

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE  
DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER LIBRARY

Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interview of ELWOOD R. QUESADA.

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, ELWOOD R. QUESADA of Hobe Sound, Florida, hereinafter referred to as the donor, do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title, and interest in the tape recordings and transcripts of personal interviews conducted on October 17, 1973; August 19, 1974; November 13, 1974; January 31, 1975; and August 25, 1976 in Washington, D.C. and prepared for deposit in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library. This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) The transcripts shall be available for use by researchers as soon as they have been deposited in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

(2) The tape recordings shall not be available for use by researchers during the donor's lifetime. After the donor's death, access to the tape recordings shall be for background use only, and researchers may not cite, paraphrase, or quote therefrom.

(3) During the donor's lifetime the donor retains all copyright in the material given to the United States by the terms of this instrument. Thereafter the copyright in both the transcripts and tape recordings shall pass to the United States Government. During the donor's lifetime, researchers may publish brief "fair use" quotations from the transcripts (but not the tape recordings) without the donor's express consent in each case.

(4) Copies of the open portions of the interview transcripts, but not the tape recordings, may be provided by the library to researchers upon request.

(5) Copies of the interview transcripts, but not the tape recordings, may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.



*Elwood R. Quesada*  
Donor

*Oct 1, 1983*  
Date

*John A. Neeson*  
Archivist of the United States

*10/15/83*  
Date

INTERVIEW WITH  
Elwood R. Quesada  
for  
Dwight D. Eisenhower Library

This interview is being taped on October 17, 1973 with Lieutenant General Elwood Quesada in General Quesada's office at 490 L'Enfant Plaza in Washington, D.C. Present for the interview General Quesada and Dr. Burg from the Eisenhower Library Staff.

DR. BURG: General, what I'd like to start with, under the assumption that the Air Force project will pick up the early background, would be to take you back to December 7th, 1941 and to ask you where you were on that day? What was your assignment? What was your rank? What were you doing at the outbreak of the war?



LT. GEN. QUESADA: I was a major, temporary major, and I was in command of the 33rd Fighter Group. And the 33rd Fighter Group was stationed at Mitchel Field (New York). On Sunday, December the 7th, I was in the process of trying to get a group of boys who were assigned to that group capable of flying P-40s. We had a lot of trainees that were sent up there to get some transition in P-40s, and the idea was that I was to give them a very rapid transition in P-40s and they were to be sent over to Takoradi on the west coast of Africa to ferry P-40s from Takoradi to the British in Egypt. And on that morning we were using three fields to give them their transition, and because we had so many of them one field wasn't enough. I learned about the war in a hospital.

BURG: You were in a hospital at that time?

QUESADA: I was in a hospital under these conditions: While this transition was going on, one boy indicated he couldn't get his gear down; he indicated so on his radio. And we coached him as well as we could and saw that he was going down say about a mile from the field where we were. And so I got into a car and followed him, having in mind to pick him up because I knew he was going to crack up, which he did. And he cracked up in a cemetery. And when he did so, he hit about three people, one of whom just bought a lot for himself, and he, himself, was buried in it a few days later because he was, in fact, killed. And so I commandeered some cars to get the people who were injured and took them to the hospital in Mineola, I think it was, or Garden City. And while I was taking them in to the hospital--several of them were very, very seriously hurt, one of course died--a reporter was trying to get as much of the story as he could and I told him, "If you'll just let me get these people into medical care I'll come back and tell you the facts."

And he said, "Don't worry, laddie, this story will be on the tenth page."

I said, "Oh, I hope you're right, but why?" And then he



told me that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. That's how I heard about it.

BURG: Now let me ask you, your 33rd Fighter Group was equipped with P-40s?

QUESADA: With P-40s.



BURG: The young men who were transitioning were transitioning from Curtis, the, what was it--

QUESADA: They were right out of the flying school.

BURG: Oh, I see.

QUESADA: They were right out of the flying school.

BURG: So they had gone through their advanced training--

QUESADA: Right.

BURG: --and were now ready to take on fighter aircraft.

QUESADA: Had about a hundred of them. They weren't particularly assigned to my group. They were just kids that were being sent to a place where there were P-40s. And they were then to

be shipped to Takoradi to ferry these airplanes to Egypt through Timbuktu.



BURG: Why did the young man come in wheels up rather than simply bail out of the ship? Was there a particular set of instructions that said he was to ride it down if possible?

QUESADA: Well, number one he was fairly low. Number two, as a general rule you don't want to just abandon the airplane because your wheels are unable to be extended. As a matter of fact, you made me think it through more, wasn't landing because he couldn't get his wheels down; he was landing because he was having engine trouble or propellor trouble, we never did learn which. And it wasn't his wheels. I got confused because I remember his wheels were down and we told him to raise them--and that's why I got confused--to make his landing easier.

BURG: Was this a P-40 with an Allison--

QUESADA: No. Yes, A P-40 with an Allison engine.

BURG: And these, I presume were still a little, perhaps some of the bugs still in them?

QUESADA: We were having a lot of trouble with them. But I imagine the trouble here was really cockpit trouble. We were having more cockpit trouble than engine trouble.

BURG: By that do you mean, dials, instruments that didn't read properly?

QUESADA: No, the training of the personnel was not up to the airplane. We were dealing with young boys who were not trained as well as they later were.

BURG: Skipping ahead just briefly, later on was an intermediate step placed between going into a first-line fighter aircraft out of the training aircraft.

QUESADA: Yes. Later on there was a very, very much improved training program. The personnel that were put into combat operations in the early part of the war--we put a lot of boys into combat operations who were not trained well by necessity. I'm not bellyaching. The war was thrust on us very quickly, and this is an example of how we had to take young kids and--

(Interruption)



BURG: Well you were saying that these young men had to pretty much be thrown into this early on in the war.

QUESADA: They were not trained as our young men later were. The airplanes were quite a task for them to fly; they did the best they could. Our accident rate was incredibly high and the boys in question here were later shipped to Takoradi and ferried planes from Takoradi to Egypt via Timbuktu and Khartoum.

BURG: Relieving the British of the necessity of handling that stage of the trip.

QUESADA: That's correct.



BURG: Then they could be turned over, operational, to the British in Egypt--

QUESADA: Right.

BURG: --for use in the western desert. All right, now, may I ask you this, on that day, on December the 7th, were your aircraft dispersed or were your aircraft parked in rows more or less in the peacetime fashion?



QUESADA: They were parked as if it were peacetime.

BURG: When you found out that war had come, what kind of action did you initiate on that day? Did you disperse then, or what happened?

QUESADA: No, we didn't disperse. Everybody got quite hysterical, and unnecessarily so. The air defense people, of which we were a small unit, became quite active and our airplanes were put on alert. And we were sent after radar targets which always turned out to be birds. And the whole atmosphere along the whole west coast, and east coast and west coast, was more responsive to hysteria than to a real military threat. Because if you remember at the time the Germans couldn't even get across the English Channel.

BURG: But I remember the period and the hysteria that prevailed.

QUESADA: There was incredible hysteria.



BURG: Did it calm down within a week or so so that you were getting fewer of these radar targets and--

QUESADA: It calmed down within a week. There was a dispersal along the east coast to various bases to, so-called, protect our vulnerable and strategic targets. In our case, which is only one of many, one squadron was sent to Norfolk to, so-called, protect the naval base at Norfolk. Another one was sent to Philadelphia to protect the navy yard at Philadelphia. And another was sent to Washington to protect the nation's capital.

BURG: When we talk of a squadron, how many aircraft, operational aircraft--

QUESADA: Twenty-five.



BURG: Now these pilots, these seventy-five pilots are old line, regulars, trained, experienced pilots by and large?

QUESADA: No, they were old line regulars in terms of the time. Most of them were very inexperienced.

BURG: Oh, they were?

QUESADA: Oh, sure. When the war broke out a vast majority of the young crews were extremely inexperienced. Each squadron

would have an allocation of boys with one year of experience and another allocation of two, another allocation of three, three years of flying experience that is. A boy with three years of flying experience was considered quite senior, and he'd be a flight commander.

BURG: So in these three squadrons, we're not thinking along the same terms, for example, as the RAF, let's say, in 1939--

QUESADA: No, not at all.



BURG: --with the heavy amount of professional long-term personnel?

QUESADA: Very very far from it. The turnover had been so great that if you had five boys in the squadron with three years experience it would be quite unusual.

BURG: Men simply did not stay in the service, having learned to fly and having served a bit they--

QUESADA: Our expansion was so great, we were expanding so rapidly that we had to take our personnel and spread it out very thin.

BURG: So roughly perhaps from 1940 up until--

QUESADA: That's right.



BURG: --December of '41, expansion had weakened a squadron.

QUESADA: Weakened everything. Everything was diluted.

BURG: What is the next thing that happened to you then? You are a temporary major at the time that war comes commanding that fighter group. What is the next step for you, personally?

QUESADA: Well, the group was moved to Philadelphia and we had to operate one of these information centers. The group headquarters was in Philadelphia, and, as I say, one of these information centers was activated using mostly civilians. One squadron in Philadelphia, one squadron in Washington, and one in Norfolk. We thought we were in an active air defense posture, but it was really more training than that. There were a few of us who thought that we were wasting our time by standing by and being on the alert rather than taking these very inexperienced personnel and teaching them how to fly as combat pilots.

BURG: In short, at this period of time, these inexperienced men who could have stood practical air experience under tutelage are in readiness on the ground perhaps.

QUESADA: Unnecessarily so. And there was a large school of thought who said that we should just reserve our strength and use it when and if we were attacked. Well there's another school of thought, of which I was one, that thinking that we were going to be attacked by air is just damn foolishness, and that we should use our resources to train our young men who were poorly trained and then take them over to Europe and fight where the fighting is.



BURG: Now let me ask you this, you were one of those who believed this latter position. Was it your experience at the time that the other view of husbanding strength was held chiefly at higher levels than group, or were there some in your own fighter group that also believed in this reserve your strength and--

QUESADA: This division was almost every place. There was a great tendency at the time to remember that considerable criticism was thrust upon the senior military people in Hawaii for having been caught with their pants down. So there was a

great effort on the part of almost everybody, senior and middle class, to be defensive. I don't mean militarily defensive, but defensive in terms of their own reputation. They don't want to be caught with their pants down.

BURG: Didn't want to lay themselves open to any kind of criticism.

QUESADA: Right.

BURG: For not being alert enough--



QUESADA: Right.

BURG: --and in that continual posture of we can strike--

QUESADA: That was a dominant thing that contributed to the turmoil.

BURG: Now, ultimately, it does go the way you were hoping it would go. Does that happen sometime early in 1942 as we begin to transfer strength over to Europe?

QUESADA: That began to occur when we got more experience, more aware of what really was going on, and more courage. And it

demonstrated itself first when we went into North Africa. We realized that most people who were defending their reputation realized there was no real threat on their reputations and realized that what we ought to do with our resources was take them where the fighting is.

BURG: Now how about you personally, did you continue to command that 33rd Fighter Group through January of '42 and on into that year or did your own personal course diverge?

QUESADA: My personal course diverged and the 33rd Fighter Group was alerted to participate in the invasion of Africa.

BURG: When did that alert come for you?



QUESADA: About a month before we left. We went to Africa in December of '41 or January of '42? Or it was December of '4--

BURG: The invasion occurs I think in the autumn of '42.

QUESADA: The invasion of Africa?

BURG: Right.

QUESADA: O.K. It was in the autumn of '42 that the 33rd Fighter Group was alerted to participate in the invasion of Africa, and it was alerted about a week before departure. The 33rd Fighter Group was assembled in Philadelphia, and all the personnel were given training on being catapulted from a catapult system that was on the ground at the navy yard in Philadelphia. It was really an accelerator more than a catapult, because they were to be loaded on one of the small carriers and when they were on the carriers they were to be catapulted off and then land in Africa, not to land back on the carrier.

BURG: Would that carrier handle your entire group--

QUESADA: It took the entire group.

BURG: --of seventy-five aircraft.

QUESADA: That's right. Eighty, actually.

BURG: That meant that all of you for the first time in your lives were going to have to come off the deck of a carrier at sea.





QUESADA: That's correct. And through the navy it was arranged that all the crews would get an experience from being shot out of a catapult by one they had on the naval base at Norfolk.

BURG: And in effect, General, this was some kind of a tether that hooked to the line--

QUESADA: That's correct.

BURG: --of the aircraft--

QUESADA: --that's right.



BURG: --and the cable was drawn forward and the aircraft was accelerated off the deck.

QUESADA: That's correct. They would bounce along the ground and take off in a shorter distance than otherwise we could.

BURG: Would that mean the aircraft had to be fitted with a strong point or a hook--

QUESADA: A hook on the landing gear, simple, very simply done.

BURG: Sort of a jury-rigged arrangement.

QUESADA: That's right, very simply done. And it was done to all the airplanes. And then the airplanes were hoisted aboard this small carrier. They joined the invasion fleet and went across the Atlantic and a fellow named Momyer was the group commander. His first name was Spike Momyer. He developed a very fine war record. And he took the group into Africa, into Casablanca. And then the group moved down to Tunisia and the Kasserine Pass. And then the group was moved to Asia.

BURG: But you were no longer with them?

QUESADA: I was no longer with them. I was a wing commander then.

BURG: So you did not go with it to North Africa?



QUESADA: I did not. I joined it later in Africa. I went over to Africa just a few days after the invasion, after the actual landing.

BURG: Was the 33rd part of your wing?

QUESADA: No.

BURG: You'd been given a different wing.

QUESADA: A different wing.

BURG: Also P-40s?

QUESADA: P-40s and P-38s and P-39s.

BURG: All right before I get back to that let me ask you this, first of all, handling the situation in this manner, putting them on carriers and flying them off those carriers for the first time in their lives, they actually never did practice coming off a carrier till the day they did it.

QUESADA. They'd never even been on a carrier. They left the carrier by air having been catapulted down its deck.

BURG: At a considerable risk.

QUESADA: Yes.



BURG: But evidently the risk was considered to be a justifiable one.

QUESADA: Oh, definitely. Most of them, they did it all right. They got away with it.

BURG: Nobody had any problems; they did get off all right. How long was their flight in? That is, were they launched at some considerable distance from land?

QUESADA: About fifteen minutes.

BURG: So no navigational problems for them to handle?

QUESADA: No.

BURG: And no difficulties in reaching the field onto which they were going to fly?

QUESADA: They had a little difficulty because there were some bomb craters in the field--couple of them cracked up in the bomb craters.

BURG: I see. But really not bad considering the number of aircraft?

QUESADA: No.



BURG: Now may I ask you this--and you may not remember this--but how were those aircraft marked when they came in, that is, was it a U.S. insignia--

QUESADA: U.S. insignia.

BURG: --with white star and red center?

QUESADA: I don't remember.

BURG: I wondered whether they had a yellow circle drawn around.

QUESADA: They were not marked as British airplanes.

BURG: No, but we seemed in Africa, or about that time, to have used a huge yellow ring around our insignia on a temporary basis evidently to provide some kind of ready visual data.

QUESADA: I would think that that is the case because I think we picked up this new design after the African campaign.

BURG: Yes, I know the insignia did change several times.

QUESADA: Yes.



BURG: Then you were there within just a few days in a new position and presumably with a new rank.

QUESADA: Yes. I was a general then, brigadier general.

BURG: You had gone from temporary major to brigadier general.

QUESADA: Brigadier general, temporary brigadier general. I went from major to lieutenant colonel to colonel to brigadier general.

BURG: In really a short span of several months.

QUESADA: About eight months.



BURG: Let me ask your personal reaction to that rapid promotion because I assume that you, like so many others, had languished in your grade for some period of time before you got this sudden accelerated series of promotions.

QUESADA: Well, my only reaction was that I can remember that it was a product of our rapid expansion and that it provided opportunity rather than privilege.

BURG: And you had no qualms about this; you felt you were ready for this and could handle it.

QUESADA: Oh, no qualms at all.

BURG: May I ask, when the war broke out, what was your age?

QUESADA: What year did it break out in?

BURG: Forty-one.

QUESADA: Forty-one, I was born in 1904. So I was thirty-seven.

BURG: Your maturity at the time, all of this began to happen to you. You really didn't have a great deal of time to become familiar with your new wing, did you?

QUESADA: No.

BURG: Its squadron leaders or anything?



QUESADA: No, that's not unusual though.

BURG: Were these three men, these three squadron commanders known to you, that is were they men that you had worked with--

QUESADA: In the 33rd?

BURG: Well, I was thinking of the wing that you--

QUESADA: Well, you see now a wing in those days had several groups. Don't think of a wing in those days as you think of a wing today. A wing in those days might have two, three, or four groups in it.

BURG: How many groups were there in yours?

QUESADA: It would change--in Africa?

BURG: Yes.

QUESADA: About three.



BURG: And those group leaders, group commanders, were they men that you knew from your past services?

QUESADA: No, some of them I'd never seen before.

BURG: So all of you then had to establish a working relationship--

QUESADA: Oh, sure.

BURG: --right off the bat?

QUESADA: That is no problem in the military service.



BURG: No problem at all?

QUESADA: No. Generally it isn't.

BURG: Their pilots were of the same type that we've discussed before?

QUESADA: Absolutely.

BURG: Same kind of level of experience, generally?

QUESADA: Yes.

BURG: And a mixture of aircraft types?

QUESADA: We had some B-24s also.



BURG: Good Lord! In your outfit?

QUESADA: Yes. They were anti-submarine aircraft.

BURG: Now that would lead to the next legitimate question-- how about the logistics of supplying parts and maintenance for three or four aircraft types within your group? Did you run into any difficulties there?

QUESADA: Oh, sure. The supply problem during that whole African campaign was a very difficult problem. The supplies were not in orderly depots like we are accustomed to in the United States with stock record card. They're in boxes with cosmoline and hardly in orderly fashion. A lot of the stuff is strewn over fields and things like that.

BURG: Now your flying fields, I would assume, continually shifted to the east?

QUESADA: Yes.



BURG: Now is it your recollection that the bulk of your parts were coming up on the railroad line or were you able to fly in some of your supplies?

QUESADA: Mostly on the railroad line from Algiers.

BURG: Did it ever at any point in the campaign--

QUESADA: And Oran.

BURG: Did it ever at any point cause you sufficient difficulty to impair your wing's performance in the field. That is, did

supply problems ever ground any significant number of your aircraft?

QUESADA: Oh, always. We were always cannibalizing airplanes to keep them going and there was always a rather large number of airplanes out of commission because of lack of parts. But in those days we could improvise and scrounge and survive pretty well. We weren't affluent; we weren't soft. We were making the best with what we had. And these young men were quite good at improvising. And rather than have ten airplanes out of commission because of lack of parts, they'd have three that they would cannibalize.

BURG: Did you lead personally, were you actively flying yourself in this period of time or did your administrative work keep you pinned down?

QUESADA: I flew some. Flew every chance I got. Not as much as I did in Europe.

BURG: I see. Why was that?

QUESADA: Well, because we were more stable in Europe. And



the situation in Africa, there was more turmoil, and there was more I had to do administratively. I had to scrounge getting things that makes the airplane fly.

BURG: Was the usual size of operation, say, at flight level or would there be squadron sorties or did you fly as groups?

QUESADA: Oh, mostly flight level. Because the role that I was in in Africa, in addition to being a wing commander, I was also deputy commander of the Northwest African Coastal Air Force. And it had three roles: it had the air defense role; it had the anti-submarine role; and it had the role of striking at German ships.

BURG: Ships coming into Tunisia from--



QUESADA: And into east Africa as well. As they come out of the Italian ports, we would launch strikes at these ships and try to sink every god-damned ship.

BURG: You say you were deputy commander of that force. Was the commander of it British?

QUESADA: He was British, Air Vice-Marshal Hugh Pughe-Lloyd.

Hell of a nice fellow.

BURG: Was he?

QUESADA: Oh, delightful.

[Interruption]



BURG: We were talking about Air Vice-Marshal Pughe-Lloyd.

QUESADA: For clarification, let me review some of the history that was applicable to the early days of North Africa. When the British and the American forces went into Africa, each was under the command of their own nationality and the discord was incredible. The American commanders wanted to command the American effort, and the British commanders commanded the British efforts. And it was chaos; there was a great deal of parochialism, a great deal of jealousy. Some of the commanders got to be adverse to each other. And it was so bad that everybody knew that something had to be done immediately. So after the Casablanca Conference where it was decided that the forces in Africa would be put under one commander and that they would be made combined forces rather

than joint forces--combined means commands that are several nationalities. Joint means commands that embrace more than one service of one nationality. So the Casablanca Conference dictated that all the effort, British and American and French, in North Africa be put under combined command. Eisenhower was made the supreme commander, as you may recall, and all the military units in Africa were then divided up into various commands that were functional. The various divisions were attached to corps and armies, and the commander of the army or corps would command all of the units in it and some might be French and some British. In respect to the air force, there was a bomber command and an air defense command. They were divided into various air forces--the Bomber Air Force, the Northwest African Coastal Air Force, and the Air Troop Carrier Air Force were all divided. All the units regardless of nationality were put in these various forces. And the Northwest African Coastal Air Force was commanded by a man who happened to be British. And in that command there were many British units, many American units, and one French unit. And I was the deputy commander.



BURG: Now when you were given that assignment, were you briefed in any way? We know for example that General Eisenhower made it very clear to the people he was working with that there was to be no factionalism, that they were to work closely. Whether it was a British officer in command or an American officer or regardless of who was deputy, they were to work with one another. Were you briefed in a similar fashion before you took your post?

QUESADA: I was not briefed. I was aware of the discord that was evident and rather distressed by it, and in certain cases disgusted by it. I do remember [General Carl] Spaatz, who I knew and respected, having made it clear that he didn't want any of us to indulge in the parochialism of the past. I absorbed this philosophy more by what I saw than what I was told. I saw the discord that was quite evident and I saw that it was not liked, and so that was the admonition to me to control any parochialism that I may have had.



BURG: Then when you met Pughe-Lloyd, your impression of him, it sounds as though you were impressed right from the outset.

QUESADA: Immediately.

BURG: Was this due to his personality, the way in which he welcomed you, or did it occur over a matter of days as you saw the way in which he worked?

QUESADA: I think it occurred over days in which there was mutual respect and a desire to get along with the war and a desire to eliminate unnecessary frictions. He had a very warm personality. And another thing that made me respect him tremendously was the fact that he was in command of the air force when Malta was most severely mauled. And he had a great deal of operational experience. And I was very anxious to have some of that rub off on me. Because don't forget, no Americans had any operational experience.

BURG: My next question was, because I assumed he had had that kind of experience on ops over a period of several years, he must have handled his relationship with you with great tact? You were the new boy, so to speak.

QUESADA: And, boy, is well chosen; he was somewhat older than me.





BURG: He was?

QUESADA: As I look back, I think he liked me as much as I like him. I don't think there was anything that motivated us, either him or me, than to just get the job done. And I think that both of us realized that tact was essential, but I don't think we were dominated by the necessity of exercising tact. I think we were dominated by the necessity of doing everything we could to win.

BURG: Was it your experience and observation as you looked around you after this change had occurred that things now went better, that friction was relieved and--



QUESADA: Incredibly better. Now I want to make sure that all of us knew that Eisenhower was going to be intolerant of any of the commanders, whether British or American, if they demonstrated a parochial attitude. All of us knew that.

