

Roy Houchin: Okay, that'd be right. March 17th. The training that all the pilots received, where was that at?

Douglas Campbell: Well, in my case, it started, in fact one of the things I always tell people that's interesting - When the United States declared war on Germany in early April, 1917, I was just in college and I had made up my mind that this was the war that I wanted to do my flying in. Well, I had a hard time finding the Air Force. The sergeant in charge of the recruiting office in Boston, knew that there was a handful of planes and a few officer pilots down on the Mexican border chasing "Pancho" Villa, but as how to get in, he didn't have the faintest idea. Another couple of guys and myself went to Washington that Thursday, and we looked for the Air Force all day Friday and couldn't find it, but we found it Saturday morning. It was called the Aviation Section of the Signal Corp. It was one room rented office downtown Washington, inhabited by a captain and a secretary.

RH: Mmm, full staff.

DC: They took our names. And by gosh, within a month they sent me a telegram to go to ground school that was just about to open at MIT, where I was for eight weeks. There were twenty-five guys in each class. This was the first class. A new class came every week. After we finished that, they sent ten of us to learn how to fly in France, the other fifteen went to various air fields here in the United States. Then, well later, just about that time, by the time we got there, the United States had planned to have a big flying school of their own in France, at Issoudun, and the people they sent over to France, and there were some other ones, quite a few later on, for a while, they were sent to get their primary training at Tours, down there on the Marne River. And then when they finished primary training they went to get their secondary training at the Issoudun School. I had something to do with that place, because when our group went over there, there were fifty of us, or forty-seven, we got to Paris. It took us nineteen days to cross the Atlantic, including a six day wait for the rest of the convoy in Halifax. Well, we got to Paris and spent the night in the barracks there, they lined us up the next morning and told ten of us, including me, to take one pace to the rear and they marched the others off to Tours to learn how to fly, and we found we were glorified office boys in a newly established air headquarters in Paris. Two other guys and I were assigned to the officer whose job it was to organize this American school, at Issoudun and get it going. We went down there. Well, the first time we went there was in August 1917. There was nothing there except twelve tents and a company of en-

gineers. But we went down in October and meanwhile we arranged for the French to supply us airplanes and fuel and various things. And meanwhile, the engineers had built some barracks and put up some of these Besenau hangers. Do you know what a Besenau hanger is?

RH: I think I do.

DC: It's a wood frame covered with heavy canvas. That's what we had all the time over there. We got the thing going about the eleventh of October. We had the first flying stop there. That's where I learned how - I didn't have formal primary training, because I missed that. So, I started in with the secondary aircraft, with dual control. I was there from then until about January and then in groups of about a dozen or fifteen, we were sent down to the French school of aerial gunnery at a place called Cazeau down south of Bordeaux for then days or two weeks. That was the place for people who were going to be in the fighter squadron. I'm not sure, no I guess they sent other people there too.

RH: Probably gunners.

DC: People who were going to fly or be gunners of observation squadrons and bombing squadrons. And that was it. The training was a little rudimentary by today's standards. I think, well I know, when I got into my first combat, I had had fifty-one hours of total flying time. I was told that the British, who were short of pilots, were sometimes sending them out with thirty. And of course, there was much less to training then. There were no instruments; they didn't exist. They didn't exist until about eight years later or maybe more, I guess. There was no radio. There was no meteorological service.

RH: No, there wasn't too much of anything.

DC: No, you just flew by the seat of your pants. Your acrobatic training was sort of interesting, or at least it interested Air Force people. Not that I thought about it now, this was after learning to fly the smallest airplane there was at the school. There were three. We started with the little bigger one. They were all Nieuports, but we started with...

RH: With what, the 17s or the Bebes?

DC: No, we started with the one we called the 23 meter because it had 23 square meters

wing surface. And then, after you had flown that a few times, you fly on the 18 meter, which was a still smaller, and then the real small one was the 15 meter. And that might be, as near as I remember there was a type 17, type 24, and a few type 27s. By that time they were not used at the front any more. They had been replaced by Spads, from the French Service. But after we had flown the 15 meter for awhile, we would go off to a field some distance away from main field at the school for our acrobatic training. At the side of the field they would have a fuselage of a Nieuport with the fabric taken off and the controls still in it. And the instructor would get in and say, 'Now in order to do a left hand spin, throttle down to spot idling, and pull the stick back to just make it stall slowly, and when you feel that it is stalling, kick the rudder that way and pull the stick this way and you'll be in a left hand spin. And then after you've spun around three or four times, put everything slowly into the middle. You'll find yourself in a dive when you pull out.' Then the student would get in and go through this routine three or four times till the instructor was sure he understood it. Then the instructor would say, 'Get into that airplane over there and go up and do it. Don't start anything until you get up to two thousand meters.'

RH: Right.

DC: But it worked and nobody got hurt.

RH: That's good. Oh, that's wild. Let me check this and see if it's...

DC: It did do a little work. It was a camera gun. You fasten the camera onto your airplane and when you pulled the trigger, or tended to pull the trigger, you'd pull something that take a picture. You'd see whether your sights were on the guy or not, but we did very little of that.

RH: Was it with a plate? You know, like the reconnaissance, did you have to change the plates, glass plates or how had the photography progressed at that time?

DC: Oh, I don't know. I never had anything to do with that. I just hung on to the airplane and somebody else did the developing. I don't know how, I think it was a film. I'm not sure.

RH: Yeah, I didn't know if it was advanced type or if it had...

DC: Oh, it was a very early type. It wasn't advanced at all.

RH: I probably won't pronounce this name right, but at Epez - was is Ipez or Epez,

where you all first moved to as a unit?

