearing then huh.

**FD:** The cables were still holding it.

**JG:** Cables were still holding it up huh? Any other memories like that of things you remember seeing.

**FD:** That is about the only thing I have.

**JG:** You were talking about the Po River earlier were there ever any gunships on that river?

**FD:** I imagine so; I don't really remember. We couldn't tell whether the shells were coming from the water or the land because we were up near twelve to fourteen thousand

feet, you know, it don't take you long to get across the river, but from that area it was a pretty country, farms and all that. It reminds me of a place out in California.

**JG:** Yes, the Po River Valley. So, y'all never made an effort to get the places that might be shooting at you? Your job was just to get through without getting hit and drop your bombs and then get back home right?

**FD:** Yes, that was our primary operation.

**JG:** Y'all never tried to take out any anti-aircraft installments or anything?

**FD:** No.

**JG:** And no fighters went with y'all or anything?

**FD:** No.

**JG:** I guess the B-25 was a relatively light bomber or medium bomber I guess.

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** How was it overall as a plane? I guess you didn't fly anything else so you don't have much to compare it to, but how did you feel flying a B-25?

**FD:** Well, I thought it was the best after Tokyo and after they went through all that then.

**JG:** You talking about when Jimmy Doolittle had the raid?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** And of course he flew the B-25's off the Aircraft carrier.

**FD:** That is right.

**JG:** So, you were pretty proud then to fly the B-25?

**FD:** Yes, I was at a little field, Elton field [Transcriber's note: perhaps he means Ellington Field] when Doolittle and them was training they had a special runway marked off like a ship and you could see them coming almost straight up like the jets do now. They bombed downtown and a lot of people don't realize what they did, you know, because they weren't heavily loaded they just had small bombs and they did a lot of damage downtown. That is what we were told not to do every time we turned around, "don't drop anything in town." I didn't want to anyway.

**JG:** Of course you were over in Europe and he was bombing Tokyo.

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** I guess that was as much moral as anything to bomb their mainland.

**FD:** They were still remembering Pearl Harbor and I remembered it too. I wouldn't have minded dropping bombs over there.

**JG:** Right, right. That was a pretty amazing feat that we did, I guess the Navy and the Air Force, the Army working together to do that, talking about Doolittle's Raid. So, talk a little bit about your training. You practiced out of San Antonio right?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** How many flights would you have flown? I guess you trained in the B-25's there as well.

**FD:** That is right.

**JG:** Did y'all do practice bombing?

**FD:** We did a little of it, not very much. Most of it was just navigating. We flew all over the state of Texas. We went to everybody's home town and if you had a girlfriend and she went to college you flew to that town.

**JG:** So, y'all flew over Diboll and Lufkin then huh?

**FD:** Oh yes, we stayed in Houston waiting for Nolen D. Pickett suppose to come from Liberty and come up there and visit with us and we went back with them some.

**JG:** So when y'all would fly would there be other planes with you or just single planes?

**FD:** Well most of the time we were single planes in the states when we were just visiting.

**JG:** Yes, but y'all never landed up here or anything. You just flew up and here and back.

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** Yes, just flying over, just getting experience then huh?

**FD:** That is right.

**JG:** Just getting experience.

**FD:** But we flew into Waco and San Antonio, and out of San Antonio, Uvalde, Dallas, Fort Worth. We were all over the state of Texas.

**JG:** I noticed in your flight log you had a couple of different addresses. I think you had a Livingston address and...

**FD:** Had what?

**JG:** You listed in your flight log where it had a place for your name and address I think at one point you put Livingston and another one you had Baytown. Were you living there before the war or after?

**FD:** After the war.

**JG:** After the war, okay. Where did you join up, at Lufkin?

**FD:** In Houston.

**JG:** In Houston, okay. What year did you graduate high school?

**FD:** 1941.

**JG:** So, spring of '41 then.

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** And when did you join the Army?