BURG: Did you and Air Vice-Marshal Pughe-Lloyd ever disagree-- and I'm not thinking here of yelling and shouting arguments-- but were there ever disagreements between the two of you regarding the tactical employment of your aircraft or were you--

QUESADA: Oh, definitely. And he was a fellow that was very receptive to the expression of his subordinates. And if I may say so, that is the indelible lesson that I enjoyed from him, the extent to which he would seek the attitudes and advice and listen to the troubles of his unit commanders and staff officers. At that, he was very, very good, very, very. And I recall that with great fondness, to be frank about it. And if I did have any success thereafter, a great deal of it must be attributed to the fact that I was able to mimic him in respect to how he would seek the counsel and listen to the troubles of subordinate commanders who were out there doing the shooting. He was extremely good and he was very helpful to me.

BURG: So in no way fitting the kind of stereotype that you sometimes encounter regarding a British officer, of a tendency to keep you distant, aloofness, or to be condescending to the newly arrived Americans, the greenhorns. This man was the antithesis of all of that as far as you could--

QUESADA: Well, I think he had a little bit of an attitude towards the newly arrived freshman Americans--I think he had a little bit of that. But I think he was quickly influenced,



as most Britishers were, by the enthusiasm and freshness of the American. And furthermore I think he liked it.

[Interruption]

BURG: Let me ask you just one more thing, General, before we close off this session. How well did our aircraft types do, and partly this is going to be the pilot as well, but our P-40s, our P-38s, our P-39s at this stage of the war, how well were they going against the German aircraft that you were up against? I assume that would be, for example, the ME-109 by and large?

QUESADA: The P-40s were inferior. The P-38s were equal. The P-39s were no contest.

BURG: They simply couldn't handle the ME-109s.



QUESADA: No.

BURG: Were you able to use any of those aircraft types in limited roles and try to keep them out of--

QUESADA: The P-39 was put in a very limited role. It was

put in mostly the air defense role where its target would be a cumbersome heavy bomber of the German air force. The P-40s were put in the tactical air role, beating stuff up on the ground. The P-38s had a combination of beating stuff up on the ground and air combat too.

BURG: How was pilot morale at that stage?

QUESADA: Pilot morale was generally good.

BURG: General, let's close this session and we can pick up at that point at some future date. Thank you so much.



This interview is being taped with Gen. Elwood Quesada in Gen. Quesada's office in L'Enfant Plaza in Washington, D.C., August 19, 1974. Present for the interview are General Quesada and the interviewer is Dr. Maclyn Burg, Eisenhower Library staff.

DR. BURG: When you and I were talking last we were still in North Africa, and you were discussing the British officer under whom you served in sort of a coastal command kind of arrangement.



GEN. QUESADA: Northwest African Coastal Air Force and [Air Vice-Marshal] Hugh Pugh Lloyd was the commander-in-chief of it.

DR. BURG: And we had talked about him, about his character and the kind of man he was, and something about the work that you were doing. Now what was the next assignment after that, General?

GENERAL QUESADA: When the fighting was in Italy and was over in Sicily and over in Africa there were about six general officers who were transferred to England in anticipation of the invasion at Normandy. And I was among them. It included as you no doubt know, [Arthur] Tedder, it included Eisenhower, it included Bradley, it included Montgomery. And my assignment in England was to head the Ninth Fighter Command and Ninth Tactical Air Command, I commanded both. And the idea was for this organization to be the American tactical force for the actual touchdown in Normandy.

DR. BURG: Now when the word came to you in North Africa about this new assignment to England, in what form did that come? Who contacted you on that?

GEN. QUESADA: I think [Lieut. Gen.] "Tooe" Spaatz just perhaps in casual conversation or on the telephone said, "Pete, you're going up

to England."



BURG: Had you had any idea that you were slated for that kind of assignment?

QUESADA: None whatsoever, none. It came out of the blue, complete surprise, and I had no idea that I was even considered.

BURG: Was it a considerable step up for you, General, in terms of command?

QUESADA: Oh, I enjoyed the opportunity tremendously because, after all, the fighting was over in the southern part of Europe for all practical purposes as far as I was concerned. And of course, not that anybody likes war, I certainly don't like it and didn't like it, but you enjoy a position of responsibility if you are in it. And this was definitely a position of considerably more responsibility.

BURG: Did you have much idea about what the job would entail while you were still in the Mediterranean?

QUESADA: Very little.

BURG: No one had really explained much about it at all.

QUESADA: I don't think anybody knew much about it. I think they were just taking a bevy of senior officers who had experience in North Africa and going to insert them into the command structure whatever it was, I don't think it had been decided then.

BURG: What was your rank at the time, General?

QUESADA: I was a major-general.



BURG: Was there any opportunity to confer there in the Mediterranean with anyone prior to your physical move north? For example did Arthur Tedder by any chance call you in to talk with you or to meet you?

QUESADA: Well, I knew Tedder quite well, we were quite personal friends as a matter of fact, but there was no preliminary discussions or anything like that, just get up there, report for duty.

BURG: Right. Now let me ask you then about Arthur Tedder. Do you happen to recall the first meeting that you might have had with him, perhaps that was an informal thing, the first time you ever met him?

QUESADA: I don't recall a specific location or the specific circumstances that surrounded it. I do recall the general circumstances that surrounded it. It was in the early part of the African Campaign, and it was after the Casablanca Conference when it was decided all the forces in North Africa would be reorganized into a combined command, that differentiated from a joint command. The difference as you know is a joint command is several forces of a particular nation, a combined command is the forces of several nations put under one command. And the Casablanca Conference decided among other things

that the command in North Africa would become a combined command. There was a considerable friction, the Americans were commanding the American forces and the British were commanding the British forces, and it was causing some difficulty and we weren't doing as well as we should have done. So the Casablanca Conference in effect resolved that part of the issue, and Tedder was at that particular time in East Africa, and he was by far the senior of all the air force officers in Africa. And that resulted in just very frequent meetings of the air force personnel, the senior personnel in Africa, and as a rule he would chair the meetings or in effect control the meetings. And it was under those circumstances that we first met.

BURG: Now when you say air forces he was the most senior officer, you mean of both British and American?

QUESADA: Yes, of the air forces, British and American. And a very fine person. He had everybody's confidence, he was anything but parochial, he exuded the experience that the British had accumulated during the war. His attitude included the experience that accompanied disaster. The British had had one disaster after another, and it had the effect of making him humble but nevertheless wise. And he was a highly respected commander, an officer who I am sure most of us thought, and I certainly thought, was void of parochial interest either British or air force.

BURG: Yes, that latter part is especially important because I think he had his problems with the Royal Navy, for example, and a few of its commanders.





QUESADA: He had his problems with the Royal Navy, and he had his problems with the Royal Air Force. There were some in the Royal Air Force that did not appreciate his objectivity. They thought that he should pursue the interests of the Royal Air Force more than he was, but he was able to arise to the occasion and disregard and cast aside any parochial interests and pursuits that maybe in the normal were urged upon him. That's why we liked him.

BURG: Right. And your recollection is that no significant number of senior American commanders objected to him as some of the Royal Air Force people had objected to him.

QUESADA: I don't want to leave the impression that the Royal Air Force objected to him, I just want to leave the impression that it is normal for some Royal Air Force people to object when a person like Tedder is completely objective just like it is normal for some United States Air Force senior people to object when Spaatz is completely objective. I don't want to leave the impression that the Royal Air Force per se did not appreciate Tedder like the rest of us. I'm just trying to say that they are human like the rest of us.

BURG: But there was nothing of this sort that was a serious problem? It might have inconvenienced occasionally.

QUESADA: During the time we were whacking up the commands, it would surface, and he would push his way through it.

BURG: What was his personal style in conducting these meetings, if you



can recollect, the kind of impressions that you now have of the way he functioned?

QUESADA: I remember that quite well, I remember him vividly. He was easy going, he had a slight tendency to get through friction by becoming jocular, and he would tease his friends and adversaries, and he would pursue his point with tact, with grace, but nevertheless with persuasive force. He was a very unusual man. He had a little bit of the qualities of General George Marshall. General Marshall was not jocular but he was very persuasive.

BURG: The mind seemed to you, in the case of Tedder, a first-class mind.

QUESADA: A very fine, well-trained, well-educated, dedicated, military type.

BURG: Had his experience, do you remember, included combat service in the First World War?

QUESADA: I don't remember but I would imagine it might.



BURG: I wondered if his age would have permitted him to have been a squadron commander.

QUESADA: I think his age would have permitted him to have been in the First World War.

BURG: Right. Maybe not at that high rank, that we can find out easily enough. Well, I'm interested in this because serving as he

did, the position he did under Eisenhower, I know that he was the recipient of some friction among his own countrymen and particularly after the book, With Prejudice, came out. My understanding is that on more than one occasion he staunchly defended the Americans when they were under attack by the British press at various stages of the war.

QUESADA: It would be typical of him and I know that he did in his book. And he had the unlimited confidence of General Eisenhower.

BURG: Seems to have had.

QUESADA: And the thing that gave him that confidence, so I think, more than anything else, was his ability to forget his own nationality.

BURG: Which was the sort of thing that Eisenhower was hoping for from all of you that you would--.

QUESADA: General Eisenhower placed a high premium on it.

BURG: And it was my recollection from our last meeting that you were one of those who thoroughly subscribed to this--

QUESADA: Oh, definitely!



BURG: --and your experiences up to this point in time when you were getting set to leave for England seemed to have confirmed you in this. Your commander in that North African Coastal Air Force that was a man that I remember you were quite impressed with and had

worked well with.

QUESADA: Hugh Pugh Lloyd. And we had under our command, he as the commander, me as deputy, we had French units, English units, South African units, and American units. And I would like to think that I was able then to shed at least in part my natural subjectivity and pursuit of parochial interests in this case, United States Air Force interests. I'd like to think that I was able to do it.

BURG: You never received from any of your friends any indication that you had not been successful, or you never heard or any resentment from any of your colleagues?

QUESADA: No, I used to be teased a little bit by being kind of an Anglophile.



BURG: Who did the teasing? Do you remember specifically?

QUESADA: Oh, my friends.

BURG: Just friends.

QUESADA: And my fellow officers. They would at times tease me about being an Anglophile.

BURG: But nobody sat down and snarled at you across a desk?

QUESADA: No, no.

BURG: If you had to make an assessment, General, of--

QUESADA: The only difficulty I got in on this point was actually on the other side of the issue. There was a meeting of the senior officers, which if I recall correctly took place in North Africa in, what's the name of that country in North Africa, east of Tunis, just east of Tunis?

BURG: Algeria?

QUESADA: No, west of Algeria, it was Italian, west of Egypt I mean.

BURG: Oh, Libya.

QUESADA: Libya, right. This meeting took place down in Libya and all the British senior air force types were there and the American Air Force types were there. And we were in effect setting up the combined command, the command structure, and as you would expect this got to be a little tense at times, there was a natural desire for the senior British people to get the predominance of command, and there was natural desire of the senior Americans to get the attractive commands. And I don't object to this, I mean, I didn't object to it then, nor do I now. Well anyway, as each command would come up and the time came to select a commander, the British, so I thought at the time in the pursuit of my parochial inclinations, would insist that the commander of each force as they were being then defined be British. And they were arguing that they were the ones that had the experience and which of course was persuasive.

But there was one fellow there, a fellow named [Air Marshal Sir Arthur] "Mary" [or "Maori"] Coningham, who, the Americans generally didn't like. I did not dislike "Mary" Coningham, I admired him for



what he had done, but he disliked me, oh, terribly. Oh, he just thought I was a jerk! And I was a kind of a kid then you know, a snotty-nosed kid come over here from America, isn't dry behind the ears, which was perhaps true. Well anyway, this kept up and pretty soon I lost my cool, and I said, "Now, look let's examine this experience--"

BURG: You were saying this to him?



QUESADA: To all present, to everybody present--let's examine this experience, but first let's recognize that the command could be based on another proposition that is the predominance of force. If any one force was predominantly British, the British should command, if any one force is predominantly American, an American should command. And that is easily determined, but experience is subjective. So let's examine what is this experience, is the experience to which you refer, Dunkirk, Singapore, Norway, Crete, Greece. I could go through them one after the other then do you see? And I was able to recite one after the other and in the order in which they occurred, which of course freshened my mind, and "Tooney" Spaatz kneeled over and patted me on the knee and said, "Take it easy, Pete." And the argument broke up, the argument of experience was no longer brought up again.

BURG: What was the general British reception to that argument you had just advanced?

QUESADA: The general reception and particularly to "Mary" Coningham was good. "Mary" Coningham from that day on was one of my best friends. Afterwards he said, "Pete, you are absolutely right. Why should our experience, which has just been one disaster after another, be the quality that gives us command." He said, "Pete, you're absolutely right." He was my friend from then on until the day he was killed,

close friend. And in Normandy during the battle, in England during the Battle of the Bulge he was my opposite number, and he thrust his units on me and said, "Look, you command them, because the battle is in the Bulge. I can't command and you tell them what to do." He was one of my best friends and one of the nicest men and knowledgeable men I've ever known.

BURG: I see why you admire him. It seems to me that one of the British admirals in the Mediterranean had tangled with "Mary" Coningham and I don't believe it was Admiral [Andrew] Cunningham.

QUESADA: It was General Patton.



BURG: Well, I was thinking of a British officer, Royal Naval officer, one of the admirals, I wanted to say [Admiral Sir Bertram] Ramsay, but I don't believe it was Ramsay and I don't think it was Cunningham.

QUESADA: I think almost everybody tangled with "Mary" Coningham. He was a particular type of Englishman. He was a very outspoken and sometimes abrasive, and he used the tactics of, "Well, I'll insult him first before he insults me."

BURG: A man very sure of his own intentions.

QUESADA: Very sure of himself and he had good reason to be.

BURG: Well, I'm glad you mention him. I was going to ask you about him because I've always been interested in him. Another one I was interested in, but I'm not sure that you would have an opportunity to see him because I think Coningham was the man who replaced him, and

that was [Air Commodore] Raymond Collishaw.

QUESADA: I never knew him.

BURG: Collishaw was a little earlier at that time when they were struggling with the Italians before the Germans had really come in, doing I guess a creditable job but perhaps with very little equipment. Collishaw had been a World War I fighter ace as you know probably, I think leading--

QUESADA: I never heard of him.



BURG: Oh, the leading British ace, a Canadian, who last I heard was still alive in Vancouver, B.C., Ray Collishaw, flew Sopwith tri-planes. And picked up I believe seventy victories and wound up leading a pretty large organization at the start of the war. All right, now, I wanted to ask you this too, we were talking about Arthur Tedder, and you described these excellent qualities, you're a perceptive man, did you see anything in his actions, his makeup, where you felt he was less effective, did he have any major flaw that you could see as a commander and particularly in this unusual combined situation?

QUESADA: Well, if I commented on this, which I have no reluctance to do, it must be recognized that my own personality is involved, meaning I interpret him as I think I would like to be, it would be subjective, in other words I'm trying to find a flaw. And if there is a flaw to be found, I would say that it was his tendency to solve problems by long persuasion, rather than making up his mind after due consideration and



then in effect ordering it.

BURG: Would you be willing to grant the fact that perhaps doing it his way, which would take longer, might in the long run keep his base secure with all concerned and perhaps make it more effective.

QUESADA: Oh, I don't think there's any doubt about that. I think that his way was superior to the way that my citing of a fault would suggest. I'm not saying that my way is right and his is wrong, I'm only trying to find a flaw.

BURG: Would the problem be, General, that with his persuasive methods there might be a using up of time that could have been critical?

QUESADA: Yes.

BURG: Maybe wasn't but could have been.

QUESADA: It could have been and often was.



BURG: That seemed to be his style.

QUESADA: It was his style, and if I had to choose between his style and mine, it would be somewhere near the middle only nearer to him than nearer to me.

BURG: You felt that your tendency during the war particularly was to consider all the factors and then having considered them make the decision and issue the order.

QUESADA: Right, and I would say that when you are in his position, I'd say he was wiser.

BURG: For the circumstances that prevailed. All right, now, let me ask you just a matter of routine curiosity, you're being transferred up north how did they do that? How were you taken up there? You were flown up I would assume.

QUESADA: Yes, I had to go to England, and one of the units that I commanded was an anti-submarine group which was located in Casablanca. Its base was in Casablanca, Rabat Sale, to be more specific, just north of Casablanca. And they had B-24's and they had missions that would take them out towards the Azores and sweep the Atlantic up towards Spain and towards England. So I just joined one of these missions, and they dumped me off in England, where they had to go to fuel, so I just got out when they fueled and went on this anti-submarine mission.

BURG: That was the usual thing that they did do, refuel in England and patrol back again.

QUESADA: Yes, right.



BURG: Now I seem to remember that the Bay of Biscay was a happy hunting ground for Junkers eighty-eight.

QUESADA: That's correct and that's why we were there.

BURG: Right. And their patrols presumably swung out from the Bay a little bit. You take sort of a circuitous route up to England that way.

QUESADA: Well, we wouldn't take a circuitous route. We would take the route where we thought the submarines were. We were submarine hunting en route to England. It was a conventional, normal anti-submarine mission, and I just went along for the ride.

BURG: What I'm trying to get at we seemed to have lost several prominent people, I can think of the British movie star, Leslie Howard, for example, others who were lost in that Bay of Biscay, presumably to night fighters or these bombers being used as fighters so I wondered if the route commonly followed by our anti-submarine patrols swung out around the Bay of Biscay when it might be less alert or whether you had simply patrolled right across the Bay of Biscay.

QUESADA: No, our patrol was where we had reason to believe the submarines were. We weren't in any way trying to avoid the ability of the Germans to come out from the coast. As a matter of fact we were looking for it and hoping for it.

BURG: Your B-24 was armed with turret guns and up to the kind of standard of the heavy bombardment aircraft flying into Germany?

QUESADA: Yeah, sure, sure. We were hoping to see, always looking for a Condor because we used to shoot them, that squadron, that group used to shoot them down from a B-24.

BURG: Like a couple of big elephants playing--



QUESADA: That's right. Oh, they'd catch them and shoot them down,

they got three or four of them.

BURG: The Condor then evidently not quite up to that standard.

QUESADA: I don't think it was armed even.

BURG: And the Germans were using those I recollect as convoy, spy ships as a matter of fact. One thing I want to ask you before I put you down in England and allow you to land, were you able to bring any of your own staff with you? Did you have the opportunity to pick anyone to come with you to assist you?

QUESADA: I brought two people, I think it was two anyway, I brought a fellow named James Lee and Edward Gerry.

BURG: Now why did you pick those two men?

QUESADA: James Lee was my intelligence officer, and he had the ability to tell me without any reservations or hesitation what I didn't want to hear, what he thought I didn't want to hear, which is a very hard thing for a senior guy to get.

BURG: And this man did it.

QUESADA: Yes.

BURG: What was his rank by the way, General?

QUESADA: He was a lieutenant-colonel. And it was Henry Gerry, no, Eddie Gerry, I took him because he was a very, very good statistician,



he developed a mathematical formula for chasing submarines that was adopted with great success. And it was based on the principle once you sight a submarine, take all of your force and put it on that submarine and kill it, never let it get away. Rather than scatter your force hunting for unknown submarines. So every time we'd see a submarine, we'd get it, ninety percent of the time.

BURG: So if I'm a commander of a B-24 aircraft and I have spotted one, and presumably I've drive it down, but I haven't gotten it for sure, then I can call and everything within range will come to me.

QUESADA: And they'll keep putting, for the first hour they put every airplane they can get on that area. Then the next hour, which is fourteen miles--they can go about seven miles an hour under water and their speed continually diminishes, but the circle gets continually larger--then they would put more and more anti-submarine airplanes into the area because it eventually had to come to the surface.

BURG: So you just flood that area in proportion to the distance it might have traveled, and he's got to come up for air and recharge of batteries and you're waiting there.

QUESADA: He's got to come up, that's right, we're waiting for him and get him. And had a tremendous impact on our whole tactics and the result of our effort.

BURG: Gerry sold you on that plan.



QUESADA: He sold Hugh Pugh Lloyd and me.

BURG: Well, I can see why you would want those two men. Did they fly up with you, General?

QUESADA: Yes.

BURG: You arrived at a base in England commonly used for refueling of this anti-submarine--.

QUESADA: Anti-submarine, yes, I don't even remember the name of the base.

BURG: And then proceeded where, to London?

QUESADA: I proceeded to, I don't know where I went, I forget, I think I went to the headquarters of the Eighth Air Force because that's just about all that was there then.

BURG: There was no Ninth in being at that time?



QUESADA: I think not, but I might be wrong.

BURG: You may recollect as we speak about this. All right, you go to the Eighth, and, we, of course, are very much interested in what happened to you, what you were doing, how you set things up, as well as your contacts with General Eisenhower and the work you were doing with regard to Normandy coming up, so I would like to know if you can remember--.

[Interruption]

BURG: I'd like to know what the general procedure was that you followed. You're coming there and evidently neither the Ninth Air Force nor the Ninth TAC are in being, and you're the man in charge of the responsibility then of bringing them into existence. May I ask how you do that?

QUESADA: Yes, if I recall correctly I went down to the Eighth Air Force and the Eighth Air Force then had a headquarters at a place called Aldermaston. Aldermaston is between London and Salisbury and rather an old and very attractive British estate. And at Aldermaston there was a defunct and idle headquarters, I think there was the Eighth Tactical Air Command or Air Support Command or something like that, I forget the name of it. I was sent there and that was supposed to be the nucleus of the cadre of my new organization.

BURG: So there was a small headquarters force there in existence?

QUESADA: Yes, about ten or twelve people if I recall correctly, officers. And they had no mission, they had no morale, they had no definition of purpose, it was a very disjointed group.

BURG: Had you found out anything about the men who were there before you arrived? That is had there been any opportunity for someone to fill you in?

QUESADA: Not a word was ever spoken or even mentioned.



BURG: So all you can do is arrive on that base if I may use that term.

[Interruption]

So you come on the ground and now you're expected to work with those officers, you're going to have to use them.

QUESADA: No.

BURG: You could get rid of them?

QUESADA: Yes, but there was no plan to either use them or get rid of them. The plan was to use that as a cadre for developing a staff for the role that was to be mine. There was no problem of getting rid of them that was never in anybody's mind.

BURG: You didn't go there to get rid of them.

QUESADA: No, not at all.

BURG: But part of the difficulties of taking up your new command would be that with other problems around you, you also had the problem of evaluating those men to see if they measured up to the kinds of standards that you had already measured Lee and Gerry by.

QUESADA: That didn't take very long I might add. In forty-eight hours I knew exactly what I had, or in twenty-four hours I knew what I had. And nobody was trying to persuade me that they were the valedictorians, that was not a problem. It was a headquarters that had been in existence for--

[Interruption]



BURG: You indicate that within twenty-four to forty-eight hours you



knew what you had with respect to these men. Was that from personnel files or your own personal observations?

QUESADA: Oh, just talking to them. I knew what I had right away.

BURG: Right. And I think you were about to make a point, I judge you were about to make the point that it really wasn't a question of these men being inefficient or ineffective officers, merely a fact that they had been kind of cut loose and were adrift.

QUESADA: Yeah, they were adrift and had no purpose, and there was no problem associated with it. And soon thereafter, if I recall correctly, Brereton, the Ninth Air Force was transferred from East Africa to England and Brereton came up. And then he became my boss and I was a subordinate command to Brereton.

BURG: But still you wore two hats.



QUESADA: I wore two hats--the Ninth Fighter Command and the Ninth Tactical Air Command.

BURG: Now I think I'm approaching this correctly. Before we get into any of the problems associated with what was coming up, the cross channel invasion, the major problem you would have had was establishing that Ninth Fighter Command.

QUESADA: Yes, that was the major command for the invasion force. All the fighter units, of which nineteen groups were eventually shipped over, were assigned to the Ninth Tactical Air Command.

BURG: And you're starting with this very small headquarters force. What were the first steps that you had to take then as commander?

QUESADA: Well, the first thing we had to do is to get some realization of what units were going to be supplied to us and what their equipment was to be, and then between Brereton and ourselves we negotiated with the British what fields they would be assigned to.

BURG: Generally in the south of England.

QUESADA: The south, one group, one clutch of airports, airdromes were in the south of England and another was in the east coast of England, just north of London.

BURG: Up towards Lincoln.



QUESADA: Right. That was a part of the cover plan. We didn't want all of our units to be on the southern coast of England because that would have suggested that the invasion would have excluded Norway. So part of the cover plan put quite a few of our units on the east coast of England, north of London.

BURG: Now these various airdromes, were they vacant, were there American forces using them?

QUESADA: Most of them were being vacated by the British and turned over to us.

BURG: Now you would have presumably also assigned to you not only fighter units, squadrons, groups, and the like but the various air corps

supply, and what should I say, airdrome management units.

QUESADA: The biggest thing that was assigned to us was a lot of communications units. We had a very, very large communications requirement because we had to build and anticipated constructing our own communications in Normandy and not relying on the existing French system. And that turned out to be a good assumption, and in order to prepare ourselves for that assumption we, for all practical purposes, did not rely on the British communications system. We built our own in England.

BURG: Now are we speaking of telephonic communications?



QUESADA: Telephone and radio.

BURG: And you stress the largeness of this, would that network have been larger than that being used by the Eighth Air Force and its bombers?

QUESADA: It would be much larger because the British, I mean the Eighth Air Force was static, and it used the British telephone system, do you see? It used the existing British telephone system. Whereas we did use a part of the British telephone system, we used a lot of a telephone system that we ourselves constructed, in order to know how to do it when we got in Normandy.

BURG: And quite a massive effort then stringing lines--.

QUESADA: A massive effort, massive. We laid lines, spiral for I think it was, hundreds of miles, laid thousands of miles of line. It

was laid on the ground all over Engalnd.

BURG: Laid it on the ground?



QUESADA: Laid it on the ground and the English would never touch it. The English were absolutely marvelous!

BURG: Good God! You had to pass over countless roads and railroad lines.

QUESADA: We carried it over roads and they'd never say a word. We'd have to have permission to be sure.

BURG: Yes. I was going to ask you if it might not have been a huge job making contact with countless, countless British burroughs and county governments.

QUESADA: It was. A lot of it was radio, FM radio. We also had a big FM radio net in England.

BURG: So in this one small, compared to everything else, this one small aspect of the pre-invasion planning, your story is one of enormous British cooperation and support just carrying on this one thing.

QUESADA: Tremendous, tremendous, yes. And our units started to arrive, sometime two groups would arrive in a single week.

BURG: Now were they coming from the United States or were they--

QUESADA: From the United States.

BURG: Is it safe to say that all of your units arrived from the United

States?

QUESADA: All but one a--reconnaissance unit arrived from someplace else, I forget where--the 67th Reconnaissance Group.

BURG: Was it reconnaissance in the sense of photo reconnaissance?

QUESADA: Yes, yes.

BURG: Flying fighter aircraft rigged as camera ships, P-38's or something of this sort.

QUESADA: That's the idea. And 51's.

BURG: All right, now everyone else coming in is coming from the United States, and therefore they are fresh units, new and untried.

QUESADA: Completely fresh, untried.



BURG: What kind of equipment were they coming with?

QUESADA: P-51's, P-47's, and P-38's. On some occasions the group would arrive, the personnel, the mechanics and all with their hand tools, and the logistics were so thorough that they would sometimes arrive at the airdrome where they were to be quartered, and all of their equipment would be there waiting for them, including the airplanes, brand new airplanes, never flown.

BURG: Who was handling that great logistics problem? Was it being handled within your headquarters?

QUESADA: What was being handled within my headquarters was to get it

from the depots to the airdromes.

BURG: It was off-loaded from ships then at the depots.

QUESADA: Off-loaded from ships and then we had the problem of getting it from the off-loading points to the airdrome and properly distributed so the mechanics could just go right to work.

BURG: The aircraft you described as being new. It seems to me that it is quite possible that it could have been new aircraft but by war standards slightly outmoded nevertheless. Were these new and of the latest mark?

QUESADA: New and the latest.

BURG: All right. Let me ask you something about the quality of the personnel, both ground and flying personnel, as presumably you went to greet some of these groups--

QUESADA: All of them.



BURG: --all of them as they arrived. Did you form a general opinion of the quality of these men?

QUESADA: Of course, my memory of training went back to the early part of the war where we by necessity had to grab anybody we could get. But I quickly learned, and I wasn't in the training side of our Air Force activity. I knew little about our training and in Africa our whole problem was to get replacements.

BURG: Coming as individuals?

QUESADA: Individuals. But now the situation was entirely different. We were getting one group after another in rapid order, and it was very clear that the training procedure in the United States had reached a point of efficiency that I was completely unaware of, completely unaware of it. I was shocked by it, I was surprised by it, and I was certainly pleased by it. A group would arrive, they had been together for months undergoing their training in the United States, the training was excellent, the commanders were young and aggressive by almost any standards and were very capable of performing their job. They had morale, ninety percent of the officers in the group had perhaps been together for six months, and they knew their equipment, and they were extremely well-trained as a unit.

BURG: Then by standards that to you were realistic, that is the training as a group, had included training that fit in with the, I hate to use the word, quality of the air war, but that's really what I mean. They were as much as could be expected, they were up to the standards of combat as existed in northwest Europe at that time.

QUESADA: Incredibly so, incredibly so. The only deficiency, if there was one, was that they had not been trained in fighter-bomber tactics, they had been trained as fighter units.

BURG: Air to air gunnery.



QUESADA: Air to air gunnery. So we had a problem converting them to

the tactical role which includes air to air, but it also includes air to ground.

BURG: Now as far as the number of flying hours that these men had you perhaps can remember what the average amount of flying hours on first line aircraft would be for the men in these various groups? We're not talking about now the First World War or the western front, and men showing up on the lines as replacements with perhaps as low as eleven, twelve hours of flight time. These are men with hundreds of hours in the air.

QUESADA: With hundreds of hours in that equipment in the air as compared to what I had experienced before leaving the United States for Africa where a guy would have ten hours.

BURG: And the training they'd had included gunnery practice and the formation tactics that were being used at the time?

QUESADA: Incredibly trained, very well trained.



BURG: Interesting to hear that, very reassuring to hear it.

QUESADA: I was completely surprised by it and I was shocked by it, I had no idea that that's what was going to occur.

BURG: Now since they lack the one quality that can only be gained by experience were you able early on to get them some active battle experience in preparation for the work they were going to do. You would have



the problem of training them for fighter bomber tactics too, but were you able to move them out on some missions to give them that kind of experience?

QUESADA: Sometimes they would go on the early missions a week after landing in England.

BURG: These were sweeps out over France.

QUESADA: Sweeps out over France and then we'd go a little deeper, then a little deeper, and a little deeper and pretty soon all holds barred. And the early part of the operation was devoted to escorting the Eighth Air Force cause for a while we had all of the P-51's, and it was the P-51 that was the best air to air airplane. And it also had the longest range.

BURG: So you were using them in an escort fighter role?



QUESADA: That's correct. That's escorting the Eighth Air Force.

[Interruption]

BURG: So they begin to get this kind of combat experience, were their losses within what you would have considered acceptable range?

QUESADA: Oh, definitely. They held their own, definitely.

BURG: Basically was it the P-51 groups that were getting that escort experience or did you send the P-38's and P-47's also?

QUESADA: We sent them all but the P-51's went deep. The only area that

was disturbing was in the P-51's we had--see this was the first time they had been in combat. See the P-51's hadn't been in combat before, any place. And we had one very, very severe problem that resulted in losing two or three of its guns in a tight turn, I think to the left. If the airplane pulled high G's in a left turn, it might have been a right turn, but I think it was a left turn, they'd get a stoppage in two and sometimes three of the guns.

BURG: It was a matter of the ammunition feed chutes.

QUESADA: That's correct. For reasons that I can't explain here, but I'm familiar with, the mechanism wasn't able to pull the feed belt through the gun under high G's in one direction.

BURG: And this would correct however when the aircraft straightened out?

QUESADA: Oh, no.



BURG: Oh, it wouldn't! It jammed those feed mechanisms--

QUESADA: Oh, yeah, they were lost. And that is very demoralizing to a fighter pilot because when you have four guns you get a big burst of fire. If it's one gun it's poof, poof, poof, poof, poof, you see, in his mind and in fact. So they didn't like that, and we got that fixed under emergency conditions.

BURG: Your pilots were remarking or reporting what was happening and ground ordnance people presumably were--

QUESADA: Well, I went to Brereton about it and raised hell, and I was rather vociferous, rather irritated. Brereton, perhaps under other circumstances would have kicked me out of his office, but instead he called General Arnold in Washington on the telephone and had me tell General Arnold what I had told him.

BURG: Toned down a bit.

QUESADA: Not a hell of a lot.



BURG: You had known Arnold though for quite some period of time.

QUESADA: Yeah, that's right. And Brereton had the wisdom to see that if I would tell General Arnold these facts that I had personally observed that would get General Arnold aroused because General Arnold is a very quick person to respond, or was a very quick person to respond to any and all tactical needs. So that night he had personnel from Dayton on the way to England. And in about three days they fixed it.

BURG: It was handled at a far higher level than I had expected.

QUESADA: Brereton had, "Whatever it took, you've got to get it done, you've got to get it done today!"

BURG: That was Brereton's view on anything like this.

QUESADA: He saw it right away. And he called Arnold on the telephone, and Arnold quickly, that night he had personnel enroute from Dayton, Ohio over to England and they made a fix.

BURG: Well, later I want to ask you about both of those gentlemen too. But right now let me ask you, this armament problem seems to be the major problem in your mind, was there any problem with the engines of the P-51, for example?

QUESADA: Yes, after the armament thing we began to lose a lot of boys on the way back from the extreme limit of their escort mission. As an example, this occurred when we were fighting over Kiel. We had several missions to Kiel, and that was at that particular time in the early stages of the P-51 uses. Kiel was about the limit of their range because the big tank was not behind the seat yet. And we got a great deal of trouble, ignition trouble, and the boys, the battle would be over, the fighting for that day would be over, and it was only a problem of getting home, do you see? And we began to lose several airplanes just by landing in the North Sea, and that's a very very discouraging thing, just that you engines won't run on the way home.

BURG: Were these Allison engines at that point?

QUESADA: Allison engines.



BURG: Well, had the men been using the engines that had, I assume the P-51 had a full boost capacity, had they been using them through the gate in combat?

QUESADA: That's the whole point. See that's what was causing the trouble. When pulling maximum horsepower they would impose some damage into the ignition system, spark plugs, specifically. And so they had

to recognize that was what was going to happen and correct it, which they did.

BURG: You mean the manufacturers of the engine were able to modify the engines to handle that. So you wiped out that problem.

QUESADA: Yes. That was a very discouraging thing to have a kid be in combat over Cologne, and then on his way home lose his engine.

BURG: With no battle damage done to it, and he survived the entire thing. And then lose him.

QUESADA: Terribly difficult for us all.

BURG: Can I think that the reaction again was a swift one, that you, Brereton, Arnold--

QUESADA: Oh, very quickly, right away, immediate.



BURG: Now later on were we, I'm not clear on how this works, but did we put into the P-51 a variant of the Rolls or was that what the Allison actually was, a variant of the Rolls-Royce engine, made under American license, perhaps?

QUESADA: Yes, I think the engine in our airplane was a Rolls-Royce engine, made in this country, and not the Allison engine, I think you're right.

BURG: While I'm on equipment I wanted to look at this before moving

on into other matters that consumed your time, you're also using P-47's?

QUESADA: Yes.



BURG: I know that the British were totally unimpressed when they saw the size of that monster and seriously doubted that it could perform well. It seems to me that it performed very well indeed in the kind of role that it was used in. Were there any "teething" problems with that or had that been worked out by that time?

QUESADA: No, the 47 did fairly well, and perhaps better than the P-51 in the tactical role. Between the time that we arrived in England and formed the command structure and the time we invaded Normandy, the tactical air forces were to get almost all of the P-51's. But the P-51 turned out to be a better escort airplane than the P-47. So back in Washington they transferred the assignment of several P-51 groups to the Eighth Air Force and transferred some P-47 groups from the Eighth Air Force to the Ninth Air Force. So the number of P-51 units that we originally were supposed to have was lessened, and the number of P-47 units that we were originally supposed to have was increased. And the P-47 turned out to be just as good if not a better tactical airplane than the P-51.

Now what are some of the reasons: One, it did not have a liquid cooled engine, so it was not quite as vulnerable to ground fire as was

the P-51. Number two, it could carry more bombs and a great variety of bombs because it could carry bombs under the wing, under the fuselage. The P-47 was a better bombing vehicle than the P-51.

BURG: It seems to me the P-51 had an enormous underslung radiator down beneath the fuselage which would prevent you from slinging a bomb on the center line.

QUESADA: Right, we couldn't sling a bomb under the fuselage. But the P-47 we could put bombs under the fuselage and under the wings. So it became more versatile.



BURG: And she's a heavier aircraft by far isn't she?

QUESADA: Heavier airplane, and also it had more fire power, if I recall correctly, we had eight fifty calibre machine guns in it. So it became a better tactical airplane than the P-51.

BURG: And presumably pretty good in a dive, it seems to me accounts I have read indicate that she dove like a brick and was stable in a dive--

QUESADA: Yes.

BURG: --whereas the P-51, because of her lightness, you might have to work her down, whereas the P-47 would simply plummet down. Did you ever made a comparison between the P-47 and let's say the Typhoon or Tempest? I understand that they too would have been used in a similar role.

QUESADA: We didn't make any comparison, I guess they were made but we

never made any.

BURG: You never did. All right now let me ask you about the P-38 as the third piece of equipment that you had to use. It too, unlike the P-51, had seen a pretty fair amount of combat. I presume most of the bugs had been worked out of the P-38.

QUESADA: Most of the bugs were out of the P-38 when we got it.

[Interruption]

BURG: Did you have a smaller proportion of P-38 groups?

QUESADA: Yes, pretty small.

BURG: Mainly 51's, 47's.



QUESADA: Only had about three 38 groups.

BURG: I see, and using them in this tactical role or were you using them for escort fighters?

QUESADA: Yes, oh, sure, we were using them in a tactical role, and they were quite good. The visibility was good which made them excellent.

BURG: The guns all concentrated right in that pod.

QUESADA: And you could see ahead of you much better than any of the other airplanes.

BURG: All right. You yourself flew all three types I assume.



QUESADA: Sure, sure.

BURG: Now did you ever fly them on missions at this stage?

QUESADA: Oh, sure, sure.

BURG: You were going too?

QUESADA: Oh, sure.

BURG: Was that common in the Air Corps?

QUESADA: Yes, fairly common.

BURG: For an officer of your rank to be flying combat missions.

QUESADA: Yes, some did it.

BURG: How many did it? Of your rank major-general.

QUESADA: Well, I wasn't alone.

BURG: You and who else, General?

QUESADA: Oh, I wasn't alone.

BURG: It was your personal style really to go and know what was happening.

QUESADA: Probably. You must remember I was a little bit younger than most, do you see? And I don't think it's unfair to say I was a more active pilot than even my age, I was younger than most of the commanders.



So I don't think it should be unusual that I should go on missions, which I did a lot of. I don't think that it should be considered unusual.

BURG: Now had you made flights for example to Kiel and--

QUESADA: Oh, sure, sure.

BURG: Right. I find that impressive, sir, despite your disclaimer, I still think that's--

QUESADA: I don't think it's too--just a natural thing to do, I had a lot more flying experience than any of my group commanders.

BURG: Now when you went on a mission like that did you lead the formation--

[END OF INTERVIEW]



This is an interview with General Elwood R. Quesada, being taped in General Quesada's office at L'Enfant Plaza South on November 13, 1974. The interviewer is Dr. Maclyn Burg of the Eisenhower Library staff. Present for the interview are Dr. Burg and General Quesada.

DR. BURG: Last time we brought you up from North Africa, and you were setting up your headquarters for the Ninth in England, and you were laughing because there were about three days that you couldn't remember. You arrived in England and then for about three days, I think, life must have been at a hectic pace for you.

GENERAL QUESADA: I remember this, only this moment, we went to a place called Aldermaston, which is about thirty miles west and I think and a little south of London, and the small staff that I brought up from Africa and I took up lodging and headquarters there.

DR. BURG: Had that been an RAF station at one time?



GENERAL QUESADA: No, Aldermaston was a private estate, and if I recall correctly, it is where the British Atomic Energy Commission now has its headquarters, but I am not sure of that.

DR. BURG: Well, we had also talked about the aircraft types that you had with you in the Ninth and some of the "teething" problems. We had talked particularly about the P-51, the engines tend to cut out on the way back from places like Kiel, and the immediate effects--you got in touch with Hap Arnold if I remember and

immediately they began to work on those engines and iron the bugs out. Now, are we talking about early 1944, when you had come up from Africa in late '43?

QUESADA: We're talking about early '44. What date was the invasion, yes, early '44.



BURG: Right, June of '44, so we are talking of an earlier period than that. Now, what you were telling me on the last interview--

QUESADA: Now wait a second, the invasion was in June of '44, we are then talking about late '43,

BURG: Because you came up prior say to December of '43.

QUESADA: Yes, well before, long before that, I think I came up in the middle of the summer.

BURG: I see. Now, your squadrons, many of them were pretty fresh from the United States--

QUESADA: All were, or nearly all but one or two.

BURG: And I remember your remark was you thought the standard of training had been excellent--

QUESADA: Extremely good.

BURG: --that these men were very well trained. Now you were using them in an escort role at first?

QUESADA: At first we were using them to escort the 8th Air Force heavy bombers into Germany.

BURG: --And running a certain amount of training for tactical air at the same time?

QUESADA: We were doing that on the side and only as training, some fighter bomber exercises, because these units had little or no training in bombing before they left the United States. They were trained primarily as fighters, rather than tactical bombers.

BURG: Now, all of those aircraft--I think you had three types, 47's, 38's, and 51's,--

QUESADA: That's correct.

BURG: --all of them were fitted out with, what is the term, "strong points", so that they could carry say as much as a five hundred pound bomb.

QUESADA: All of them could carry or were capable of mounting bomb



racks, and they could carry a two thousand pound bomb.

BURG: They could? Now some of these points, these attachment points out on the wings and perhaps one in the centerline of the aircraft, I suppose that's where the heaviest bomb--

QUESADA: Not necessarily.

BURG: Not really?



QUESADA: No, just as long as--if you put bombs on the wings it was desirable to put bombs of the same weight on each side, but not absolutely necessary, but desirable.

BURG: Because of the isometrical flight characteristics that you would get if you do--

QUESADA: But you could have unequal weights on the wings, it would be inconvenient and make the flying of the airplane a little bit more difficult but not impossible.

BURG: Now, let me ask you this. In the kind of role that your unit was going to play, was this bombing technique a shallow dive and release and pull out, or were these pilots in these fighter aircraft largely going to be flying level flight and dropping the bomb.

QUESADA: The former.

BURG: They are going to go for the shallow approach?

QUESADA: For all practical purposes their bomb site was their gun site.

BURG: I see. And they get special training in how to lead off on that gun sight in order to drop the bombs.

QUESADA: That's correct, that's correct. And practically all of our attack techniques were from a shallow dive. Now there is an exception to this, which we will go into later, which occurred during the Battle of the Bulge.

BURG: Okay, fine and dandy. Now, no special training had been given to these men for this kind of technique prior to their coming to the--

QUESADA: --Very little training, some but very, very little.

BURG: So, how would you then set up training for them? Is this left at the squadron level? Did you pass down to squadron commanders, for lack of anything better, manuals on how to do this or how was that handled?



Quesada: By and large, it was handled by giving to the group commanders a place to practice and have them practice on their own, under their own guidance. I don't recall that there were any formal manuals sent down to the group or squadrons. I don't recall that there were at all.

BURG: Had to work it out by themselves?



QUESADA: Yes, the group commanders worked it out pretty much by themselves. They were men of considerable initiative.

BURG: The reason I asked this is that it strikes me, it's very much like war on the Western Front [World War I] where my recollection is that it came to the point where they were using aircraft, fighter aircraft, like the Sopwith Camel in anti-trench bombing attacks. They were using them tactically in the--

QUESADA: --First World War, rarely that was true.

BURG: Putting Cooper bombs on them and little twenty-pounders I guess, and then you come down, you machine-gun enemy emplacements, whatever your targets are, artillery batteries, you drop bombs on them.

QUESADA: I think a better example, however, is what the German's did in their invasion of France.



BURG: How's that?

QUESADA: The German air force was very successful against the French, English and Belgians, in the use of tactical air power. And it attracted a great deal of public attention, how the Stukas were dive-bombing and immobilizing the French and Belgium and English armies during the invasion of France. That was a more recent example of the use of tactical air power. And it was by the Germans.



BURG: Yes, except a Stuka is making a very slow and very steep dive, and the aircraft really wasn't too capable of defending itself.

QUESADA: The difference is technique.

BURG: So you are using a very hot, a series of hot fighter aircraft with plenty of ability to defend themselves and using them in a shallow, flatter approach. So really you couldn't use the German example really for training your men.

QUESADA: Well, we couldn't use, we didn't use, their technique, but we used the objective behind it.

BURG: Right, Right. But you're using a--

QUESADA: And we used it much more effectively, I might say.

BURG: And partly perhaps because that Stuka was very slow, very vulnerable--

QUESADA: Yes, it couldn't defend itself. It couldn't live in an environment where the supremacy of the air was questioned, whereas we could.

BURG: And by 1944 would you say, General, that largely you had command of the air?



QUESADA: Almost complete command of the air. We would welcome a challenge even while on a tactical bomber mission. Many times, not occasionally, but many times we would have our crews jettison their bomb just to engage in air-to-air combat. If an opportunity presented itself to engage in air-to-air combat, we would always accept it, and we would almost always win. Our airplane was superior, our crews were infinitely better than the Germans at that time, and we welcomed an opportunity to shoot them down. If a group or a squadron was on a bombing mission and laden with bombs on its wings, and our radar or our intelligence told us or if they told us that there was an opportunity for air combat we were almost invariably instructed to jettison their bombs and

engage in air-to-air combat.