**FD:** About two weeks after I graduated from high school.

**JG:** Okay, so before we were in the war then right?

**FD:** That is right.

**JG:** So, you joined before Pearl Harbor?

**FD:** I was home on leave when Pearl Harbor got bombed. Mother had a café in Willis, Texas and I was in Willis, Texas when the Jap's bombed Pearl Harbor. I got a phone call shortly after the first bomb landed to get back. I was stationed in Panama City, Florida in Tyndall Field.

**JG:** So, you graduated from high school and joined up pretty soon after that. Why did you do that?

**FD:** I just...they was drafting a bunch of people and I didn't want to get drafted. I wanted to get in the Air Force.

**JG:** Okay, so you wanted to choose where you went. Any particular interest in the Air Force? Did you want to be a pilot or anything?

**FD:** No, not really just wanted to get in the Air Force to keep from walking. (laughter)

**JG:** So, what were you doing in Panama City?

**FD:** I was stationed in Panama City they were just opening up a field there. In fact we didn't have any barracks or nothing else. The war hadn't even started then, but they sent a crew of us down there to start that.

**JG:** To start the base then, it was brand new. And, so where were you when...you said you were in Willis I guess, but and you got the phone call, were you at the house or at the restaurant?

**FD:** No, mother got it at her house.

**JG:** At her house okay. I was just wondering if you could describe where you were when you actually got the call. Well, let me back up let me ask it this way. Do you remember when you first heard about Pearl Harbor?

**FD:** Yes, I remember it the day before I got a phone call.

**JG:** Where were you when you heard?

**FD:** I was at Willis, Texas at the café.

**JG:** You were at the café when you got the news. That was on a Sunday morning how long did it take before you got the news or the town when you first heard about it?

**FD:** I don't know. I imagine three or four hours at the most. I'm just guessing.

**JG:** So, how soon were you expected to be back at base after you got the call?

**FD:** Well I didn't give it a thought.

**JG:** They just said get back huh?

**FD:** Yes, I didn't want to go to Pearl Harbor but I got the call to get back.

**JG:** When were you sent to San Antonio?

**FD:** I don't know, I spent a lot of time in San Antonio.

**JG:** You didn't go over and fly combats until December of '44 so, between Pearl Harbor December of '41 and '44 what were you doing?

**FD:** Well I went to gunnery school and I was an instructor at the gunnery school at Tyndall Field. Me and another guy, I was getting some of these letters out of here and I saw in there where me and a pilot had a crash in AT-6 at Kindle field. What happened I was a target operator in the back of an AT-6.

**JG:** And that is a Texan right? The AT-6 was known as the Texan.

**FD:** Yes, AT-6, advanced trainer.

**JG:** Oh okay.

**FD:** It had a hydraulic wench to let the target out because the gunners were trained you drop that target out at fourteen feet long and three feet diameter. And it got wrapped, the cable got wrapped around the tail wing and I cut it in two and cut the cable off and cut it in two and it hung on to the tail wheel and when we landed we turned around and turned the plane over upside down on us. A few years ago I saw that letter and I started to bring it down here, but I had this letter I wrote to Washington to find out what happened to my pilot and I got a letter back from them that he was killed in the South Pacific later on as a pilot.

**JG:** So, he was a Navy pilot?

**FD:** He was originally from Canada. We had a lot of them come in from Canada to the United States and trained, turned out to be pilots.

**JG:** Trained with y'all.

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** Was he in the Navy?

**FD:** Air Corps.

**JG:** Army Air Corps, okay, but based over there. So, how soon after the war were you discharged?

**FD:** It was probably about a month I guess after I got home. I came back on a ship. We had a choice. We all had choices to fly the plane back or come back on the ship and I didn't want to fly back in one of them war wearied B-24's or B-17's so, I went to Naples on a bus, Naples, Italy, and got on a ship and came back. I was seven days coming back.