BURG: Was the idea to achieve sort of a moral superiority to them or merely simply to knock more of them down?



QUESADA: Well, looking at it in retrospect the main objective was to maintain our complete, or almost complete, control of the air. Our control of the air was unchallenged; we could do anything we wanted to do, and anytime that was questioned we would welcome the opportunity of asserting it, but not only of asserting it but to keep it. But there was another more subjective influence, and I say this reluctantly but I can say it now. We wanted to give these guys, these kids, an opportunity to shoot down a German airplane! See, a fighter pilot, the epitome of his success is to shoot down an enemy airplane, and we were always saddened or disappointed that we didn't get many chances to this. So when it did come, I am sure that that emotional desire to give these kids an opportunity to shoot down a German airplane had some effect. I hope you don't mind me being--it sounds kind of crude but it isn't really. It's human anyway.

BURG: No, at least not with my knowledge of fighting the air in the first war and the second war, of course. The same sort of thing that motivates the leader to let his wing man get in there

and scrag a few--

QUESADA: That's right, and don't forget we were dealing with human beings, and we tried to treat them as such, and they were damn good kids, too!

BURG: They were young human beings.

QUESADA: Yes, they were young and they couldn't wait to get into a fight with the Germans, and they were always longing for it.

BURG: And you yourself probably would be the first to admit that earlier in the War, it would have been a little tougher once you got into a fight with the Germans.

QUESADA: Oh, we would have had a tough time--

BURG: The quality of their pilots was very high.



QUESADA: Those kids would have had to fight air-to-air with a P-40 or a P-39. They had tough going; whereas it wasn't an unequal match, we weren't fighting with a less efficient airplane than the Germans had.

BURG: Of course, now as you move on into early '44, did you become involved then with the planning for Normandy--

QUESADA: Oh, very much.

BURG: Your Air Force was going to be used, the Ninth was going to be used very definitely in that thing. At what point were you drawn into the Normandy planning, the OVERLORD planning. Would it have been in late--?

QUESADA: Late '43. Almost immediately upon arriving in England.

BURG: All right, let me ask you: how did that go in the sense of who contacted you, who were you working with at first, what kinds of things were you doing at that point. Because we would very much like to know how it went for you.



QUESADA: Well, of course, the American ground forces that were to engage in the touchdown, the actual invasion were commanded by Omar Bradley, and his command was the First Army. And he was doing all of the planning, all of the parochial planning. The actual planning for the invasion was done in a place in London, and I can't remember the name of it. The actual planning was in the hands of a small mixed group--

BURG: COSSAC.

QUESADA: COSSAC, right. COSSAC would call us in to assist them

in the planning, and they were influenced primarily by a desire to have their planning have some relation to the reality that the executor could provide as input. They would call Bradley in as an example to make sure that what they were planning were within the means of the Army that was his. And likewise, they would do that in respect to our fighter bomber force, our tactical forces, and that is how I would get involved. The basic planning was COSSAC's, but they learned and wisely knew that they could not plan in a vacuum. And I must say that contact when they would call us in, they would do it for a very objective reason and we knew it. Likewise, we were not jealous of them because we knew that by their detachment they could plan well.



In the first place as far as the tactical air forces were concerned, we were fighting a war, we were going into Germany so we had to devote most of our attention to that. And as far as I was concerned I was glad that somebody would take over the planning for the invasion of Normandy. I certainly wasn't in any position to do it; I didn't have the information, and I didn't have the knowledge or experience. I was just a young kid commanding a very large tactical air force. I had knowledge of what we could do, and they were quick to ask, to exploit it.

So the actual planning was in COSSAC, and they would call us in from time to time with meetings--and meetings that lasted a couple of days sometimes--to go over their plans and basically with the objective of criticism on our part to point out whether this was real or unreal because we were the ones that would have to execute it. And they were very constructive meetings.

Now, outside of that and knowing that Bradley's First Army was to be the ground forces and knowing the 9th Tactical Air Command would be the air forces, we did a lot of planning with Bradley. We put men in his units so that we could know what we were doing and they would know what we were doing, and we had to work out where they would go, who they would be. We had to get them there early so they would know each other; we had to make each other know what communications we had. There was a very, very close coordination of the communications requirements--theirs and ours--because both of us had a tremendous communication requirement. We more than they, because our units are so far apart. And we had a great big telephone company that moved right with us, but nevertheless that big telephone company had to be compatible with their telephone company and that takes a lot of coordination and planning so we did have a lot of--for the lack of a better word--more parochial planning than COSSAC was engaged in.



BURG: Right. Well, let's look back then at COSSAC briefly. The man in charge of that was a British officer, Frederick Morgan, and then his American deputy was a man named Ray Barker.

QUESADA: That's correct.

BURG: And would you be consulting with them or with their subordinates?

QUESADA: Mostly at staff level and mostly at prearranged symposiums or meetings.

BURG: I see, interesting. Now let me ask you how this would actually work because as always this is what we historians rarely know, precisely how things were done and the routine. Let us just pick some particular day, you receive a call from COSSAC I presume, telling you that there is going to be such a symposium, a meeting, would they tell you the general subject matter of that particular meeting?

QUESADA: The way that it was usually worked out is that COSSAC would indicate to [Air Marshal Sir Trafford] Leigh Mallory, who was the guy who was suppose to be, and was, in command of all the air forces for the invasion. And they would tell Leigh Mallory that there is to be a meeting at COSSAC to cover a certain general





subject, and they would like to have the tactical units that would be specifically involved in that subject present. And Leigh Mallory would then determine who he would like to have accompany him so the input to COSSAC would be by those people who had to perform the task. And on those cases he or Brereton would call me and tell me--assuming it was an area of my interest--to be at a certain place at a certain time and to bring whoever was appropriate with me to do so.

BURG: Yes, now can you give me an example of who you would take from your staff. You have in mind perhaps some particular tactical problem and just give me an example of who might go.

QUESADA: I would rarely take more than two. That would be my chief of staff and operations officer, as a rule. Now if the subject was logistics, as an example, I would take my A-4.

BURG: Could I suppose at this point that if it required your A-4, it might deal, for example, with the problems of setting up your advance fields in France once the beachhead had opened up enough--

QUESADA: Well, they were allocating tonnage to the various commands is a good example of logistics. How many--

BURG: How many airfield maps for example--



QUESADA: That's correct, and how many vehicles, how many tons we want to take over the beach and how many vehicles are necessary, what vehicles we want to take, what radars we want to take, that is a part of the logistics planning.

BURG: How much aviation fuel was--

QUESADA: That's correct, and there is a lot of that you know.

BURG: Yes, engine spares.

QUESADA: Oh, a tremendous amount.



BURG: And the full mass of logistical data that has to be--

QUESADA: That's correct. All right, I might just inject here that that was the hardest part to coordinate.

BURG: All right, let me ask you a pertinent question. I don't believe I asked you before. At that stage in your life, with the responsibilities of doing some planning that in our air corps at that time certainly had not been done on any scale such as that, not ever.

QUESADA: Never.

BURG: And you were a very young officer. Did you find that the training you had received in the Army Air Corps had prepared you to cope with problems on that scale?

QUESADA: No, we had never had any training in the Air Corps Tactical School or Leavenworth that even approached that scale, but we did have training at both schools I went to.

BURG: You had attended Leavenworth?

QUESADA: And the Air Corps Tactical School.

BURG: I am sorry, I didn't know that because I was thinking that the average army officer--an army officer like LeRoy Lutes with whom I am working right now--Lutes also had logistics operating out of Washington, DC. He had gone to Leavenworth and the War College.

QUESADA: I went there as a young captain. There weren't many captains at Leavenworth either.

BURG: I would think not.

QUESADA: But anyway--



BURG: So, generally speaking, you had that kind of staff-type training.

QUESADA: I had had that kind of staff training, but it didn't equip me to do what we eventually were required to do. It did equip me, however, and I want to emphasize this, the Staff College did equip me to appreciate how urgent it was to plan your logistics with care. That's what it equipped me with; it didn't give me the answers to every problem, but it impressed upon me and others that you had to find an answer to these problems, otherwise you were in a hell of a lot of trouble!

BURG: In a sense it gave you an attitude that you could take with you. You are coping with something. Well, may I ask, when were you at Leavenworth?

QUESADA: In 1937, I think. '37 or '38.



BURG: Which may have been an advantage to you because by '37, '38, perhaps it is easier to see the scale on which things are going to operate in modern war. Had you been there ten years earlier I am not sure that you would have seen it at that same scale.

QUESADA: Well, I assure you the exercises at Leavenworth did not contemplate war on the scale that we eventually witnessed, experienced.

BURG: So in most cases it seems to me that all of you, air and ground forces alike, had to rapidly learn the trade--

QUESADA: We were all alike, and actually the ability to adapt to this change had a tremendous influence on how far you progressed in the hierarchy of command.

BURG: I suppose so; I can see that.

QUESADA: --very noticeable.



BURG: Yes, your adaptability would be very important. All right, you have received a call, your chief of air staff, and who was the second officer?

QUESADA: The operations officer, or it might be an intelligence briefing; but I would usually take the staff officer that was appropriate to the purpose of the meeting called and we were almost always informed of what the purpose was.

BURG: So you knew the purpose. Would you have very much lead time, General to put together notes or--

QUESADA: A week.

BURG: About a week.

QUESADA: I don't remember, but I can have a recollection it would be about a week.

BURG: All right, now you go. May I ask you: you suggest that the meetings were held at various places, not necessarily at the--

QUESADA: Usually, if they were called by COSSAC, they were usually held at COSSAC.



BURG: All right, now you come up to London to take part in the meetings, you pass through security checks going into COSSAC I am quite sure, now you are ushered into a room at which there is a conference table, would that be typical?

QUESADA: Generally, it would be a conference type meeting.

BURG: And normally could we expect at that table a group of how many, perhaps 15 to 25?

QUESADA: Fifteen to 20 and about a third of it would be from the COSSAC staff.

BURG: And the rest of you would be a mixture of British, American, air, ground?

QUESADA: As a general rule, as a general rule.

BURG: May I ask you if naval types would be--

QUESADA: Sometimes they would be naval types if it were a meeting that involved it. I can recall several meetings that did involve the navy.

BURG: Now, who would chair the meeting, one of the COSSAC people?

QUESADA: Usually somebody from COSSAC.

BURG: But at the staff level, not as high as Morgan or Barker, but down the ladder--



QUESADA: As a general rule, it would be somebody on the staff level. It would be the man in charge of the problem that was being discussed. You'd never get any place if you just talk about everything. And you've got to focus the subject on a few things, otherwise you accomplish nothing.

BURG: Right. Now the chairman then would call the meeting to order, would he then restate to you the problem or problems that were to be discussed at these sessions?

QUESADA: He would state in rather precise terms what the problem was. I recall, as an example, he would state what they were

planning, and he would ask those present to criticize what they were planning as the executioner. There was a very good atmosphere. The British are darn good planners. I think they are good planners because they have been punished so by failing to plan.

BURG: Perhaps always with fewer resources typically than we would bring into something--

QUESADA: We are extravagant and they are not.



BURG: You were a young officer at the time. Was the British approach to planning and the solving of problems, do you ever recall it making you impatient. You did represent abundance by and large. Did you ever find them hesitant to the point that it might have annoyed you in these planning sessions?

QUESADA: Oh, I think there would be occasions--I am at times inclined to be impulsive, impulsive partly because of the youth of the time--that I became impatient. But by and large, the general impression was admiration for what they were doing. I would become impatient at times, I would often think that they are talking about trivia, but I think they would be right in more cases than I would be. As a general rule, my personal attitude was not one of impatience.



BURG: Do you recollect, now in retrospect, ever being asked to do something which you felt was literally impossible for your men and your machines.

QUESADA: No, never.

BURG: Mainly what was asked of you was within the realm of possibility for your units?

QUESADA: I think your answer to that is a definite, yes. The only qualification that might go to it is that we didn't think anything was impossible!

BURG: You didn't think anything was impossible.



QUESADA: No, we thought we could do anything. It was our era not theirs. We didn't think that we would be called upon to do anything that we couldn't do.

BURG: All right, let's ask the corollary to that then. Was there ever a feeling in your mind that you were maybe being under used?

QUESADA: Oh definitely, definitely.

BURG: Can you give me an example, General?

QUESADA: There was a definite and rather strong, almost a phobia and a fear that the German air force would be able to impose a very, very serious impediment on our landing. There was a general belief that the German air force was a lot stronger than it was, and I along with many of my associates in the Air Force felt that the German air force could not be an impediment on the landing because we wouldn't let them. We were sure that if the German air force had some strength, which we didn't think it had, and would come out in strength, which it didn't, we'd knock the hell out of them.

BURG: Well, may I ask, did Leigh Mallory share that belief with you?



QUESADA: Leigh Mallory, I'm vague in this memory, quite vague. Leigh Mallory had a tendency to attribute to the German air force greater strength than it eventually turned out to have. I'm vague in that--

[Interruption]

BURG: --just a recollection of his tendency to be a little--

QUESADA: My recollection of Air Marshall Leigh Mallory was one in

which he didn't have as much confidence in our ability to maintain superiority of the air over the beachhead as we did. It never occurred to us that we just couldn't knock the hell out them if they showed up. We were confident, almost cocky--well, perhaps cocky.



BURG: Yes, yes, I remember some Air Force officers at that time. Yes, I would say cocky as far as a "grunt" would view it. Let me ask you, talking about infantry types, how about British ground officers in discussions where for example you gentlemen were confident about your ability to cope with the German air force if they should show up. The British infantry officer at that meeting might even have been at Dunkirk, where as you remember they saw very few RAF aircraft, mainly I think because the RAF was doing its job out of their range of vision, but do you recollect whether any of the British ground officers also had doubts about--

QUESADA: Oh, there is no question. My recollection is quite vivid on that. All army or ground personnel, with few exceptions, felt that the German air force was--. They were worried about the German air force, impeding their progress, British and American-- I don't think one any more than the other. I don't mean this in a derogatory sense--the army always feared the German air force

more than we did, but that's understandable. I don't say that with any malice.

BURG: No, you were in your element.

QUESADA: But we were in our element, that's right.



BURG: Coping with a problem that you had coped with already and had assessed--

QUESADA: The ground force always had an exaggerated concept of what the German air force could do or would do.

BURG: Right, if we go back then into the context of the COSSAC meeting, were these sessions by and large argued out and discussed at a fairly calm level. That is do you ever remember any American or British officer getting quite argumentative or vehement about his position, or did you all pretty well mesh in a calm assessment of the problems that you faced?

QUESADA: I can't site any specific examples, but I assure you that during these meetings individuals got vehement and expressed their views very, very strongly, and if they were in opposition to somebody else's views, they would very often express them more strongly. In other words, there was an atmosphere of advocacy

prevailing. However, I can't recall a single case that this was pursued with ill will. When the meetings were over we would talk among ourselves, about that "dumb bastard" or something like that, you know. But I don't recall any basic ill will that existed. There was a general feeling, it was general and nothing that deserves special attention, and I comment on it not with the view of attracting special attention, but there was a general feeling that Montgomery was unnecessarily conservative and at times timid.



BURG: Had he sat in on any of the meetings that you attended?

QUESADA: Oh, a lot, oh sure. And he would convey to several of us, including me, that there was a natural tendency to be timid. He seemed to demand a guarantee from freedom of German air attack, as an example. And our view was, at least mine, but views more important than my own, is nobody can guarantee freedom. We will do the best we can and that would be plenty good. And we were confident that we could keep the Germans off their back.

BURG: General, did he seem to draw that timidity from a time in the western desert when the German air force there in North Africa had been able to hit him pretty hard?

QUESADA: I am sure his reactions were borne of experience, yes.

BURG: I just wondered if he had ever grabbed you by the tie and said, "Now listen, damn it, when I counted on the RAF at El Alamein or someplace else, they did not come through for me."?

QUESADA: He would comment something like that, but nobody minded. It was give and take. There was a fellow that would attend a lot of these meetings whose name was "Mary" Coningham. And he was a very, very fine airman, particularly tactical airman, with an abundance of experience. And he knew Montgomery like the back of his hand, and he and Montgomery would often get into, or sometimes get into a clash such as you described. And we always had a tendency to rally to Coningham's side and not Montgomery's.

BURG: He was RAF and I believe that he took over from a man I have mentioned to you, Ray Collishaw. Collishaw had been a First World War fighter pilot of seventy victories in the Western Front, Canadian by the way, and Collishaw originally was out there in the desert--

QUESADA: --in Africa, that's correct--

BURG: --That's right, and then I believe it is Coningham who takes over after Collishaw left.



QUESADA: That's correct and Coningham brought sense to the tactical air war in Africa. A very capable guy.

BURG: Brought sense?

QUESADA: He brought sense to it.

BURG: In the way air was employed against ground targets.

QUESADA: That's correct. "Mary" Coningham hated me for a while in Africa.

BURG: He did?

QUESADA: Whew! God, and we got to be the best of friends.

BURG: Well, I wonder if you may not have mentioned that to me in an earlier interview.

QUESADA: Oh, my, he use to hate me, God, he use to hate me, and we got to be the best of friends. We genuinely liked each other as people.

BURG: Is Coningham still alive, sir?



QUESADA: No, he was killed in India, I think, as was Leigh Mallory: both were killed.

BURG: So by the time you were at COSSAC planning, Coningham has been a friend of yours for what amounts to perhaps a year.

QUESADA: Oh, Coningham was killed well after the war, I think three or four years after the war, and our friendship continued all along.

BURG: Right, then it is more likely in these COSSAC planning sessions for Coningham to tangle with Montgomery since he had had to cope with him?

QUESADA: That's correct. And he would also tangle with the American army commanders, too.

BURG: Coningham would?



QUESADA: Oh, yes, on their timidity in respect to having confidence in what the air could do. And this timidity was born of a natural desire of the ground forces to have an over stadia, to have the tactical air forces as an adjunct to their own artillery, you see, and bomb everything directly in front of them. Whereas it was our school of thought that we were best serving the army and best serving the invasion by keeping the German air force from getting to the battlefield and keeping the German air force from having the means with which to fight the war when they did



get to the battlefield.

BURG: So the ground view would be: if a squad gets pinned down they would just love to call in 45 P-51s with 500 pound bombs to take care of that machine gun.



QUESADA: Absolutely. Now that is overstating it but not much. And that was where the arguments would occur. Whereas our view was that we were serving the invasion, and hence the army, best by making the forces in opposition to the army, German forces, weak and which we did with great success I might add.

BURG: Now, did you come as the ground forces advanced--getting away from COSSAC again briefly--did you come more to the ground force point of view, or could I put it another way, did the ground forces sort of draw you more and more into that tactical role immediately in front of them, the strafing, the bombing, rocket--.

QUESADA: Well, as the war went on we did more of the close support. And this is born in the fact that we developed techniques with which to do it.

BURG: Do it accurately?

QUESADA: To do it accurately and constructively. But in the final analysis one of the reasons we put more of our effort on close support is because there was no German air force to fight. The German army was immobilized, so there was more of our force available for that.

BURG: Right. Now, you have said that Montgomery was present at some of these COSSAC meetings which you attended, and the implication would be that we might expect to find Bradley--

QUESADA: Oh, definitely, definitely.



BURG: --there too. And perhaps others, Collins, maybe some of the men--

QUESADA: Sometimes Collins.

BURG: All right, let me ask you if I have not done so before, I think we have a part of your assessment of Montgomery from your point of view as you saw him, your perception of him.

QUESADA: It was a parochial point of view.

BURG: Precisely, and you saw there some evidence of timidity and a desire to have everything lined up and ready to go with as many guarantees and sealed contracts as he could have.

QUESADA: Well put.

BURG: How about Bradley?

QUESADA: Different. Bradley's personality was different from Montgomery's. Bradley was an infantryman to the marrow of his bones. He was a very, very stable guy. He didn't possess the view that the infantry would fight the war without casualty. He knew that he was in a war and that they would have to fight, and they would have to fight the German army, and probably have to fight under conditions where the German air force was either present or effective. And he wanted to be prepared for it. Naturally, he wanted as little German air force interference as possible, and he was more inclined to rely on us to be able to do what we said we would do or could do. His personality was more inclined to express confidence than to express doubt.

BURG: That was the thing that I was going to ask of you, if you could compare these two army commanders--Montgomery and Bradley. I wanted to know which of the two, again in your own personal estimation, seemed to have the best grasp of what air power could do for them. Which of the two men seemed to be most at home with airmen and the thinking of airmen with regard to these problems. In a way, I suppose I am asking which of the two is closer to a



modern general, a man fully aware of ground, air, naval support between the two men?

QUESADA: I am at a loss to try to draw a distinction between the two because in the case of Montgomery he had witnessed what the German air force could do and did do, but he also witnessed what "Mary" Coningham did for him in Africa. I think, he was aware that "Mary" Coningham and his tactical air forces in Africa made a tremendous contribution to Montgomery's sweep across North Africa. Now, Bradley had not been subjected to that experience because the limit of his experience or the apogee of his experience was as a corps commander in Sicily. And there was practically no opposition from the air there. So it's a hard--I don't think I can answer that question with any useful purpose.

BURG: Maybe the two men cannot really be compared, at least by you under the conditions that I set forth.

QUESADA: No, I can't.



BURG: All right, do you remember any other personalities at these COSSAC planning sessions of this sort who stand out in your mind, who might stand out in your mind because of sheer grasp of the issues, brilliance of mind, or they may stand out in your mind as

being stuffy "horses' asses", who completely "turned you off" to use the modern phrase. We have talked about Bradley, about Montgomery, Leigh Mallory was there, any others who stand out in any aspect?

QUESADA: Yes, Louie [Lewis] Brereton, Louie Brereton is an old long-standing air force type in the service much longer than I was in it. He was somewhat older, and Louie Brereton had many detractors and had many supporters. Louie Brereton was a rather flamboyant type. He was rather fond of the high life. And at these meetings he would make his presence known by an extraordinary confidence in what the air forces could do. He was convinced that the battle area would be isolated. He was convinced that we could gain supremacy in the air, and he would be capable of expressing these views.



Lewis Brereton's personal life perhaps had some effect on how strong his view and how much impact his views had. I don't mean to say his personal life was anything unattractive because it wasn't, but the fact remains that he did not have the persuasion that Leigh Mallory had and that Bradley had and that Spaatz had. Those men, by their personalities, were much more persuasive, but Louie Brereton was at times much more right.

BURG: You were saying that Brereton had the facility of being right, though not always as persuasive in his manner.

(Interruption)

QUESADA: A tendency to be abrasive. People who are right often are.

BURG: So, in those sessions he is one who stands out in your mind.

QUESADA: No, he doesn't stand out, no.



BURG: He is just one who was there and on many occasions--

QUESADA: The fellow who stands out actually is Leigh Mallory. He stands out.

BURG: Oh, he does?

QUESADA: Oh, yes. He would be the dominant airman at these meetings.

BURG: Not, I gather not necessarily because of his rank which was pretty high in the Royal Air Force but because of his knowledge?

QUESADA: His knowledge and his personality.

BURG: Let me ask you about that personality then. What did he have going for him?

QUESADA: He had a dominating personality. He had one of these British personalities that sort of takes over. Now I am saying this with admiration, because I like people with strong personalities. Leigh Mallory did have a strong personality, and his personality was one that in a group would dominate.

BURG: Based on his intellectual quality--

QUESADA: Intellectual qualities and his manner. He was an extrovert, he was assertive, he was not timid, he spoke well, very well, very articulate. And he was not disinclined to speak up.

BURG: And was he generally right, as you have suggested that Brereton often was?



QUESADA: He was often right, but not generally right, drawing the distinction with what I said about Brereton. He was--looking at it in retrospect and having the benefit of experience in history--he didn't have as much confidence in what the air forces could do as history justified.

BURG: Yes, I see. This seems to have been borne out in the earlier situation where he and Lord [Hugh] Dowding clashed during the Battle of Britain with respect to the handling of their two groups.

QUESADA: That's correct. Right.

BURG: I have used up the time that I begged from you.

(Interruption)

QUESADA: I would urge you to examine what was the command structure, to what degree were the tactical air forces subject to the command of the army ground forces, and to what degree could the airmen of Russia exercise command of their forces in response to their own knowledge of what their forces could do rather than in response to what the army told them to do.

BURG: So it is a question of does [Georgii Konstantinovich] Zhukov, [General Vasili] Chuikov, [Marshal Konstantin] Rokossovsky, are these men who command fronts, are they also absolutely in command of the air regiments, the Russian air regiments and air divisions attached to their front, or are those air divisions separate entities?





QUESADA: But I would go further than that. I would go--was there a command jurisdiction, command jurisdiction between corps and divisions and to air units. Did corps command air units and did divisions command air units.

BURG: Much as they would perhaps command armored troops, so that they could employ them within the corps boundaries and with no question about the airmen making separate decisions at all. We need 25 Sturmoviks at that point.

QUESADA: And to what degree did the army--I can understand why a front commander might have under him an air force, army and naval command, but if they're going to disperse that principle and have it down to the last battalion commands the last airplane, that is the difference between--you see our army to this day seeks that philosophy.

BURG: Still seeks it, well, that's an old philosophy.



QUESADA: And they still seek it. And we were successful in resisting it and overcoming it. Now, I would urge you to make that inquiry into the Russian.

BURG: All right.

QUESADA: Have you read Barbarossa?

BURG: Yes, I have, yes.

QUESADA: Marvelous book.

BURG: Right.



This interview is being taped with General Quesada in General Quesada's office in Washington, D.C., January 31, 1975. Present for the interview, Dr. Burg and General Quesada.

DR. BURG: When we last talked, we had been talking about the Cossac staff and some of the planning meetings that you had attended, and you had talked about some of the strong personalities present in those meetings. Certainly General Brereton was one we discussed; Air Marshal Leigh Mallory was another one that we had discussed. I believe that those people, aside from Bradley and Montgomery whose views with regards to air power you've discussed, I think those were the major people that we talked about. I was going to ask you, before moving on, whether there was anyone else that stands out in your mind from those COSSAC--

GEN. QUESADA: Mary Coningham.

DR. BURG: Yes, we discussed him. You had met him in North Africa and--not too pleasantly at first and then--

GEN. QUESADA: Yes.

DR. BURG: --things had straightened out later on.

GEN. QUESADA: I can't recall any specific other names. There were some, of course.

DR. BURG: Yeah, I think that probably we--

GEN. QUESADA: Broadhurst was one.

DR. BURG: This would be Harry Broadhurst.



QUESADA: Air Vice Marshal Broadhurst.

BURG: Air Vice marshal. I don't recall what his work was--I don't--

QUESADA: He was basically the equivalent of me in the British Royal Air Force on the other side of the

BURG: Oh, really.

QUESADA: Yes.



BURG: Now would his aircraft have then been the Typhoons and the Tempests--

QUESADA: Right. That's correct.

BURG: --this kind of thing. Let me ask--I'm glad you thought of that name because it would never have occurred to me. Broadhurst was also present at COSSAC meetings?

QUESADA: Occasionally, not very often.

BURG: Not as much as you?

QUESADA: No.

BURG: Why would that be?

QUESADA: Because the British had Air Marshal Coningham, who was very knowledgeable in the tactical air role.

BURG: This would be "Mary".

QUESADA: That's correct.

BURG: Right. I see.

QUESADA: And the Americans didn't have any equivalent of "Mary" Coningham in the knowledge of the role of the tactical air forces.

BURG: I see. So Broadhurst didn't get there as often--

QUESADA: He didn't get there very often.



BURG: --as you would have. You, yourself, had conversations with Broadhurst from time to time?

QUESADA: From time to time, yes. Not often but occasionally.

BURG: When you did converse with him, what was the general topic of conversation that you might follow?

QUESADA: The legitimacy of the role that we were asked to perform, our ability to perform it, and how we would perform it. And he was always, at least in my opinion, very, very, knowledgeable in the role. And he had a great faculty towards candor, and I found him very, very invigorating and cooperative and sympathetic.

BURG: Were there any problems that arose for you that you ever took to Broadhurst to get an opinion from him?

QUESADA: Yes, many. But I can't recall them specifically. They weren't significant problems. I would often lean on him to be frank about it. To extract from him his attitude toward certain

things. And he was always a very reliable guy. He was a doer. He was not particularly a planner.

BURG: I see.

QUESADA: And the planners would often come to him to get the attitude of the doer.

BURG: I see.

QUESADA: The planners very often, or sometimes, deal in, avoid reality.

BURG: Right.

QUESADA: Not necessarily with intent--but they have a tendency to avoid reality, and if they're good planners, they know it, and if they're good planners they try to seek reality, to put reality to their planning.

BURG: Yes.

QUESADA: And Broadhurst was a very good depository of reality.

BURG: Could I say that your feeling about the Cossac planners was that they were people generally who recognized the lack and did seek this experience.

QUESADA: Very, very definitely. Very definitely.



BURG: I see. What was Broadhurst's unit called? Would he have commanded an RAF Group? Or was it a larger formation than that when we speak of his tactical--

QUESADA: I am taxing my memory but I think the name of his command was the 2nd Tactical--I think it was called a Group, but I just can't remember.

BURG: All right. That's something that the records will tell us.

QUESADA: Easily. It's indelible in the records.



BURG: Yes. All right. Now his aircraft, by and large I think, were, if not designed deliberately to the tactical role, air-to-ground strikes and the like, certainly were quickly converted to that role. The Typhoon I think coming first, the Tempest, the second aircraft in the series, an improvement on it. Your aircraft had not necessarily been designed for a "tac" air role had they?

QUESADA: No, our aircraft, particularly the Mustang and the Lightning were designed for air-to-air combat, and the air-to-ground was an adaptation. The P-47, it was also designed primarily to air-to-air combat, and it was converted to the air-to-ground role. There was a definite and deliberate effort on the part of planners and designers back in Washington to get as much dual capability as possible. But, if I recall it correctly the predominant role in their minds was air-to-air combat.

BURG: Now were Broadhurst's men more familiar, let us say, with air ground rocket use. I remember that their Typhoons and Tempests carried rocket racks, and they seemed to use them quite frequently.

QUESADA: The British definitely employed the rocket much more than we did. Our tendency was to go to multiple machine guns. As an example, the 47, if I recall correctly, had four .50 caliber machine guns?

BURG: I believe so. Detachment points. Bombs.



QUESADA: Right. And we were on the machine gun more than the British; and they adopted the use of the rocket. And we had a tendency to hand <sup>ly</sup> under our wings, racks for bombs rather than racks for rockets.

BURG: Did you ever discuss with Broadhurst the difference in those two?

QUESADA: I don't recall having done so. I think it's probable that we did, but I don't recall it.

BURG: So it doesn't stand out in your mind now.

QUESADA: It doesn't stand out in my mind, no.

BURG: Yes. I was wondering whether you'd ever had any deep philosophical discussions about the merits of one over the other.

QUESADA: I would think not. Not a deep philosophical discussion.



We might have had a discussion, but it was never an issue.

BURG: Right. Now am I correct in thinking that Broadhurst's people were going to be in support of 21 Army Group--

QUESADA: That's correct.

BURG: --and you were going to be in support of Bradley's--

QUESADA: Right.

BURG: --and then expand away from that.

QUESADA: That's correct.

BURG: So the two of you, Broadhurst and Quesada, are not going to be working jointly on matters. That is, your aircraft are not combining to strike at targets, but rather you're both striking on your own respective fronts.

QUESADA: As a general thing that's so, definitely.

BURG: Only occasionally would there be cooperative--

QUESADA: That's correct. During the Battle of the Bulge, the British turned Broadhurst's command over to me.

BURG: I see. I see.

QUESADA: Which was a very unusual thing for anybody to do.



BURG: Where at that time we were turning infantry over to the British command--

QUESADA: Yes. They turned his whole Group over to me for operational control.

BURG: All right then. I'll come back to that at the proper time. Since we've talked about COSSAC planning, and we're now coming up on June the 6th, I know from what you've said in the past that your men were being in effect, "blooded," trained, given their experience, during this whole period while as we've talked about COSSAC planning---

QUESADA: Right.



BURG: We've spoken, for example, of missions to Kiel and other places where they got their experience, missions into France--as we come up closer to June in 1944, were your men gradually turned to assignments in France, somewhere in the vicinity of the invasion beaches? Or were your missions still varied and flown into Germany and into other areas of--

QUESADA: There was a definite trend there. As our groups would arrive from the United States, they would almost invariably be

put to escorting the B-17s, or the strategic bombers. And that was almost to the exclusion of all other roles. They had, the groups that were sent over for my command, a greater range than the fighters that the 8th Fighter Command had, as a general statement. And so my units were escorting the bombers at the deepest part of the penetrations.

BURG: That interests me, General. Had your aircraft a greater range because it might be necessary for them, as the expression went at the time I think, to form cab ranks and to circle, burning up gasoline, waiting for targets or--

QUESADA: There's a simple reason. They were P-51s. See the--

BURG: And the Eighth did not have the P-51s.



QUESADA: The Eighth didn't. We got the first P-51s. And the P-51s had a much greater range than the 47s and the P-38s that the 8th Fighter Command had.

BURG: I see.

QUESADA: And the P-51s had the big tank, 70 gallon tank installed behind the cockpit seat. And it could carry the wing tanks, and it had a significantly greater range. Now, as time went on, there

was a transfer of P-51 equipped units to the Eighth and a transfer of P-47 units to the Ninth, because of this point that I was raising. And some of the units that the 8th Fighter Command had were in fact equipped with P-51s because they had the longer range.

BURG: So they took some units from you and put them in the 8th Fighter and gave you--

QUESADA: That's correct.

BURG: --47 units out of the Eighth.



QUESADA: Yes.

BURG: This was not an exchange of aircraft--pardon me for asking this--not just an exchange--

QUESADA: As a general rule not. As a general rule it was an exchange of groups.

BURG: Yes. Pilots and all.

QUESADA: Right. Everything.

BURG: Yes. And the men they were getting were experienced, both in the escort role, and to some extent trained for the ground attack role--

QUESADA: And another way this was accomplished, Group number so-and-so arriving from the United States that was destined and planned to be in the Ninth and equipped with P-51s was in fact assigned to the Eighth when it got there. And groups that were destined to be assigned to the Eighth, equipped with P-47s when they got to Europe were assigned to me. So some of this transfer took place before the units got to Europe.

BURG: Now did that create special problems for you?

QUESADA: No.

BURG: You could assimilate 8th Air Force types and you could assimilate P-47 groups coming out of the States?

QUESADA: Easily. Easily.



BURG: And you had training, training syllabi set up and the whole routine--

QUESADA: Most of the training had already been done in the United States.

BURG: Oh, even before they got over, they had been trained for air-to-ground--

QUESADA: No, practically none of them had been trained for air-to-ground. The whole concept of training in the United States for all of the units was air-to-air combat.

BURG: I see. In retrospect does that seem a reasonable way to have done it?

QUESADA: In back-sight, which is very, very good--

BURG: Yes, 100 percent, yes.



QUESADA: --it would have been better had it been otherwise. But I think in all fairness, the training activity in the United States logically assumed that the German air force would not be as defeated as it was by D-Day. There was a tremendous fear on the part of all, the ground forces and the air forces, that the great obstacle to a successful landing in Normandy would be the German air force. And so I can't fault, except in hindsight, the concept that our fighters had to assume the role of gaining air superiority by air-to-air combat.

Now as it turned out, the Royal air forces and our air forces defeated the German air force before D-Day. And we defeated them by making them come join in air-to-air combat during our deep penetrations of the strategic bombers into Germany. See that's

where we defeated the German air force, in air-to-air combat, was during the deep penetrations of the bombers into Germany. They had to come up, they just couldn't sit there idly--and twiddle their thumbs while the B-17s were just destroying the German industry. So they had to come up for air-to-air combat, and we had a tremendous force to take along, and did take along. And the P-51 was a better airplane than any of them had, than any German airplane. And it destroyed them in great numbers.

BURG: And you were sucking them up, I assume, from fields in France, too--

QUESADA: Fields in France and Germany--



BURG: --as well as Germany, yes.

QUESADA: And mostly in Germany. And it is there that the German air force was, in fact, defeated. And when it came time for the invasion to take place, where everybody anticipated, almost everybody, I don't know of anybody and certainly including myself that didn't think that when the invasion took place, the real role of the American and British air forces would be to maintain air superiority over the beaches. And we assumed that it would be contested. The facts are that air superiority all over Europe had

been achieved prior to the landing in Normandy. There was practically no contest for the air over the beaches in Normandy. There was no German air force to show up. They were destroyed. And when they, the little bit that did show up, we just shot'em down.

BURG: Yes. I would assume we were there with gaggles of aircraft--

QUESADA: That's correct.

BURG: --that couldn't be penetrated.



QUESADA: And we had a tremendous amount of airplanes. The Eighth Air Force airplanes were put over the beaches with the view of maintaining the air superiority. And they were disappointed that it wasn't challenged. Whereas my fighter-bombers were then freed to engage in the tactical role, to help the invasion get started on land. Whereas it was anticipated, see a year before, that all the airplanes, including ours, being the Ninth, would have to participate in the maintenance of air superiority over the battlefield.

BURG: Right. All right, I see that. Can I suggest to you that it might be correct to say: If our pilots are trained in the States for air-to-air combat so that they had that skill, that



capacity, then it was not difficult--in a relative sense--not difficult to convert them to this particular skill of air-to-ground strikes. And they can fall back on their air-to-air combat skills, if they get into any difficulties. Then, in other words, that is a better system--train for air-to-air and then convert them for air-to-ground than it would be to have them air-to-ground trained--

QUESADA: Than vice-versa?

BURG: Yes.

QUESADA: It would be easier. One of the real problems we had which I have to say was relatively minor, was the psychological problem.

BURG: Oh?

QUESADA: The young American who is in the Air Force likes the idea of shooting another airplane down and being responsible for it.

BURG: I see. Yes.

QUESADA: To the fighter pilot that is the ultimate objective. That's what he thinks he's there for.

BURG: And is imbued with that idea--



BURG: --by the Air Force, itself.

QUESADA: --by the Air Force itself and by our spirit and by what he reads. He thinks that the fighter pilot is there to shoot another fighter pilot down. You see. And that's as it should be. So it is true that some of these units would come over here anticipating engaging the German air force in mortal air combat. And when their role was changed to the tactical role, there isn't the slightest doubt that many were disappointed. And would rather have been engaged in a tactical role that was air-to-air combat, which is the thing that they looked forward to. And we had to get through that. And there was a little bit of a problem. Some of the guys wanted to stay in the 8th Air Force so they could engage in air-to-air combat.



However, as it turned out, soon after they got a taste of this air-to-ground combat and when they could see how effective they were, in other words--knock a bridge down--that's a pretty effective thing for a 22 year old boy to see. They would take on a column of tanks and just have one blow up right in front of the other, you see. They got just as imbued with the idea of air-to-ground as air-to-air.

BURG: And I believe you told me on a previous interview, which

would be another factor I suppose to consider, that your instructions to them were, if they saw German aircraft, German fighter aircraft in the area, they'd drop everything they had and went for it.

QUESADA: Oh, absolutely. Because this was a continuation of the logic that you could only be successful in the tactical role if you have a degree of air superiority. So anytime there was a German airplane about, that became the target.

BURG: Which would help their morale too, knowing that they were free to do that--

QUESADA: Tremendously, that's right.



BURG: --and could do it.

QUESADA: And that made the other, by engaging in air-to-air combat whenever the opportunity arose, and if it's done with success, which is usually the case, that makes the air-to-ground combat easier, when you're less harrassed by the German air force.

BURG: Yes.

QUESADA: And towards the last, when I say the last I mean before the actual invasion, the skill of the German air force pilot was not very good. Noticeably--

BURG: By then the highly trained men were gone.

QUESADA: Oh, it was very, very noticeable. Very.

BURG: That had actually changed perhaps while you were back in England, during a period of maybe six months or so.

QUESADA: That changed during that period before the invasion-- that period when the strategic bombers were going into Germany, deep into Germany, and the 8th Air Force fighters and the 9th Air Force fighters were going with them and engaging in air combat, which was a battle we won. And as we won the battle, our superiority in skill, not only in numbers, began to show itself.

BURG: Yes.

QUESADA: Demonstrate itself.

BURG: Their's was clearly declining--

QUESADA: Their's was declining and our's was going up.

BURG: Right. Right.

QUESADA: The relative ratio was changing.

BURG: Now I wanted, also, to ask you General: During this period,



as we come up on June of 1944, were there ever occasions where General Eisenhower spoke to you either by yourself or several of you connected with 9th TAC, with respect to what was coming up on the invasion.

QUESADA: Yes, he would make his periodic visits around to the various commands, and we would show him the equipment. He would be fascinated by it. He was fascinated by one particular thing-- quite fascinated. Radar had always been used as a warning device.

BURG: Yes.

QUESADA: Here they come! You see. And the British used it in that role with great success.



The Americans developed a radar which was a warning device radar called the MEW, Microwave Early Warning. By its name it was a warning device. And it was a very, very good radar equipment. And we were to get, I think, three sets of MEW equipment. And one of them was actually installed down on the south coast of England. If I recall correctly, near the Isle of Wight. And I was there one day looking at it, because it had fascinated me, too, and the controller noticed some returning B-17s over Cherbourg. And I think there were about six of them and the question was. What in the hell are they doing over Cherbourg? That's not their route

home. It's far from the route home. And it became clear that they were lost. They didn't really know where they were. So we were able to listen to them talking to themselves by switching the frequencies, and it became clear that they were lost. So I instructed our guys to put some crystals in our transmitters that were the same crystals that they were talking to themselves on--

BURG: Give you the same frequency.



QUESADA: --same frequency. So we then told them that we knew they were over Cherbourg and we would guide them home. And we did. We just improvised right there and then. And we guided them home. Now, if you'll try to visualize, what they had a tendency to do was to turn left, and had they done so they would have gone deeper down into France and could never have gotten home.

BURG: Why would there be a tendency to turn left?

QUESADA: Because they thought by turning right would take them into the North Sea, east of England.

BURG: Oh, they thought they were much further up--

QUESADA: That's right.

BURG: --along that coast, the North Sea Coast. I see. I see.

QUESADA: So we brought them home.

BURG: Now had you identified them as our bombers through IPF  
[Identification Friend or Foe radar] or--

QUESADA: No. No. Just by their--

BURG: Size of the blip?



QUESADA: Just by hearing them talk and the size of the blip, and we knew that our B-17s were then coming home.

BURG: Now was Eisenhower there--

QUESADA: At the station?

BURG: --at the station at that time.

QUESADA: No. No.

BURG: But this is a device that very much interested him.

QUESADA: Very much interested him, particularly since we turned it from the passive role of warning to the active role. We turned it around and used that to control our fighters.

BURG: Not "Here they come!", but "There they are!".

QUESADA: There they are.

BURG: Yes.

QUESADA: So we took these equipments over to Europe with us, over to the continent and use it in an offensive role rather than a defensive role.

BURG: Yes. And that fascinated him before you ever--

QUESADA: Oh, it fascinated, yes--

BURG: --took it over there.



QUESADA: --because he didn't quite understand what radar was, and he was fascinated by the idea that this warning device would be turned around and used as an offensive instrument to fight the German army and the German air force in their country.

BURG: Right. I see.

QUESADA: And that's in itself a story. How it was done.

BURG: Now did he ever indicate to you any particular worries that he had that he was counting on you to protect him from? Protect



his men from?

QUESADA: I don't think he was ever personal in that respect, no. I think he was terribly anxious and was quite pleased by the relationship that existed between Bradley and ourselves. By nature, Eisenhower was a person who was inclined to cooperate and he wanted others to cooperate. He was well aware and made it crystal clear to everybody that if we, the services, are going to fight among themselves and we, as nationalities, are going to fight among themselves or even argue, our effectiveness is going to be very severely diminished. And without becoming a school teacher lecturer, he made it clear that he wanted everybody to cooperate with everybody and try and avoid the parochial attitude that is knee deep in all the services. You know the services aren't immune from being parochial.

BURG: Of course.



QUESADA: Yes, they're parochial as hell.

BURG: Indeed. And perhaps a greater problem in earlier days than it is now.

QUESADA: Yes. And he was rather pleased, and I don't think it's

unfair or an exaggeration to say that he was pleased with the relations that existed between Bradley and ourselves.

BURG: Now let me ask you: If he were coming to your station, your own headquarters, as he did; could I ask you the simple and homely questions about how did you find out he was coming and how did he show up and to what degree did you have to "put on the dog" for him, or what was the nature of his routine when he would come to your outfit and take a look around?

QUESADA: Well, I'm afraid in answering that we're going to reveal my own personality more than is appropriate. [Laughter]

BURG: I don't know about that.

QUESADA: Of course, as a general rule, not in every case, we would be advised that he was coming.

BURG: Who would let you know, General? Would you get that call from--

QUESADA: Usually from his office and certainly from Brereton. But sometimes his aide would call and say such and such; he wants to make sure the telephone's available, things like that. But as a rule it would come from Brereton that General Eisenhower is going



to visit your headquarters or one of your--.

[Interruption]

QUESADA: So I took the attitude that he didn't want to come down to Middle Wallop [a fighter station on the east edge of the Salisbury Plain], as an example, and see our officer's mess and the boring things that are his normal routine.

BURG: Precisely. Yes.

QUESADA: So I had a tendency to show him our spartan side. Go out into our woods where we actually had the equipment. See, when we were in England I always took the attitude that we must conduct ourselves and behave as if we were on the Continent.

BURG: Oh, so you're in a combat-ready state, in effect.

QUESADA: Combat--well we were in combat--



BURG: Yes, of course you were.

QUESADA: --while in England. But I didn't want our people to be in chateaus in England. I wanted them to be in their marquis tents and a spartan atmosphere or environment that they would necessarily have to adopt on the Continent. We were there temporarily and so

I would make it a point, and a deliberate point to be frank about it, to always display to Eisenhower the type of spartan life that we were adopting, not with any motive--I didn't want to impress him, I just wanted to make him see what we were in fact doing.

BURG: So you take him out to areas where your aircraft are dispersed.

QUESADA: Dispersed.

BURG: As though you were on the Continent and--

QUESADA: That's correct. And living a rather spartan life. To get back to this radar thing, I remember that quite vividly. That was back in a woods all camouflaged and in tents, and in fact exactly as they had to live on the Continent, constantly moving.