**JG:** Because you felt safer then?

**FD:** Oh yes.



**JG:** Safer than being on as you described a worn torn bomber that had been shot up?

**FD:** Yes, they had all them planes they had to bring back to get out of Italy.

**JG:** Right, I never actually thought about that I guess, but did they have many problems with the planes coming back?

**FD:** I don't know of any but...

**JG:** You didn't want to take a chance. (laughter)

**FD:** I wasn't involved in it but, they had a bunch of them lined up.

**JG:** Ready to bring them home huh?

**FD:** I got home and when I got back to the States it wasn't anything said about me being discharged. Mother met me at San Antonio and carried me back to Corrigan. She had a café in Corrigan about that time and I got home and they had notified me immediately to get back to San Antonio to get discharged. So, she drove me back down there and I got discharged.

**JG:** Well, I'm sorry I didn't do my homework here. I meant to read back over some of your log here, but we may think about something else to ask you here in a minute. If we can, let's back up to your high school days and talk about Coach Abe Martin playing football.

**FD:** Well, I was living in Diboll out here going to elementary school and I had an uncle in Lufkin, George Powell, was chief of police and he got me and W. D. Barge from Zavalla and his folks and they got us a rent room. They got us a room with Mrs. Perkins in Lufkin and I started high school in Lufkin.

**JG:** With Mr. Powell who was chief of police?

**FD:** He just took care of all of us. We didn't live with him; we lived with the Perkins'. They rented us a room up there. That was back, people didn't hear of that back in those days but, I was there four years with the Perkins. I was co-captain of the 1940's Lufkin Panthers, me and John L. Miller. We were in the state playoff every year. We didn't win it any year.

**JG:** I understand before Coach Abe Martin came Lufkin wasn't too good, but he turned it around didn't he?

**FD:** He did. He was a good one.

**JG:** Now, what was your first year to play football?

**FD:** '37.

**JG:** The '37 year and he started just the year before?

**FD:** Yes, I think so.

**JG:** What position...you played end?

**FD:** I was full back and guard.

**JG:** Full back and guard, okay.

**FD:** We scrimmaged Diboll their first year they had a six man team. We got six of our Lufkin Panthers and scrimmaged them in Lufkin.

**JG:** So, you had six from the big Lufkin team to play the Diboll six?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** How did that work out?

**FD:** It worked out real good. We beat them! My brother was one of the Diboll boys.

**JG:** Oh, so you played your younger brother?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** You played Charles then, your younger brother.

**FD:** Yes, Charles.

**JG:** Well tell me a little bit about Coach Martin. What do you remember about playing for him?

**FD:** Well I didn't know there was anything different than Coach Abe Martin because that is the only one I ever had, but he was a good one.

**JG:** He was the only one you had.

**FD:** We had three coaches, Abe and two more, and I played ball at Baylor and I got discharged... about two weeks after I was discharged from the service I started to school and I had a scholarship on football and Abe Martin was coaching at TCU and I had a real good day that day. We got through and TCU beat us but I had a good day tackling.

**JG:** For Baylor?

**FD:** For Baylor against Abe Martin. (laughter)

**JG:** Against your old coach huh?

**FD:** I went down to the hotel, they came down and stayed in the hotel before the game and I went down and visited with him and he said I don't know why you didn't come to TCU. I would have give you a scholarship.

**JG:** Here is...let's see...Coach Martin that is a 1939. I think you are over here towards the right.

**FD:** Roscoe Ivy is leaning on my shoulder someplace.

**JG:** We are looking at a photograph from the newspaper, the 1939 Lufkin Panthers team and I believe you are...let's see...back row, third row, Spivey, McKinney...I think it would be those guys there. So, let's see where is Martin? Martin, Glenn, Spivey, that is you right there. Devereaux and Ivy is right there. Is that him?

**FD:** I think so.

**JG:** Can you see what number you were there? I can't make out the number.

**FD:** I can't either, 21 I think.

**JG:** So, what was that uniform? It looks like the shoulder pad part is striped.

**FD:** It is.

**JG:** Do you remember what colors that was?

**FD:** Purple and white.

**JG:** Purple and white. What color was the shirt?

**FD:** I can't tell you.

**JG:** Was it like gray or you can't tell? The shoulder parts were purple and white. Were you playing that year that there was a player and I forget his name right at the moment but his spleen was injured.

**FD:** His what?

**JG:** His spleen was injured and he died. He was a Lufkin player. I think up in Jacksonville, Mr. Ivy was telling me about that. It was under Coach Abe Martin. One of the Lufkin Panther players was injured in a game and ended up dying from that. I think it

was about '37. His father was an Army officer, I believe and there was something about him being accepted to West Point. You don't remember that?

**FD:** No, I don't.

**JG:** Well anyway Mr. Ivy was telling me a little bit about that.

**FD:** Is that a Lufkin Panther there?

**JG:** Yes sir that is the '41 team. You graduated...well that would be the fall of '41 I guess.

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** And, you graduated the spring of '41. That is the '42 team. That is a picture there of Coach Martin. So, what do you think about some of this talk about renaming Abe Martin stadium?

**FD:** I don't like it. I don't think it will ever happen. I hope it doesn't.

**JG:** So, again you think that Abe Martin sort of set the standard then for Lufkin's football?

**FD:** Yes sir.

**JG:** Tell me a little bit about some of the games. Any particular games you remember when you played football? You remember playing Nacogdoches?

**FD:** I remember them every year. It was always something big, always wanting to meet them at the river, half way.

**JG:** So, what does that mean meet them at the river?

**FD:** Tear them up!

**JG:** On game day? Did y'all ever do that?

**FD:** No.

**JG:** Nobody ever met?

**FD:** I think there was some of them that did.

**JG:** Now how did y'all travel?

**FD:** We traveled on bus, school bus.

**JG:** I think Roscoe Ivy was saying at least some of the games it was a chartered bus that Lufkin traveled on. They had chartered buses.

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** Anything...I think I was reading in the newspapers too, I forget which season it was, I think you had a broken elbow or something at the beginning of one of the seasons. Do you remember that?

**FD:** Yes, I still have trouble with it.

**JG:** How did you break your elbow?

**FD:** I got it hung up in the crowd and jumped on it and turned it around and got it behind me.

**JG:** Playing football?

**FD:** Yes, my shoulder is in worse shape now than my elbow.

**JG:** Yes, I think whatever season that was Stephen F. Austin High School from Houston was coming up to Lufkin to play the season opener and it said everybody was ready but it said "smashing end Devereaux was going to have to miss that game because of his broke elbow." I think SFA beat Lufkin 20 to 13 or 21 to 13 that game. It said that there was a special train that came up from Houston that brought the Houston fans and the band and everything and they got off at the railroad station and of course y'all are playing over there by Lufkin Industries now or where the Boys & Girls Club I guess is. So, they had a little parade from the railroad station to the stadium.

**FD:** Yes, that school we started there in midterm of 1940 at that new school down there.

**JG:** Midterm of '40. So, that was a pretty new field that you played on. How did it compare to other towns you visited, their fields?

**FD:** Well, back in those days a football field was a football field. You couldn't hardly tell the difference in them.

**JG:** They were all the same.

**FD:** They were all the same.

**JG:** None of them were any better as far as drainage or no grass burs or anything? They all had grass burs?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** No artificial turf, anyways?

**FD:** No.

**JG:** Well, I believe that is most of what I had. Is there anything that I have neglected or forgot to ask or anything you want to add to your time in the service?