BURG: So even more spartan than the Quonset hut--

QUESADA: Oh, yes.



BURG: --you're down to the basics of a field unit.

QUESADA: Sure. That's correct.

BURG: And he seemed to appreciate seeing your life under those conditions.

QUESADA: I think he noticed it, yes. I think he did notice it.

BURG: He never kidded you about it.

QUESADA: No, I don't think he ever teased me, no.

BURG: Seeing what you were doing perhaps.

QUESADA: I think he was aware of it and also pleased by it.

BURG: Yes. Yes.

QUESADA: See he was infantryman. And by history the infantryman leads a spartan life.

BURG: Oh indeed he does.

QUESADA: Yes he does. He leads a helluva life.



BURG: Yes, there's no hot bath at the end of the day.

QUESADA: In combat he leads a helluva life. I don't know how they got 'em to fight. But nevertheless we tried to create that atmosphere while on the Continent, so we didn't want to get too comfortable. We deliberately avoided too much comfort. We even avoided the tendency to use the British telephone system. We would lay our own lines and we'd use our equipment. We didn't

keep our equipment in storage.

BURG: So you knew it worked because you'd been using it before you ever took it over.

QUESADA: We made it work.

BURG: Yes, right, right. How long would a visit of his usually last?

QUESADA: A day.

BURG: He would come down perhaps in the morning and stay the day with you--

QUESADA: Yes.



BURG: --and come back. Now as you know, he had been taught to fly, knew how to fly, had a pilot's license. Did you notice the effect of that? That is, did he seem as knowledgeable as other general officers or more knowledgeable perhaps than--

QUESADA: By taxing my memory, I would say that it's fair to say that he was more inquisitive than most. Now you say he was a pilot, you know he was a kind of a half-assed pilot.

BURG: Oh, of course, yes. Lefty Parker has told me that.

[Laughter]

QUESADA: Yes. Kind of a light airplane type pilot.

BURG: Yes.

QUESADA: Really and I think he was fascinated by what was then a rather complex machine. See the P-51 was quite an airplane; today it's a relic. You see. But at the time he was fascinated by it.

BURG: Yes. Yes. Now did he ever ask you for a flight? Now I realize that there were some P-51s, for example, that were rigged up so that they could carry two. Did he ever hint around or try to get someone to take him up in--?

QUESADA: Not only hint around, but he did it.



BURG: Well, I had a feeling--

QUESADA: In Normandy.

BURG: Yes.

QUESADA: And that was just a queer circumstance. He came over to Normandy, and he was meeting with Bradley and Hodges and all the principal commanders. And I had to leave the meeting was over,

nevertheless I didn't hang around just for idle chit-chat because I had already arranged to go down to one of our groups to go on a fighter mission. And he, as I was leaving, said, "How about letting me go down with you." So we were in my jeep and on the way down he says, "What are you going to do when you get here?" I said, "I'm going on a mission. Would you like to go along?" And he said, "Sure. Can you take me?", with somewhat, what now could be classified as boyish enthusiasm. So I arranged quickly for the one and only P-51 in which the tank had been taken out from behind the cockpit.

BURG: That 70 gallon tank.



QUESADA: That 70 gallon tank. And there was a seat in there and so we stuffed General Eisenhower in that seat and conducted a mission off of a very, very crude airstrip that was still under construction. I remember the mat had just been laid, its full length had not been extended, you had to touch down within a few feet of the end, otherwise you'd go over the end; and it was a very, very crude strip under construction. Mud all over the place.

BURG: You were the one who flew him.

QUESADA: Yes.



BURG: Were you also leader of that mission.

QUESADA: Yes.

BURG: Now let me ask you this: Did it bother you that you've got the Supreme Commander stuck in there behind you, I presume in a parachute, and with very little chance, I would guess, to get out of that bloody thing if anything went wrong?

QUESADA: No. We discussed this, and I told him that he'd have a hard time climbing out; that he doesn't have to worry about climbing out. If it's necessary, which it will not be, I'll just turn the airplane upside down and he'll fall out.

BURG: You both would, or would you stay in it strapped down until he got out and then you'd go out.

QUESADA: Well, I didn't go into that, but I knew I could dump him out.

BURG: You could?



QUESADA: Just by turning over on my back and he would fall out.

BURG: Were you under that single canopy--

QUESADA: Yes. Yes. I could take it off. Knock the canopy off.

BURG: I see. Now was this an air-to-ground strike that you--

QUESADA: No, the intent was to go down to Paris. This was right after the German air force had moved into the clutch of airdromes around Paris. About the second day. We knew that they had moved into Paris, and we were slaughtering them. And the idea of this mission was to go down to Paris and engage them in a fight. But once we had Eisenhower in the flight, we decided--I decided not to go to Paris. It would have been an unreasonable risk to subject him to, and I knew I'd catch hell.

BURG: You told your pilots this privately. That is you--

QUESADA: I told them, just follow me.

BURG: Oh, I see.

QUESADA: And which they did.

BURG: Yes. Later on, I presume, that when they talked with you,--

QUESADA: They saw what happened. They aren't dumbbells. And I was hoping that we might get into a fight up around Avranches or someplace like that.

BURG: You were hoping you'd get into a fight?



QUESADA: Oh, yes. And have him see an air-to-air combat.

BURG: See it! He'd be in the middle of it!

QUESADA: Well, I don't know what was in my mind, but I doubt if I would have permitted myself the luxury of engaging in a air-to-air combat personally.

BURG: Yourself, you would have hung out of it.

QUESADA: I would have hung out of it. Not because I would want to, but because he was there, but nevertheless he would have seen it.

BURG: --Your P-51 modified in that way, with that 70 gallons of gas out of there, his weight would come nowhere near 70 gallons of gas.

QUESADA: No.



BURG: So your aircraft was still as light or even perhaps lighter than those of the rest of your flight.

QUESADA: I assure you the others did not have fuel in their 70 gallon tank.

BURG: They didn't either?

QUESADA: No, because that made the airplane quite unstable. A 70 gallon tank was used to get the airplane out deep into Germany, and it was a very unstable airplane while that tank was full.

BURG: That helped move the center of gravity of the aircraft back.

QUESADA: Back, yes. Very unstable. We always used that first.

BURG: The other thing that strikes me is that had anyone hopped you from behind, the path that the German bullets would have taken would have been through General Eisenhower and then off the seat armor on the back of your seat.

[Laughter]

QUESADA: I think the seat armor was removed.



BURG: Oh, it had been?

QUESADA: I think so. I'm not sure, but I think so.

BURG: So the two of you were equal in the sight of German machine guns.

QUESADA: My recollection is that's the case.

BURG: Yes, yes. To lighten up the aircraft.

QUESADA: No, so the man could get in.

BURG: Oh. I see.

QUESADA: It was a tight squeeze.

BURG: I bet it would be, yes.

QUESADA: I think the armor, if it had remained in its place, would have made it difficult for a person to squeeze back in there.

BURG: Now I'll ask you another question while I think that I know the answer to this: There was no auxiliary control stick or rudder pedals back there with him?

QUESADA: Oh, no. No.



BURG: So had anything happened to you, he would not have been able to have controlled that aircraft--assuming that he could handle anything as hot as that. Now, did he enjoy that?

QUESADA: Ooooo, he enjoyed the hell out of it! He didn't say so, but I would imagine that he enjoyed the crudeness of the whole environment. Here the engineers were working on the strip, the newly laid pierced plank didn't have any tar paper under it, the touch down had to be on the exact end of the runway and the pierced

plank had not settled, and it was rippling in front of our wheels as we run down the runway. And I think he enjoyed seeing and experiencing himself the spartan environment that existed.

BURG: He was at war in that different element, perhaps for the first time in his career.

QUESADA: Yes. Well, he'd seen some rough going in Africa, but here, it was not, we were not at La Guardia. [Laughter]

BURG: Yes indeed. Yes, indeed.

QUESADA: Or Dulles.



BURG: Right. Forward airfield and a combat mission.

QUESADA: A few miles from the lines, rough as hell, crude.

BURG: Did you, do you recall talking with him during the flight on your intercom system?

QUESADA: Yes.

BURG: Were you pointing out to him your position in the air--

QUESADA: Yes, "there's the Cherbourg Peninsula" and things like that, definitely.

BURG: Yes. And his responses are part of what tell you that he was enthused about this whole thing.

QUESADA: I sensed enthusiasm. That was my feeling.

BURG: It's a fascinating story, General. It really is.

QUESADA: He was human, like anybody else. You know, any full-blooded guy would, and particularly if he'd been, through age or other things been, for the lack of a better term, relegated to the rear area.

BURG: Yes.

QUESADA: You know, he was just like the rest of us.

BURG: Right. The breaks had not come his way in the First World War for combat or anything else, so something like that would have interested him.

QUESADA: Oh, I think he was thrilled by the idea of being there. He was a soldier.

BURG: And obviously it did not worry you too much. You're a man of some confidence in your own abilities and--



QUESADA: Didn't worry me at all.

BURG: --you were not at all concerned.

QUESADA: I would worry about being imprudent, being foolish. And I think it would have been foolish to have gone down to Paris, which was our intent.

BURG: Yes. Tried to take them on over their own ground and--

QUESADA: Right, which was our intent.

BURG: Yes.



QUESADA: I would have been carrying this thing too far.

BURG: All right. Let me drift back in time, just a bit, and look at that period in the first week of June, roughly. What happened to you personally as the day came up on you. What, simply what was your life like in that last day or two? It must have been a very dramatic moment for you in many ways and a part to play.

QUESADA: Looking at it in retrospect, I wasn't aware of its drama. I really wasn't.

BURG: There was just one more stage in routine and you were prepared.



QUESADA: Yes. Oh, yes and admittedly we worked hard, long days. And as I remember the last week, it was more personified by a desire to make sure that everything that should be done was done. I was more interested in, I guess it's fair to say, the logistics of the problem. To keep things from keeping us from doing our combat role because I was never worried about that. I was never worried one minute about the ability of the units to do what they should do when airborne. Didn't worry me at all.

BURG: But at first, prior to the day on which everything's going to occur, the matter would be being sure that armaments stores were up with the units and sufficient fuel was up and then later on it's the worry of--we've gotta move it all over to the Continent and--

QUESADA: I was devoting most of my attention to that because that's where I thought we could get into trouble and indulge in failure. See a lot of our equipment and personnel were at the ports of embarkation.



BURG: Already.

QUESADA: Already. Waiting. The units that were to go over there the first week, were operating off of the English airdromes as

skeleton units and a lot of the men were in the ports of embarkation.

BURG: That is ground crew and--

QUESADA: Ground crew and radar equipment and supplies and engineers and engineering equipment.

BURG: With the pilots, aircraft and a few mechanics operating off English airdromes--

QUESADA: That's correct.

BURG: --until they could--



QUESADA: Until they, then eventually would fly over and these men would be waiting for them with their bombs and--. Because there was no use getting there unless you can go into action right away within an hour.

BURG: Yes. That's right.

QUESADA: And so I was very conscious of--unless that works, the ability of the airplane to do his job is going to be diminished. The bombs had to be in the port, the gasoline had to be in the port, the ammunition had to be in the port, the certain number of

armor people had to know exactly where they were going to go. They had to have their own personal map because war is confusion, organized confusion. Every man had a map that showed him where he should go--the very spot where he should go.

BURG: And, of course, that's all laid out on the projected amount of advance that is made--

QUESADA: That's correct.



BURG: --if your men are going to go there D-Day plus three and they've not advanced onto the ground--

QUESADA: We had units operating on D-Day plus three in Europe.

BURG: Yes, I would imagine.

QUESADA: And so we had to have our men over there. Then the airplanes flew over, and then they would put new bombs--. Then they spent that night back at England. But the next day they came over and stayed.

BURG: And we didn't have the great chunk of France in our control at that time.

QUESADA: No. I assure you that my attention and the attention

of other responsible people was not focused on how our people would fight. But focused on how to make it possible for them to fight.

BURG: Yes.

QUESADA: And to make the logistics work.



BURG: Now as I think back on it, I recall--as I know you recall--the disturbed atmosphere when Eisenhower indicated his desperate need for heavy bombardment to interdict the battle area, hold the Germans off from the zone where we were going to strike. Did any of that concern you or was that something that Air Marshal Harris and others of our bombardment type had to concern themselves with?

QUESADA: Oh, we got very much involved in that because it was mainly the tactical forces that were assigned the role of knocking the bridges down across the Seine and the Loire, and of making the various marshalling yards in that area incapable of heavy movements of rolling traffic.

BURG: Right. The railroad marshalling yards.

QUESADA: Now the planning for that was done as COSSAC as a general rule, and then the execution was done by the RAF and the

U.S. air forces. So I would get more involved in the execution.

BURG: Of course, your role was precisely that kind of work. Whereas the Eighth and I guess the RAF--Harris' men too--were very disturbed about being pulled off strategic bombing.

QUESADA: That's exactly right. They didn't want to remove themselves from the deep penetration role. And until a few days before Normandy, they continued the deep penetration role. And the tactical air forces assumed the isolation of the battlefield role.

BURG: Now as a high ranking air officer, can you give me your opinion: Was that decision, Eisenhower's decision, that he needed that heavy bombardment just before the invasion and for a period perhaps five or six weeks after it, and pulling them off the strategic role, is it your opinion that that was the correct decision? Or would you have preferred to see them continue their--?

QUESADA: Well, again it's a case of back-sight.



BURG: Yes, I know.

QUESADA: We were not really, when I say "we," I'm talking about the editorial "we", the --

BURG: Yes.

QUESADA: We were not really aware of how immobile the German army was. See. We only learned through history how immobile they were.

BURG: You saw them as still the blitzkrieg army of 1940--

QUESADA: I didn't. No.

BURG: --that is, generally speaking again,--

QUESADA: Generally speaking there was, and particularly in the ground forces and understandably so. They were of the opinion the the German army was more mobile than it in fact was. The ground forces were not aware of how short of fuel they were. They were not aware of how short of rolling stock they were. And they were not aware of how damaging it is to their equipment to have to move several hundred miles on their own wheels.

BURG: Since they couldn't put tanks on flat cars--



QUESADA: On flat cars.

BURG: --they've got to run them on the roads--

QUESADA: Right. Yes.

BURG: --and break down the treads.

QUESADA: And they were not aware of how effective this isolation of the battlefield had been. Never were, they never were. It's an occupational disease. The army, it never is. And to be frank about it, I think the Air Force, in this case, was not aware of how complete the isolation was.

BURG: I see. Would that include you, too, that--

QUESADA: Well, I thought they were more mobile than they turned out to be.

BURG: How did you feel about the isolation of the Normandy area. Do you think now, looking back, that perhaps you were aware that your men had cut that zone off from the rest of France?

QUESADA: Oh, yes. I was definitely aware of it.



BURG: Because you knew the results of strikes on the same bridges, on the Loire.

QUESADA: That's right. And don't forget we had the advantage of this so-called Ultra information.

BURG: Yes. It's just come out on that recent book.

QUESADA: Yes. And you couldn't talk about it. And not many had it.

BURG: So you knew it. That data was getting to you, too.

QUESADA: Definitely.

BURG: At your headquarters.

QUESADA: Absolutely. And another thing we knew, that during the daytime there wasn't a vehicle on the road.

BURG: Oh!

QUESADA: Now that means something.

BURG: Ah, yes. Yes, I see. Your pilots are looking for targets on those roads and--

QUESADA: And can't find them.

BURG: --there aren't any there to find.

QUESADA: So, where are they? They only can move at night. Now that is a hazard. Right away you've accomplished something.

BURG: Yes. Yes.

QUESADA: I would shudder to think of how mobile we would have been with all the incredible transport that we had if it was confined to night movement and if it had to be hidden during the day.





BURG: Yes, precisely. How do you get tanks and trucks off the road and into a woods without leaving all the traces and leaving yourself--

QUESADA: And you haven't got many of them if you can do it. And that was a very tell-tale thing to me. And one day, to get that across, and in fact, to Bradley and his staff, I had our reconnaissance people go out and take a whole photograph of an area in front of our beachhead and take another photograph of our beachhead at the exact same hour. And in one case you couldn't find a vehicle for mile after mile after mile; in the other case, you couldn't see the pavement on the road, because all the vehicles were in the way.

BURG: That is our forces compared to their forces at the same hour.

QUESADA: Same moment.

BURG: That must have been an impressive thing for--



QUESADA: To me it was very impressive--

BURG: --General Bradley.

QUESADA: --and I think it was to Bradley, too. And it was done to make him aware of how immobile they really are. And he caught on.

BURG: And in part that might account for the fact that we so quickly, once we broke out, outran the projected plan of advance.

QUESADA: Oh, yes. Nothing to stop us.

BURG: Yes. Nothing there. Yes. Now you personally, let us say on the night of 5 and 6 June--through that night--you were at your headquarters?

QUESADA: In Uxbridge.

BURG: And you had been told then that it was on. That word came down to you--

QUESADA: Oh, yes.



BURG: --through Brereton? Did he call you personally?

QUESADA: I don't remember. To be frank about it, I just don't remember.

BURG: Had you scheduled yourself to fly that next day--

QUESADA: No. I was flying over--

BURG: --any missions?

QUESADA: Oh, yes. Over to the Continent!

BURG: So on the 6th you were going to be in the air with units, parts of your units and--

QUESADA: No, I was going to fly over and land on the beachhead.

BURG: On the 6th of June?

QUESADA: Yes.



BURG: Where were you going to land on the beachhead?

QUESADA: Well, we didn't have enough room for me to land on the beachhead--

BURG: That's what I was thinking.

QUESADA: --so I landed on the morning of the 7th on the beachhead.

BURG: By then we'd pushed in far enough.

QUESADA: Yes.

BURG: Had a field, by then been set up?

QUESADA: It was a little strip, one side of the strip was the cliff--your wings actually hung over the cliff.

BURG: So you landed just behind Omaha Beach.

QUESADA: Yes. Remember the big hill there at Omaha Beach where the main traffic moved up to the elevation of Normandy there. The ground elevation was about 50 or 75 feet above the sea elevation.

BURG: Right. Right.

QUESADA: And there was a cliff, and then there was a road that went up to get all this tremendous volume of vehicles and all up to the elevation of the terrain.

BURG: Yes.

QUESADA: And I landed right there in a P-38.

BURG: Not far from Pointe du Hoc probably.

QUESADA: Probably, yes. In a P-38.

BURG: In a P-38.

QUESADA: With my dog on my shoulder.

BURG: You took him, too.

QUESADA: Yes, my little puppy. Yes.

BURG: One of the first U.S. Air Corps people to get into Normandy was that dog. [Laughter]



QUESADA: Yes!

BURG: Now, did you--probably you didn't--but during the course of the evening, that night of the 5th and 6th--do you recall any particular problems, last minute problems that arose, or was it simply a matter of letting this entire vast plan simply roll?

QUESADA: I have a recollection that on D-Day, a crisis occurred in the landing area where the army was being held up rather effectively. And we had to make some quick changes in our planned operation for the day. See on D-Day everything was planned. This gun would be attacked, that gun would be attacked, this would be attacked. And we had to amend the plan and take some forces from here and put it where the army was being very seriously held up.

BURG: Now do you remember--



QUESADA: I'm talking about D-Day, about three hours after the invasion was under way.

BURG: After they'd landed. Now the instructions to do that, the call for you to do that, given the difficulties they seemed to have with communications--Omaha Beach trying to get back to the flagship off the Beach--I wonder, were you getting those instructions from the flagship?

QUESADA: Yes, we got that from the flagship.

BURG: I presume that they were spotting the volume of German fire which wasn't being silenced and so they could then say, "Well, whatever's gone wrong, those guns are still--"

QUESADA: They were getting pleas of help from the ground units that were suffering quite severely. They were getting direct pleas of help.

BURG: Yes.

QUESADA: For help.



BURG: And then what your boys had to do was go over there with whatever kind of directions they could be given, and they're actually trying to knock out a pillbox--

QUESADA: Yes, we actually converted airborne units; units that, when they left England, had other targets. And we took them off of those targets and directed them to the area where the need was greatest.

BURG: Which in the smoke and confusion must have been very,--

QUESADA: Not easy.

BURG: --very difficult for them.

QUESADA: Yes.

BURG: And they were able to perform this--

QUESADA: Yes.

BURG: --able to carry it out.

QUESADA: See it became quite aware to us that if we were going to be successful we had to be able to improvise. And in order to improvise you've got to have good communications. Our communications were incredible. We had more goddamn communications than-- better communications than the city of New York has got today.

BURG: I see.

QUESADA: We had incredible communications.



BURG: Was there, for example, a small staff of 9th TAC people on the flagship with--

QUESADA: Oh, yes. Sure.

BURG: I see. So the commander of that section of the beachhead could actually send somebody to a radioshack on board the ship

and say, "Call up Quesada, we need--"

QUESADA: That's right. We actually had a telephone in Normandy on D-Day.

BURG: You had a man on the beach with a--

QUESADA: On the beach with a telephone. A telephone just like that. [Laughter]

BURG: Just pick up and dial H-E-L-P! [Laughter] And he's an experienced pilot, an air officer, who's on the ground--

QUESADA: Signal Corps guy. And he had crews with him.

BURG: And he's trained for ground-to-air cooperation.



QUESADA: That's right. We had an FM circuit from on the Isle of Wight that came up to Middle Wallop, just like a city telephone, and before the Normandy invasion we had the other end of the FM circuit down on Land's End, that point of England on the west that sticks out--

BURG: Yes, Cornwall.

QUESADA: Right. And that distance is almost the same distance as the Isle of Wight to Normandy. And we put that circuit there and



made it work day after day after day after day.

BURG: To prove to yourselves that that FM circuit would cover that distance.

QUESADA: That's right. And so then about a week before D-Day, we picked it up out of Lands' End, I think that's the name of it, and brought it back to the ports of embarkation. Had it on an LST. It was one of the first vehicles that went ashore. There it was, right away.

[Laughter]

BURG: Now you, in the air then on D-Day, because you were in the air and over the beach. I would presume.

QUESADA: No.

BURG: Oh, you didn't go.



QUESADA: I didn't go.

BURG: When you knew that you, there wasn't a place for you to land--

QUESADA: That's right.

BURG: --there was no need for you to--

QUESADA: And then when this emergency took place--

BURG: Oh, that also held you at your--

QUESADA: Yes.

BURG: --at your headquarters.

QUESADA: Which was in Uxbridge.

BURG: Still, judging from what you've told me about your--.

[End of Interview]



This interview is being taped with General Elwood Quesada in General Quesada's office in Washington, DC on August 25, 1976. Present for the interview are General Quesada, Dr. Burg of the Eisenhower Library staff.

DR. BURG: We were discussing the D-Day preparations and activity when we closed our last interview, and in fact we'd gotten to the point where you told me the story about taking General Eisenhower with you in a two-seat P-51 fighter on a little sweep looking for a bit of trouble and closed off at that point. Now what I wanted to ask you was how your 9th Tactical was employed then in breaking out of the Normandy box, so to speak, and in the pursuit toward the end of the war, actually. Now I assume that you were, by and large, in an air-to-ground support role for the armies.

GEN. QUESADA: That's true.

DR. BURG: And very little German opposition.



GEN. QUESADA: There was practically no German opposition, a little German opposition tried to develop, or they tried to develop it, when they moved into the airports around Paris. And they were rather late in moving into the airports around Paris. They didn't even attempt to move in until about three weeks or a month after D-Day, and that was disastrous for the Germans. Because they were in easy striking distance of our beachhead where we had about five groups then, or maybe more, and we would forecast the weather in Paris in order to determine when they would be either arriving or taking off to come into the beachhead and be a nuisance. And that technique proved very successful.

And so we might have good weather in the beachhead when there was bad weather around Paris, which is often the case, but as soon as we had reason to believe there was good weather around Paris, we would send one group after another down to these strips which were very poorly prepared airdromes. Most of them were in fact grass. And we would just slaughter the German air force that was moved into Paris. They would try to take off, and we would shoot them down before they were fifty feet off the ground, time after time. And then once they took off we knew how much fuel they had so we knew they had to come back to their base so we sent another group down to slaughter them as they were landing. And so the fact remains there was practically no air opposition in the beachhead from D-Day on. If a small incursion occurred, it was one or two or three or four airplanes and I can't recall of a single occasion when it was more.



BURG: By and large the weather pattern meant that the weather made up and came in from areas where allied weather forecasting opportunities were excellent. You would know then what the weather picture was?

QUESADA: We had extremely good weather forecasting. This was developed long before D-Day. There was an extremely efficient weather forecasting system made necessary by the strategic bombing, because the strategic bombers required weather forecasting to a greater extent even than we did. And their penetrations were

greater which made the forecasting more difficult. So the weather forecasting for Paris was relatively simple compared to the weather forecasting that was normal while we were still based in England and going as far into Germany as Berlin. So the weather forecasting was an art that was highly developed, and all we did was inherit this efficiency.

BURG: And the Germans on their part are reduced to whatever weather readings, let us say a submarine can take in the Atlantic by surfacing briefly. They simply don't have access to--



QUESADA: We had mastered the art to a much greater degree than the Germans. When I say "we", in this case I mean the allied forces, and I think it's fair to say that the British were the ones that initiated it and we helped improve it. The Germans never even approached us in our ability to forecast weather.

BURG: Had the prevailing pattern been out of the east, it might have been a different story.

QUESADA: Might have been different, and reading a lot of history as I do, this has been confirmed. They had no highly developed skill in this area.

Well anyway, to get on with the question, after the period that I referred to--which I don't want to over emphasize because it was only one episode in many in which we slaughtered the Germans as they moved into Paris--. They also helped to slaughter themselves because the airdromes into which they moved were just

grossly inadequate. They were just pathetic strips, unprepared for military operations, so they just wrecked a hell of a lot of airplanes. Of course, this was added to by the fact that at that time they were using very inexperienced pilots. Whereas I refer to shooting them down, I think it might be appropriate to say that I've exaggerated it; however, not intentionally. But the impression I'm trying to leave is the fact that we were there and making a nuisance of ourself by shooting at them, caused many of these young, unskilled pilots to crack up.

BURG: Just in trying to evade the attack.



QUESADA: Just in trying to evade and the nervousness of landing with somebody shooting at you when you don't know how to manage your airplane in itself contribute to one crackup after another. Those airdromes were just full of wrecks when we got to Paris. It was a slaughter.

BURG: They were trying to operate, for example, the very narrow track undercarriage of a Messerschmitt--

QUESADA: That's correct.

BURG: --on fields when that aircraft was rather difficult, I think, to handle on concrete.

QUESADA: It was difficult to handle under good conditions. And most of these fields were just plain grass, and it was an act of desperation or you might even say an act of ignorance. I think

the German air force was so poorly led that when these units were moved there, they didn't realize what they were getting into.

BURG: Now, am I right in supposing that since they had been there since 1940, they had had ample time to build excellent fields. German military engineers, I think, are highly skilled people. I suppose that fields around Paris did not fit in with the pattern of the war in '40, '41, '42, where they needed fields out along the coast to make their runs at Britain.

QUESADA: I think that's generally true.



BURG: And then you overran the Normandy fields, which presumably were fairly decent, and what they had then to do to counter you was to go into the Paris area and start from scratch. They had built nothing there.

QUESADA: They had built almost nothing, and I don't think they really anticipated a necessity for them, and they were heavily occupied in Russia. But more importantly I think the German air force was stupidly and very badly led. It was a very hodgepodge attempt to be an air force that was completely lacking in leadership. Goering was a boob. And the subordinates under him were inhibited; there was never a cohesive plan that they were trying to execute; there was a lack of initiative. The senior members of the air force like the senior members of the army and the navy, they cared more for their position than they cared for their own

self-respect. They wouldn't speak up and they were discouraged from speaking up, whereas in the allied forces a senior officer was not inhibited in expressing his views, and those views were accepted constructively. Whereas in the German air force as I read history--and as I observed then--they must have been a bunch of boobs because they were terribly led all through the battle of Normandy.



BURG: Evidently politicized at the top and those men quavering for fear they'd lose their positions--

QUESADA: And they cared more for that than they did their real honor as an officer of the air force.

BURG: Yes. I get the impression that fighter leaders like Adolph Galland simply butted their heads up against a stone wall.

QUESADA: They were frustrated and their enthusiasm was dampened, and it showed in what they were able to do.

BURG: Have you ever met that man, as a matter of fact?

QUESADA: No, I haven't. I would certainly like to have--is he still alive?

BURG: Yes, so far as I know.

QUESADA: I would love to meet him.

BURG: Yes, I think it would be most interesting.



QUESADA: I was aware of him during the war and tried to learn as much about him as I could.

BURG: He is the man who probably ruined any effectiveness he might have had left--I think he thought there was none left--when Goering spoke to Galland and someone else and asked them what they needed most. Galland's response was he could do with a squadron or two of Spitfires. And Goering was incensed, already angry anyway, and that did it, and Galland was moved out shortly thereafter.

QUESADA: Well, that's typical of what I'm trying to convey.



BURG: Right, right. Now for your own men, the bulk of their employment then is in a sense at the behest of the ground forces as they try to break out of the Normandy perimeter and then as they sweep, make that end run and turn east--

QUESADA: All right, I'll address myself to that. For a period of about two weeks, maybe a little less but certainly ten days and maybe a little longer, there was a definite desire to break out of the bridgehead. And Bradley wanted to get his ground forces to a line that was identified as the St. Lô Road. That was a road that ran east and west through St. Lô, and it was rather prominent on the map. He, with our help, was trying to get up to that line as an embarkation line from which this attack would be launched. We were of the mistaken impression that that

road was very easily identified from the air. And I've often condemned myself for not having spoken up. I did go down and look at the road from the air and it was visible. It was visible to the fighter bomber who was looking for it; it was not too apparent and standing out line of demarcation to a high-flying bomber. It was one of many kind of secondary roads.

But nevertheless we were engaged for about two weeks in helping Bradley's army get up to that line so a lot of the support that we were giving to the First Army was close support. It was rather a tedious task on their part, on the part of the First Army, because the country was this "bocage" country, and it was very difficult to move through it. The losses were not minor.

BURG: Every farm becomes a strong point.

QUESADA: That it does on account of these hedgerow hills which were real obstacles to the army. You know, everybody knows what they are now, there's no use me describing them. Well anyway, they finally got down to this line. Now during the preparation, during the effort to get down to this line, I think it is appropriate and fair to say that I was urging Bradley to, rather than try to break out on a great broad front, to confine the breakout to a very narrow front and concentrate all or nearly all of his armor to a narrow area.



BURG: Why did you suggest that?

QUESADA: Because I was convinced that the greatest tool for a breakout would be armor. It had to be a breakout so I thought-- and so he thought--I don't mean to imply that I thought it and he didn't, that the breakout in order to be what we were looking at, a breakout in which there would be a great rush to the south and then hence to the east, had to be armor because infantry cannot move at the rate that we thought was achievable. All of us knew that there was very, very little behind the German, what we will call the front line. They had no maneuverability. In order to prove that they had no maneuverability, on one day at a certain hour I had a vertical photograph made of the beachhead and a whole host of vertical photographs made of the area into which this breakout could go, and you'd have to be a real photo interpreter to have found a single vehicle--

BURG: On the German side?



QUESADA: On the German side, on all roads for maybe hundreds of square miles, whereas in the beachhead it was just a tailgate to bumper traffic. I mean it was just a great big traffic jam, and I use that photograph to show how there was nothing behind the line. But we had other information that confirmed that. But I wanted to show it physically and I have to say very frankly Bradley was impressed by it. That encouraged him. But anyway--

BURG: There's another thing that one could suggest there and that was that you were doing your job so well in the 9th Tactical that they didn't dare come out in the daytime; they might have been there in some strength, if you didn't have the other evidence to disprove that, while you were perfectly safe in your beachhead area they couldn't get in there to so much as look let alone strike.

QUESADA: That's correct. But likewise we had other information, which is through Ultra and things like that, that told us pretty well that whatever was hiding in the woods were scattered units. We knew that their divisions were all broken up trying to get into the beachhead area, and they would be separated. And we just slaughtered them as they move on the road in the daytime. The Germans told us that we were doing it through Ultra. You see, over and over they told us that.

BURG: Yes, the intercepts.



QUESADA: That's right. They told us over and over. And anyway in my persuasion--this seems to be personal but I'll try to be as accurate as I can,--I was trying awfully hard to have the breakout concentrated, and Bradley was persuaded to that end. Then one day I made a very quick gesture, which was perhaps off the cuff, and I said, "Look, Brad, if you'll concentrate your armor, I will keep a flight of P-47s over every column from dawn until dusk." And he was rather startled by that suggestion. And I said, "There'll never be a time during the daylight hours in which there would not be a flight of P-47s. Furthermore, what I'm suggesting is

that we put an aircraft radio in the lead tank of every column and put a pilot in the lead tank of every column, so that he can talk to the airplanes above him in language that is meaningful to the aviator. If we have a tank officer talk to our aviators, he'll talk in terms that the aviator doesn't understand, and likewise the aviator'll talk in terms that the tank guy doesn't understand." As an example, the guy in the tank if he's a tank officer, I don't mean this in a disparaging sense, he'll say, "Look, see that tree over there? There's a tank just hundred yards from it." Well, the tree is very visible to the tank and its occupying officer, but to the aviator he sees thousands. He just sees a forest. This is one case where he can't see the tree but he can see the forest. So the idea was to put aviators in the lead tanks so that he would be able to say, "In the middle of this town over which you are now flying there is a white steeple." Now a white steeple stands out. "And three miles to the east there's a bridge and there's a concentration of tanks just five hundred yards east of that bridge." And that would be terms in which the aviator could respond. And likewise the aviator could tell the tank that there is a tank column of four tanks at a certain place that were meaningful to the aviator in the tank. And so Bradley was very interested in this and he accepted it immediately. And I'm convinced that it had some persuasion, force of persuasion to concentrate.

Now a very amusing thing happened. He said, "Well, how do you know this radio will work in a tank?"



I said, "Well, I have no reason to believe that it won't, but if you have any doubt, let's do this: Send a tank around to our headquarters, and we'll put a radio in it and try it." So in the meantime I arranged with a fellow named Blair Garland, who is my signal officer, to have an aircraft radio available and that this tank was arriving. Well, Blair was a Signal Corps officer, and he didn't pass the word. So, but nevertheless, what actually happened is Bradley's--see our tents were right next to each other, as far apart as this room is wide--

BURG: Right next to Bradley.



QUESADA: Yes. Our headquarters were right beside each other.

BURG: I didn't know that.

QUESADA: Oh, yes. All through the whole campaign we were side by side. This makes the cooperation a lot easier, and this breakout was jointly planned.

BURG: And that close proximity of your headquarters was deliberately achieved, too. It just wasn't--

QUESADA: Oh, it was done for this purpose.

BURG: Yes.

QUESADA: Well anyway, Bradley had his ordnance officer call up an ordnance depot and told them to send a tank around to the

headquarters of the 9th Tactical Air Command. Well, the depot accepted this instruction, but they sent this tank to the 9th Armored Division. They couldn't understand why--they thought the guy was nuts up there and gave them erroneous instructions. So pretty soon they called back and said, "Look we sent that tank around there; they don't know what to do with it. They don't recall requisitioning one tank."

So I said, "You damn fool," I said, "send it to the 9th Tactical Air Command headquarters. I didn't say the 9th Division."

BURG: It actually went to John Leonard's outfit.



QUESADA: Yes, I guess so, yes. And so in about an hour this tank arrived at my headquarters, right next to Bradley's. And they tried to get rid of it because, "What are we going to do with a tank?" See the MP's and everybody, my G-3, and they weren't aware of this instructions. Bradley hadn't told them. So they called back while the tank was still there because they were being frustrated and so that was finally straightened out, and we got the tank the same day that those orders were given. And we put the radio in it and it worked. I mean it worked with the greatest of ease. There was no reason why it shouldn't work as long as you had an antenna outside of the tank.

BURG: And we should probably point out that the aircraft radios, the crystals, the frequencies used, were different from those used by ground forces.

QUESADA: Oh, definitely.

BURG: Therefore you had to have this compatibility. You couldn't use a ground force radio to contact aircraft.

QUESADA: There was no way their radios and our radios could work with each other. They weren't in the same frequency band. And it was all arranged that a predestined frequency would be determined, would be specified, and in fact we put a supply of crystals in each tank because if one group was supporting them, they had to use one set of crystals; if another group was supporting them the next day, they had to use another set of crystals. And it's very easily changed, it's changed in a matter of a few minutes.

BURG: I didn't realize there was that much differentiation among your own groups, too.

QUESADA: Oh, yes. That was a common procedure. It could be done in just a few minutes. All you got to do is get word to them what frequency they're going to be communicating on, and this is often arranged by having one common frequency. And then you communicate on that frequency and tell them to switch to another frequency, which that frequency then would be confined to that tank and those airplanes, and we wouldn't have any interference. That's a common procedure.

BURG: And so the flights, let us say, for that day are provided by one single group, and every flight that goes there to take up "cab rank" duties is going to have that frequency and--





QUESADA: Right. And they would have the common frequency, too.

BURG: --and the common frequency.

QUESADA: I think we were able to have five or ten frequencies in each--and we could change them very easily. Change the crystals very easily.

BURG: So throughout the day as flights rotated into this duty, there is continual conversation--

QUESADA: Continual, that's right.

BURG: --with their ground crew.



QUESADA: And so Bradley was very, very enthusiastic over that scheme, and we put it into effect. And then it came time to get the pilots to be put in the tanks. Erroneously, I thought there might be some trouble, but it turned out to be just the reverse. There were so many volunteers that we had to draw for it.

BURG: Really?

QUESADA: Yes. So many aviators volunteered to do this that we had to find some way to make it impartial.

BURG: So far as you could tell, was this the pilot, the young pilot wanting a little taste of adventure on the ground?

QUESADA: I think there's a lot to that, yes. I think it was just a typical American, youthful enthusiasm, and the young aviator had plenty of it. And so there was a great competition to get into the tanks.

BURG: How long would a man hold that duty?



QUESADA: Oh, maybe a week and then he'd be taken out and another fellow put in.

BURG: And in a sense you then indoctrinate that young pilot who's now going back up into the air with what these ground troops are facing and the urgency of these requests when they ask for help, and--

QUESADA: This was always a problem. We used to send pilots up to the front lines before this was put into effect to let them know what the problem of the ground troops was and to be more sympathetic. Because sometimes the ground troops would ask things that were not possible, and they'd have to be turned down. There are other times when they asked for things that were possible, and sometime were erroneously turned down. And I was very anxious to get a better understanding of the trials and tribulations of the infantry, and I don't see how they got the infantry to fight in the beachhead. They had a hell of a task. I was in great sympathy with them. Well anyway, I don't want to labor that point--

BURG: But your men on the scene, let us call them observers or liaison people riding up in the point on these columns, were in a position to explain to the infantry. "You've asked us to do this, we can't, and this is why we can't."

QUESADA: That's right. That's right.



BURG: And the infantry would soon come to understand what could be done and what couldn't and that makes for a much better working relationship, too.

QUESADA: Very essential and looking at it in retrospect I wish we had done more of it, but we did quite a bit. There was a very good relationship between the aviator and the infantryman. There was great sympathy between the two.

BURG: And inevitably, it seems to me, you must have lost some of your pilots in that duty.

QUESADA: Yes, not very many though. Not many because the breakout was so complete, and it broke out into open country in which there was no opposition. Well anyway, then Bradley and I talked over the possibility of doing some blanket bombing, using heavy bombers for the breakout.

BURG: Just carpeting an area.

QUESADA: Carpeting an area. And I encouraged the blanket bombing and told him not only that, but I was sure I could get the entire

9th Air Force, including their light bombers, to participate in it, because if blanket bombing is going to be effective it must be extremely heavy and severe. So Bradley and I jumped in an airplane and went over to see Leigh Mallory, I think it was, who was the head of all of the air forces at that time and Jimmie Doolittle was there. And we explained what we wanted and a little later on and a little bit of a controversy--not controversy but a difference of opinion--developed. It was mainly between Jimmie Doolittle and us because we thought it best for them to bomb from north to south. And they thought it best to fly down parallel to the road east to west. So, but nevertheless it was left up to them, but we thought when we left the meeting that the bombing would be from north to south.

BURG: What was the advantage, General? They would commence bombing as they crossed a visible line?

QUESADA: That's correct, yes. And we thought that, we wanted the heavy bombing to be in the area of the breakout, so therefore there would be a concen--instead of a string east and west, there would be a concentration at the breakout point if they bombed in trail from north to south.

BURG: Yes, east and west they were bound to--

QUESADA: East to west.

BURG: --be over, an over and shorts, and you wouldn't get full saturation of the zone that you wanted to enter.



QUESADA: And there would be a tendency to bomb the whole St. L<sup>o</sup> Road from its entire length, you see.

BURG: Yes, yes.

QUESADA: So when we left the meeting, we were of the opinion that it would be from north to south which is--I don't want to make a big point of that, although Bradley has drawn attention to this. So the day arrived for the breakthrough. The St. L<sup>o</sup> Road was ours.

[Interruption]

BURG: The point where we would have to start was the arrival of the bombing column, and they bombed as you had not expected, east-west.

QUESADA: Bradley's 1st Army was poised on the St. Lo Road. The armor was all in its marshalling areas, and the infantry was in its marshalling areas. However, for this bombing everything moved back. I don't know how far back, maybe a mile. Maybe more. But they moved back.

BURG: From the road?



QUESADA: From the road. And the bombing started and the first bombers to bomb laid a track along the St. L<sup>o</sup> Road, track of bombs. This naturally created dust. The dust was moved by the wind, which was south to north, and as a result the following

bombers used as their aiming point, the dust. And it began, bombs began to fall in our marshalling area and doing a great deal of damage as you might expect. That being the case, within a matter of minutes Bradley's headquarters knew it, Collins's headquarters knew it because it was his corps that was to break out, and in a matter of minutes I knew it. And they were quite indignant, as one should expect. This was a great tragedy. And they were, and Collins in particular was quite angry, as you would expect. So nevertheless, I immediately got a hold of one of our wing commanders whose name was McCauley, and he had the ground communications with the air. And I told him to get on a frequency that was a Mayday frequency, frequency that all the airplanes had, but not all of them were listening to, do you see?

BURG: Yes.



QUESADA: And tell them to stop the bombing, that they were bombing north of the St. Lô breakthrough and the bombs were falling among our troops. And to keep repeating it over and over and over. And it wasn't very long, it was only a matter of seconds, then when he was in communication with them and knew that they had the message, and he could then listen to the bombing being called off. Because on other frequencies to which we listened, because we knew what frequencies they had, we could hear the commanders of the B-17s telling their crews to stop the bombing. So the bombing was stopped. I guess the bombing didn't last more than fifteen minutes, but it was able to be stopped, luckily. And the result

was very unfortunate, very sad, and very regretted. There were-- I don't know how many of our troops were killed, but among those who were killed, it was McNair, General McNair, for whom Ft. McNair is now named. And the next day it was repeated, the bombing was repeated, and everybody was marshalled the same way, and the next day the error didn't occur.

BURG: Did they, on that second day, come in from the north and bomb to the south? Do you remember?

QUESADA: I think that they did, but I'm not positive. I'm almost sure they did, but I'm not absolutely positive. But I am positive the mistake did not reoccur. And the bombing was not confined to all the 8th Air Force's B-17s. All of our fighter bombers were in it, and the medium bombers were in it raising hell, and I would imagine about six thousand tons of bombs were dropped. And so when it was over, I guess it lasted for about an hour, and when it was over, the breakout was started and the tanks, I think it's fair to say, led the way. And the tanks got through what was then the front line, although a front line at that time was not like a front line in the First World War.

BURG: Right, right. Very fluid kind of thing.



QUESADA: It was a very fluid front line. And the tanks got through and they went down to Mortain, almost with no opposition, and we did keep over each column four airplanes from dawn to dusk.

BURG: How were those aircraft armed for that particular kind of mission?

QUESADA: With light bombs, 500 pound bombs, and carried a lot of machine gun ammunition.

BURG: Would they be able to carry two 500 pounders slung under each wing?

QUESADA: Two and sometimes three. A P-38 could carry three. One in the center; one under each wing. But I don't think we had many, if any P-38s in this; I think it was almost all P-47s. And so they would carry two 500 pound bombs and heavily laden with ammunition. We would carry the maximum amount of ammunition because we would run out of bombs early, but we wanted to still have some armament left, and it was ammunition. And the ammunition was very effective against even German tanks.

BURG: Oh, was it?



QUESADA: Oh, yes. We learned that the way to attack a German tank was attack it from the rear. And in that way get these armor-piercing shells into the ventilating system that was on the rear of the tank. See the tank had to get within it a lot air, otherwise the engines couldn't run. So in the back part of the tank there was a big heavy screen in which the tank got its air, mainly for--not only for its crew but mainly for its engine. And so we learned that by attacking it from the rear, if we could get even



one armor-piercing shell through that ventilating system, it would rattle around inside of the tank and just chew everybody up. And often cause a fire. But once you get an armor-piercing shell inside of the tank, what it's going to do is ricochet all around the tank.

BURG: Were your P-47s firing fifty calibre, armor-piercing?

QUESADA: Fifty calibre, that's correct. And armor-piercing shells. And if you could get one inside of a tank, it just raised hell with the tank, and they just chew it up. See it just keep on going around in a circle inside of this tank for, that's exaggerating it a bit, but it would just tear everything all to hell.

BURG: Because the frontal armor is very thick; the side armor a little less so, but--

QUESADA: We could never pierce it--



BURG: --but they're open from the rear.

QUESADA: --from a fifty calibre machine gun. The only thing and there was not much sense in shooting at the front of a tank; it's like shooting at it with a pop gun, but if you attack it from the rear and get one of these shells inside, that has a devastating effect. And we found tank after tank after tank in which there was no physical damage except to the inside of the tank.

BURG: That's amazing that that stuff would come through. It must have been very, very thin armor then to--

QUESADA: Oh, well where the air gets through was very thin armor.

BURG: Something between the engine--

QUESADA: Hardly any armor at all, I think it was basically a screen with flaps on it or something like that.