**FD:** No, just glad to be back in Diboll.

**JG:** Glad to be back in Diboll. What did you end up doing, did you finish at Baylor?

**FD:** No, I finished at Stephen F. Austin, got my Master's degree and taught school.

**JG:** What did you teach?

**FD:** Well, I started out at elementary and I was high school and school superintendent.

**JG:** Where were you a school superintendent?

**FD:** Huffman, Texas.

**JG:** Huffman, okay. What was your master's degree in?

**FD:** Just education administration.

**JG:** Were you still Superintendent during integration, racial integration?

**FD:** No, I was Assistant Superintendent at Cleveland [Texas] at that time.

**JG:** In Cleveland, okay, during integration. How did that go?

**FD:** I was in charge of buses and cafeterias all that and I was rather surprised that it went as well as it did and as smooth as it did at that time.

**JG:** Any particular incidents or anything that happened when that happened?

**FD:** No.

**JG:** I don't know much about Cleveland's integration. Was it in the late sixties?

**FD:** Yes, about that time. I am trying to remember what date and year it was.

**JG:** Diboll started in '65 when they started.

**FD:** I was going to say about '65 or '67.

**JG:** Was it full integration all at once or did they try to do the...

**FD:** On Monday morning integration was over with as far as I was concerned because we had bus service and up until that time we didn't have integration on the buses.

**JG:** So, it was complete from first grade all the way to twelfth grade?

**FD:** Schools and all.

**JG:** Was it at the beginning of a year then when school season started?

**FD:** I don't think so. I don't think so.

**JG:** So, was it between semesters?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** I think Diboll started what they called Freedom of Choice and, you know, some of the elementary students integrated and then the high school eventually integrated but it took a couple of terms I guess. But, Cleveland was all at once is what you are saying all across the board?

**FD:** Monday morning!

**JG:** Started and ended on Monday morning. Did all the black students go to all the white schools or did the facilities for the black students did some whites go to those schools?

**FD:** No we had it a certain grade at a certain place and if you were close to that school that is where you went to school regardless of what color you were.

**JG:** So, there was more than one elementary school then.

**FD:** Yes, we had a couple of them.

**JG:** Well, how integrated was it really then if it was by where you lived?

**FD:** Yes, but you only had one school mostly elementary school over where the blacks were.

**JG:** So, then like the high schools?

**FD:** The high school was way across town.

**JG:** So the high schools, there were actually still two high schools for Cleveland then or just one?

**FD:** No we only had one high school.

**JG:** So, the black students then started attending the white high school?

**FD:** Yes, I know we had very little or no trouble at all. And, back in the early days whites and blacks had a lot of trouble down there.

**JG:** Around Cleveland?

**FD:** I don't remember it because I wasn't involved in it. I wasn't there at that time.

**JG:** Where did you teach before that?

**FD:** Well, I coached football at West Columbia and I coached football at Angleton and then the next time I started working at Huffman worked my way up. We only had six grades at Huffman and we started building a grade a year and I got Superintendent and we had a high school.

**JG:** Was that where you retired from Huffman?

**FD:** No, I retired from Cleveland.

**JG:** So, you went back to Cleveland. What position were you in at Cleveland?

**FD:** Assistant Superintendent.

**JG:** You were that earlier too right?

**FD:** Yes.

**JG:** Assistant, then Huffman Superintendent, and then back to assistant. How many years between those two, between when you left and came back at Cleveland?

**FD:** I don't remember where I got you fouled up. I was only there one time.

**JG:** Oh okay. I guess I'm confused.

**FD:** I was only there one time.

**JG:** So, where did you retire from?

**FD:** I retired from Cleveland.



**JG:** From Cleveland, okay.

**FD:** My wife retired from Cleveland, my present wife.

**JG:** Okay. What year did you retire?

**FD:** '83.

**JG:** Did you move to Diboll at that time?

**FD:** No, I stayed in Cleveland. I had a farm out at Romayor.

**JG:** Did you have cattle?

**FD:** Yes, and I drove a truck for James McWaters.

**JG:** I don't know who that is. Okay, Mr. Devereaux.

**FD:** You think that will do it.

**JG:** I think that will do it. I sure appreciate it. I'll stop it right here.

**END OF INTERVIEW**