BURG: So the engine compartment sets up pretty much exposed to fire, and anything between the engine compartment and the crew compartment is probably thin sheet steel.

QUESADA: And see a tank used a tremendous volume of air, not only for the crew--they use a small part--but a tank with its engine running, whether it was running at full speed or not, consumes a tremendous amount of air. And they have to have an access to the atmosphere to get that air, and it had to be a hole in the shell of the tank, and this hole was really basically a screen.

BURG: And a burst from a P-47, if the pilot has much opportunity to fire a long burst, it isn't just one fifty calibre round every second, but literally hundreds of rounds are fired.

QUESADA: Oh, well one was enough to wreck it. Once you get one fifty calibre shell inside, it just tears the place to pieces.

BURG: And if you can do that to a tank and immobilize it, perhaps burn it out or kill the crew with an air burst of fifty calibre stuff, then you certainly could take care of a soft-skinned vehicle.

QUESADA: Oh, definitely. Yes.

BURG: So really those bombs and the machine gun fire alone was enough to do a job.

QUESADA: It proved to be very effective.

BURG: Yes, I'm quite surprised.



QUESADA: Yes, well, we were surprised, too. We were surprised, too.

BURG: You didn't have to go to rockets really, for example, to knock out German armor.

QUESADA: No. No. That's correct. We found, almost by accident; one guy tried it and he told us about it, and so we just copied it from him.

BURG: And then soon as the columns moved on, you were encountering the carcasses of German tanks. You could see for yourself.

QUESADA: Oh, we found one after another. But I must emphasize that the resistance, once they got through the early shell, which was a shell that was stunned, the whole German army that was in that area was just almost paralyzed. Not completely, but almost. It was really a devastating punishment of them, and they had little resistance. They had some.

BURG: As an after effect of this aerial bombardment.

QUESADA: That's correct. It accomplished the very point that we had in mind that is to numb them for this first hour or so. And then when the tanks got out into the open, they were free to run at their own speed and hold any speed they wanted, and they would occasionally be met by a tank, or two or three tanks. And the opposition was very, very minor, I'll tell you frankly.

BURG: Did any real problems come up that had to be solved with respect to this cooperation between ground troops and your P-47s?

QUESADA: No, there were no big problems. There were no doubt little things that came up. I can't remember anything specific, but anything as complicated as war doesn't run as if you were in your own office. War is organized confusion, so sometimes maybe a flight would meet up with the wrong column or something like that. But it would be corrected in a matter of minutes because the communications were so good. And so those things were happening--the confusion of war were occurring--but there were no incidents other than the first effort of the 8th Air Force to lay its carpet of bombs, which created great confusion. That was a very unfortunate thing and that was not minor.

Well anyway, they moved down to Avranches, and so they had Cherbourg cut off then and the Cherbourg Peninsula. And then the Germans were instructed, which we knew through Ultra, which is now a known fact, that the German army was instructed to launch



a very severe, their maximum effort to gain back Avranches because they saw that this was a threat to a movement to Paris, or to the east, I should say.

BURG: We turned the corner there.

QUESADA: That's right. And we knew that, so I remember the night, the army was quite concerned over it, and Hodges called it, referred to it as "buttoning up"; everybody buttoned up. And how the Germans tried to put some air effort into it; we slaughtered it, frankly. They had, oh, maybe a hundred airplanes trying to help their effort to get into Avranches, and we just slaughtered them.

BURG: Were they a hundred of all types?



QUESADA: Oh, every kind, just, it was a hodgepodge of junk and again poorly led. Nothing adhesive. They didn't know what they were doing, and they had very little effect. The attack came off and it was abortive, and it caused the 1st Army practically no harm. And it was soon called off. Now--

BURG: So your men had really a field day in the air against their air assault, and presumably a field day against whatever German armor and infantry was trying to make the counter attack.

QUESADA: That's correct. And now they never were able to muster much against the 1st Army at Avranches. They had very little they could pull together; they had no mobility during the daytime; they

were stunned by the breakout; they had some forces that were arriving in the area. They were scattered; there would be a regiment of one division and the battalion of another division, and it was a hodgepodge of harassed military units that were hard to control. And the attack that they were instructed to launch came out of a mind of a man who was uninformed. Hitler had no idea what was really happening. He didn't know, he wouldn't believe that his military, his armies in the east, west, could be as defeated as they in fact were. Rommel, -- if a division commander told a corps commander how, what in terrible shape he was, the corps commander would relieve him. If the corps commander told the army commander what terrible shape his corps was in, the army commander would courtmartial him. And if the army commander told Hitler what bad shape they were in, he would lose his job and they did. As you will recall they changed commanders just almost every couple of weeks. And this was mainly because they were bearers of bad news.

BURG: Yes. By then Hitler would look at a map, and the division signs and corps signs and army signs meant to him a fully intact fighting force, fully equipped.

QUESADA: Right. He was issuing instructions for his units to hold on certain positions that they had lost three days before. So it was very evident to us that there was a complete breakdown of cohesion. And we would get the discouraging reports of their army commanders, Rommel and the others. So we knew, we had a



better idea of what the conditions were, a lot better idea of what the conditions were in the German army than Hitler did. A much better concept of what it was. Well anyway, that attack was a complete failure. Now you must remember that at the breakthrough the 3rd Army was only a shell; it was a headquarters. They hadn't come into operation yet.

BURG: Patton's outfit.

QUESADA: Patton's outfit. And about Avranches, he became an operational unit, and many of the divisions that were in the 1st Army were assigned to the 3rd Army at about that time. Many of the groups that were assigned to the 9th Tactical Air Command were then assigned to the 19th Tactical Air Command, and this was not done until Patton's army became an operational army and the 19th Tactical Air Command, which was a headquarters and already formed. So we assigned to them, the 9th Air Force assigned some of our groups to them. You follow me?

BURG: Right.

QUESADA: As was always planned.

BURG: So they're getting experienced air cover--

QUESADA: That's correct.

BURG: --the minute they're ready to go in.



QUESADA: They're ready to go in. So then, and Patton took his army and the armored divisions that were assigned to him, which were already in combat most of them, and he sent some back into Brittany, into Brittany. But by and large he sent his force east and southeast, and there was nobody to stop him. He just had the complete access to all the roads. And without any opposition and he very courageously exploited it. And as he moved east, the 1st Army also moved east in parallel with him.

BURG: Yes, running to the north of him, I think.



QUESADA: Running to the north of him, but the 1st Army, after moving east maybe twenty or thirty miles, moved north to close the Falaise Gap, because now this breakthrough to Avranches had occurred. Now Patton to the south was moving east at a very rapid rate, the 1st Army north of Patton was moving east at a slower rate because they were fighting, whereas Patton had nothing to fight. But he had whatever it took to move fast, you see? He exploited that he had nothing to fight. But nevertheless the 1st Army had to move north with the view of closing the Falaise Gap.

BURG: With the British and Canadians closing it from the top.

QUESADA: Closing it from the top. For apparently perfectly good reason, the British and Canadians were slow at breaking out, because don't forget the Germans had practically every fighting man on the front line holding them in.



BURG: Yes, and most of the German armor I think.

QUESADA: The most of the German armor, so it wasn't as easy for them to break out as one should expect after the chaos of our break out. What was previously holding them in Caen was most of it was still there. So they had a hard time breaking out, and so we kept moving north and then as far as the 9th Tactical Air Command was concerned and as far as the British 2nd Tactical Air Force was concerned, we engaged in the goddamnedest slaughter in that Falaise Gap that you could possibly imagine. Because the Germans that were facing Bradley's 1st Army were now trying to get back to the Seine, because they saw that their effort to penetrate through to Avranches had failed. They saw that the 3rd and the 1st Army was enveloping them, so their concern now was to keep from being enveloped. And as the Falaise Gap got narrower and narrower and narrower for their escape route, it made it easier and easier and easier for us to concentrate on their massive and collected forces.



BURG: Yes, and another thing being they no longer could afford the luxury of moving at night.

QUESADA: That's correct, they had to move in the daytime because they were trying to get to the Seine and many did. And we were trying to close the gap and eventually did, but while the gap was trying to be closed, we had many lucrative targets, more than we

were accustomed to. And the British did a lot, too. Now when I say "we" in this sense I mean the allied forces because the British, with their rockets, could be very effective. And so the British air force and our air forces really slaughtered those armies that were attempting to escape. And we made their escape extremely difficult because much of their mobility was dependent on the horses. So air attack against horse-drawn vehicles is very effective because it kills the horses. And it creates stampedes. Oh, it was just a melee. I never will forget one time I went down there, and mainly just to have a little fun participating in it, and you never saw such confusion. Their horses were running all over the fields drawing parts of wagons, and it was just a great melee.

BURG: Tangled up in the harness and--



QUESADA: Tangled up in the harness; it was just the--

BURG: We tend to forget that they were using horse transport.

QUESADA: We do. That was their major--they relied to a large extent on the horse for their mobility.

BURG: Now that must have been one of the most unusual features of air war on that front, that activity at the Falaise Gap, the amount of target opportunity, the butchering that was actually done.

QUESADA: It was quite cruel.

BURG: Vehicles and personnel.

QUESADA: Everything just--just dead men, dead horses, dead vehicles, dead tanks. I went down there afterwards just to see it on the ground, and it was just devastating. And the thought that ran through my mind was how in the world are they ever going to clean this up, and how are they going to get the dead animals buried before they create a hell of a health hazard. Well, the answer to that was that I wasn't bright enough to see that the Corps of Engineers came along and dug big ditches and helped the French.

BURG: Bulldozed graves and--



QUESADA: That's right. But with this heavy equipment that we had they could do almost anything. So the cleanup was much quicker than I ever thought it could be. Well, anyway the Falaise Gap was eventually closed, but it was not closed until quite a bit or much too much of the German forces had gotten away and was rushing to the Seine. And then there were only a few places on the Seine that they could cross so then that became our target.

BURG: By the way, can you give me a few more minutes?

QUESADA: Yes.

BURG: Okay. Trying to knock out those bridges?

QUESADA: Well, the bridges mostly were already knocked out.

BURG: As preparation for D-Day.

QUESADA: Preparation for D-Day. So they were getting across swimming, and on barges, and on what-do-you-call-them?

BURG: Pontoons, I suppose.

QUESADA: Pontoons, so they were confined to a few places.

BURG: Yes. So everything's got to funnel--

QUESADA: Got to funnel so that gave us another target, and we were only fairly successful. Again looking at it in retrospect we should have put more force into that. We were anxious to help the movement of our troops eastward, so we used most of our tactical air forces to help Patton and Hodges rush to the east.

BURG: So your people are committed to the points of those advances, not--

QUESADA: That's right. We might have been--

BURG: --not up there in front.

QUESADA: --we might have been wiser to have committed more to the actual few crossings of the Seine.

BURG: Let me ask you: Do you now in retrospect think that had you committed more of your Air Force to the Seine crossings that



that might have measurably shortened the war? That you might have trapped numbers of them on our side?

QUESADA: I don't know. I wouldn't be so bold to say that, but I think it would have reduced some of the fighting or minimized some of the fighting that occurred for about a week in Belgium between some of these retreating forces and Collins, one of Collins's corps. He had a pretty husky fight in Belgium that lasted for about a week, if you might remember, and had we concentrated more on the bottleneck crossings of the Seine, we might have not necessarily prevented but certainly have made the relative strength greater.

BURG: Now, since we've been talking about pursuit, and I remember the same, we now have in the Library situation maps that show the enormous runs of units in one single day, were also outrunning your fields.

QUESADA: That's correct.



BURG: At what point did you have to move forward and how was it done? You're going to have to take over German fields presumably that have been all shot up and bombed.

QUESADA: We weren't at any great disadvantage during this period when we were moving to Seine. We got plenty of range, plenty of range.

BURG: Your aircraft were designed for long-range penetration.

QUESADA: Oh, that was only about a twenty minute run. We had plenty of range. Where we had to move, we did once we got around Paris, we did move into some of the fairly well, like Le Bourget and things like that, we did move into them, but we didn't stay very long. We only stayed for about a week, and then we had our engineers building fields in Belgium. Oh, maybe, I guess an average would be in that area about halfway between Belgium and Aachen. We just moved right--see the movement of the army eastward was so great and there was so little fighting, they could move just about as fast as they could move, you see.

BURG: Yes. Right.



QUESADA: There was practically no opposition to them except this one fight that Collins got into in Belgium. And so the American armies, both the 3rd and the 1st, passed through Paris as if it wasn't there. And they went on eastward and the movement through that part of the country, through Namur and Liege was about as fast as they could travel. There was practically no fighting except for the one thing I've alluded to, and then when we got up to the Siegfried Line, the army was stopped. They were stopped by modest resistance and a very stretched supply line.

BURG: Right, right. Okay, I'm--

[Interruption]

BURG: Now, the army is slowed and really brought to a halt. They had far outrun their pre-D-Day predictions of speed of advance. Their supply lines are stretched, they're finding it hard to get gasoline up to the tanks, your fighter fields had by the time you're pausing in front of the Siegfried Line, your fighter fields had advanced beyond Paris to--

QUESADA: Well beyond Paris.

BURG: --well beyond, to prepared fields; therefore "av" [aviation] gas, ordnance stores, this sort of thing, I presume, are difficult for you to get, too.

QUESADA: They were difficult for us to get, and we had to exercise some restraint against extravagance.



BURG: To cut down the number of missions or sorties that you fly?

QUESADA: No, no we never did that. We just were more careful in our target selection, and we didn't have a great demand on us because the army was hardly in contact with the German army while they were racing across Paris.

BURG: There was almost nothing in the way of concentrations for you to hit.

QUESADA: That was in direct contact with the army. So most of our effort at that time was interdiction, even back into Germany.

BURG: Oh, really? Your planes are flying back in there and trying to stop stuff coming up.

QUESADA: That's correct. That's correct.

BURG: Rail traffic, road traffic.



QUESADA: Rail traffic and road traffic. The American armies, because I have to confine myself now to the American armies, had little contact with the German army. It was pursuit and pursuit with almost no contact. So therefore, there was no requirement for close support. So our effort went primarily, at that time, to the interdiction effort.

BURG: With some aircraft still assigned to stay with the lead columns--

QUESADA: We didn't even do that after we left Avranches. There was no necessity for it. We did some, we did some, but that was not a big thing then. That was a big thing at the breakthrough, but after we were at Avranches and the army was moving west to eastward across Europe, the idea of keeping aircraft over the armored columns was almost, not stopped but was diminished. In the first place it didn't move in heavy armored columns, they just, they used every French road they could use to move east as fast as they could. You see there was no concentration of forces at that time, of armor at that time. Or less concentration I guess I should say.

BURG: Yes. Could they still call, in effect ring you up--



QUESADA: Oh, absolutely. And it was occurring, but it wasn't consuming all of our force.

BURG: You still had pilots with the points of the columns.

QUESADA: Yes, some of them. Some of them, but not many. In the first place the armor spread out then in order to permit them to move faster, and use more roads, do you see?

BURG: Yes. Penetrating in a broader front--

QUESADA: On a broader front, yes.

BURG: --as they headed east.

QUESADA: And that permits them to move a lot faster.

BURG: We're also talking about autumn, 1944, coming up on some of the European bad weather. Was that cutting down the amount that you could do?

QUESADA: No, we had very good weather during that autumn, very good.

BURG: Did you really. So then the first kind of setback perhaps that we need to talk about, and it was a setback that was accompanied--fortuitously for the Germans--by horrible weather, would come then in mid-December, '44, when they--

QUESADA: Or a little before that maybe, a little before that.



BURG: --when they struck back.

QUESADA: That was the first big weather setback, but we had some bad weather before that, but not a lot. What we had, I remember very distinctly that autumn, October was just incredibly lovely weather. The B-17s would be coming over in great masses, and the sky would be without a cloud. And there was very little combat between the two armies while they were chasing them, while they were moving east, with the exception of this one incident that occurred in Belgium. The movement up to the Siegfried Line was almost, almost, but not quite, total, almost unobstructed. The Germans were not in any way trying to make a stand any place. They wouldn't even leave troops behind to slow us up. Their whole effort was to flee. They were frantic. I remember I had to spend a night because I made a mistake in a little French village. And it was behind the lines, and I remember watching the Germans go down the main street of this little village. I just watched it through a little grating in a cellar. And they were just frantic, frantic. They were stealing the Belgians' bicycles, they would take anything that would help their mobility. It was rabble, the worst order, trying to flee. The only thing they had in their mind was to flee, and to get back into Germany. They were so demoralized that there was no way to issue instructions because they were so mingled up, and it was a mass of men and just fleeing. There was no organized resistance at all.



BURG: So they couldn't really draw a line any further west than the Rhine River, in effect.

QUESADA: That's--well, the Siegfried Line.

BURG: Yes.

QUESADA: Yes, at Aachen, through there.

BURG: Yes, the west side--

QUESADA: That's right, the so-called west wall.

BURG: --that was the first place they could rally.

QUESADA: Yes.

BURG: Now did they make that last air effort--you remember the gaggles of German fighter aircraft that came out and struck at a number of allied fields?

QUESADA: That was on Christmas day, I think, wasn't it? No.

BURG: It's in that period of time, roughly.

QUESADA: Yes. Yes.

BURG: That was perhaps the last big effort the German air force made.

QUESADA: That was their last big effort, yes.



BURG: And they did catch you on the ground in places, I think, with that--, all of you.

QUESADA: Well, I hate to give a wrong impression, but the German air--. This was when the 1st Army and the 3rd Army was licking its wounds and trying to have its tail catch up with it, so that they could start an offensive which had stopped. And during this period we had some airdromes that were fairly near, fairly far east. I had one airdrome at a place called Maastricht [in the Netherlands] that was so far east that it was within their artillery range. It was only a matter of some thousand yards from the front line.

BURG: At the time of the [Battle of] Bulge.



QUESADA: At the time of the Bulge and at the time before, earlier than the Bulge, the time when this attack took place. I just intuitively thought that the Germans were going to come out. I couldn't believe that they were that decimated that they would do nothing because we couldn't find an airplane in the air. Admittedly, during that time when the army was not using us for close support or we were not giving close support to the army, we were raising hell with the German airfields, attacking them on the ground, as a part of the interdiction program. But nevertheless we, when I'm talking about "we" I mean the 9th Tactical Air Command, we were a little bit more fortunate than Opie [or "O.P.", Maj. Gen. Otto P. Weyland] was down in, further south, in the 19th. Number one, I anticipated it. And number two, I issued instructions that at daylight there had to be a squadron airborne over the airport.

BURG: Sort of a combat air patrol.

QUESADA: Right.

[Interruption]

QUESADA: And that we must put pilots in every ground machine gun installation that was protecting our airdrome.

BURG: Oh?



QUESADA: Put a pilot right in every position where there are machine guns. Because--and this was what was in my mind, and I gave these instructions personally--that our airdromes had never been attacked, and these anti-aircraft units were not Air Force units. They had never seen a German airplane or almost never seen a German airplane. And if I was going to be foolish enough--if you might call it that--to have some of our airplanes airborne, while they are attacking us, these fellows won't be able to tell our airplanes from theirs. But our pilots can, you see. So I put a pilot in every position where there were anti-aircraft guns. At daylight, and if I recall correctly, I think for an hour. And then also in the evening for an hour and a half or so before darkness.

BURG: Be like a 1st World War stand-to, where they went up on the fire step at dawn and went up on it again at dusk.

QUESADA: Yes, that's the idea. Yes.

BURG: The two favorite times for attacks.

QUESADA: Right. All right on this particular day the Germans did attack, and we actually had a squadron at this one airport at Maastricht which is the only one of our airports they attacked--

BURG: Oh, that was the only 9th Tac outfit to get hit?

QUESADA: Yes. And we actually had a squadron taking off at the time. And the group that was at Maastricht was a group that the 8th Air Force sent over to us to help us out on our interdiction. And it was commanded by a fellow named J.C. Meyer, who eventually became the commanding general of the Strategic Air Command, and the vice-chief of staff of the United States Air Force, who died only a few months ago. He was this commander. He was in one of the airplanes that was taking off. He literally shot down a German fighter before he had his wheels up.



BURG: Good lord.

QUESADA: In other words, the German fighter at high speed was coming over trying to strafe, it passed him, he just pulled his nose up and went B-r-r-r-t, like that, and shot him down.

BURG: Isn't that something?

QUESADA: And he shot down four airplanes before he landed. So we were more fortunate than the other ones that were struck. The 365th [Fighter] Group, headed by Colonel [Ray James] Stecker, was

very badly mauled. He was a very fine commander. He was one of West Point's top athletes. And he resigned and then came back as a reserve officer and became a very successful group commander. He died four years ago. Anyway,--

BURG: Meyer was actually on his way, with the squadron, up to take station above--

QUESADA: He was on his way down the runway when the attack started. When they came over at low level, do you see? Because we had no radar warning. And he just passed -- Meyer was in, he didn't have his wheels off the ground yet when this airplane passed him. He just raised his airplane up, flew and brrrt, shot him down.

BURG: Oh, isn't that something.

QUESADA: Yes, and he shot three others down before he landed. And it was a melee. I don't think we lost an airplane, and we shot down about twelve of theirs.

BURG: Well, once again it seems to me that the composition of that strike force, very few experienced German pilots, very few who could even find their way to our fields.

QUESADA: It was pathetic. They were very inexperienced, just like taking kids out of our flying school, and very obvious. You could see it every day, all day that the caliber of the German air force had sunk to a very, very low level. Once you got in



combat with them, I think they wrecked themselves as much as we shot them down. They would fly into the ground and things like that. It was pathetic.

BURG: Seems to me I remember instances where our pilots expressed amazement. All they did was get behind a German aircraft and the pilot bailed out.

QUESADA: They were completely incapable as an effective force, they were just not--and they were just pathetic, pathetic.

BURG: I'm going to ask you one more question, General, did your outfit and you, too, did you have to cope with the German jet effort at the bitter end?

QUESADA: Well, you say cope with it--I guess the answer is yes. And we were very concerned over the German jet, and as a result the air bases that they were able to use--now the word, "able", is an important word here, that had been built for them, that had greater distances for landing and take off, and mostly in all cases concrete--we identified them. So we knew exactly where they could operate from. And so we had a system whereby once we saw any jets in the air, we could identify what base they were from by our Y-System which listened to all their chatter. On the next interview I'll tell you about our Y-System.

BURG: All right. All right, good.





QUESADA: And we would listen to their ground-to-air directions, chatter, you see. And so we could tell by the code names at what airdrome they would go back to. So when we would see jet fighters at any one time, we wouldn't necessarily try to engage them in combat. We would just call a unit from over here and send it back to stooge over their airdrome when they came back to land. Because when they got back to their airdrome, they had to land, they couldn't fight, because they didn't have any fuel. You see jets at that time were inherently short of fuel--that's true to a much lesser extent now. See they only had about an hour or two of fuel.

BURG: And they've got to slow down--



QUESADA: And they've got to land. They had no alternative but to land, so we would send our P-47s and P-38s back to stooge over these airdromes where they have to land, and then shoot them down while they were landing.

BURG: Dirty pool.

QUESADA: Yes, it was dirty pool, yes. But you'll be interested in this Y-service.

BURG: Yes, let's do that next time then, General. Thank you.