DC: Ah, Epiez. No, we first went to Villeneuve, got there the first day of March. There were no airplanes there. The 95th squadron was already there; they didn't have any airplanes. Some of their pilots had gone back to the Paris area to ferry some Nieuport 28's, which the French decided we could have. The Nieuport 28 was quite different from earlier Nieuports in that it had a much bigger lower wing, and there's a model of it up there. That was supposed to be Nieuport's answer to the Spad. The Spad in the meantime had built the Spad 13, with the more powerful geared engine and whatnot. The French decided that they would use that, so they let the American squadrons have the Nieuports, until they found out that we could do a job, then we got Spads. I never had a Spad in combat. The squadron got one, I think, about the end of July or August 1918. I had been wounded and was out of action by that time, so I never used one in combat. I have flown them. And of course, they were quite a different airplane - heavier.

RH: What did you think of the Nieuport 28?

DC: Oh, I liked it, except that it had one rather serious defect. That was the leading edge of the top wing would come off if you put it under too much of a strain. That would take all the fabric off the top side of the upper wing, leaving you with only part of the upper wing left and the lower wing left. I think most people got back on the ground that that happened to. Of course, a couple of them got captured. Couldn't get it to come right down. But, it was a very nice airplane to fly. More maneuverable than the Spad, not quite as fast. It was about ten miles an hour slower.

RH: Yeah, that seems to be, you know when we mentioned the tri-plane, that seemed to be the reason they kept it at the front as long as they did. A lot of pilots liked the maneuverability of it.

DC: Yeah, some of the pilots liked the maneuverability of the Nieuport preferred to the Spad, they said later. The Spad you could put it into a power dive and pull it out and it wouldn't break.

RH: How did they select, you know, right after you finished your training, how did they select the members for the 94th?

DC: I have no idea. I have no idea.. When we finished Cazeau, the gunnery school, we went back to Issoudun for two or three days or a week I guess, or maybe longer. And

then, all of a sudden they said you're going to be in the 94th squadron and you're going to get on a train tomorrow and go to Villeneuve, which was only something like 150 miles but it took thirty-six hours to get there. But all the enlisted men were on the train too. A lot of equipment. And then after the airplanes - when the airplanes did arrive at Villeneuve, they had no machine guns on them. It was another week, I think, before we got machine guns. And then about that time - this was late March - about that time the German push up North was worrying everybody and that was going to be the hot sector and so they didn't want greenhorns on that, so they decided, apparently, we would go down to a quieter sector near Toul. I don't know why we went to Epiez. I guess it was because they weren't ready for us to go into the Toul airport, the Primary airport as it is called, because we didn't do anything in Epiez except wait, put our airplane in shape. The last day we were in Villeneuve, the last couple of days, the roof of the hanger caught fire from sparks from the kitchen or something. Several airplanes were damaged. Two were destroyed. So at Epiez, we fixed them up. I don't remember doing any flying.

RH: It was basically just a center for...

DC: A way station.

RH: Right, before you moved on.

DC: It wasn't much of a place. I think it was just a landing strip cut out of the woods.

RH: The barracks and stuff that you all stayed at Issoudun, did you all have to build them?

DC: Well, I didn't. I went there as a staff officer. Some of the pilots, I guess around just a couple of weeks later, a whole bunch of them came in from the states. They were all, most of them were first lieutenants already. But we were short of barracks and short of airplanes and they were put to work building barracks. They called themselves the "Royal Flying Carpenters."

RH: I didn't know if you had been recruited for that or not.

DC: No, I was the adjutant at the post for the first month I was there, knowing practically nothing about army paperwork, but somebody had to do it. We had a good top sergeant who had been in army offices all his life.

RH: So he more or less helped take care of things.

DC: Then the reserve officer that had organized this place was replaced by a regular army officer, another second in command was a regular army officer, and they brought in some people who really knew how to do the paperwork, manage the place. That was, a matter of fact, the fellow who took charge was Tooley Spats, Carl Spats, who later was big general who was in charge of the 8th Air Force in Britain, I think, during the last two years of World War II.

RH: I believe so. When did Major Huffer and Major Lufbery...

DC: I can't remember whether they joined us at - I think Huffer joined us at Villeneuve, yes they joined us at Villeneuve. Or Lufbery did, I don't know about Huffer, whether he took over there or at when we got to Toul Airport, I can't remember.

RH: Something I've noticed in reference to Huffer as commander and also as Lufbery as commander.

DC: No, Lufbery wasn't commander. Lufbery, when he transferred to Lafayette Esudrille, to the U.S. service, which transferred over as a major, he was already a seventeen victory ace then. But he didn't want to command anything; he just wanted to keep on combatting and he wanted to take us young guys up and show us...

RH: How it was done.

DC: Show us some tricks about it. That's what he did; he didn't even command a flight in the 94th squadron. He just took patrols out and we went with him. We learned a lot from him.

RH: I imagine so.

DC: The short time he was there - of course, we started operating April 14th and he was killed on the 19th of May. I flew with him three or four times.

RH: How was he as a pilot?

DC: He was good. He was good. Had to be to have done what he did.

RH: Yeah, that's true and stayed alive for as long as he did. How long, I was trying

to remember how long the 94th was at Toul. Were they there all the time?

DC: No, no. They were there, I think it was in June that they were moved from there, or maybe it was early July, to another field near the Chateau Thierry front. Then in, I guess it was the Saint Mihiel, offensive in September, it moved up to northwest of Verdun, I think it was. First to Souilly and then to Rembercourt.

RH: I had a list. I've got the Gorrell's history for those...

DC: Oh yeah, you probably know more about it than I do if you read that.

RH: I've tried to catalogue it for my thesis, month by month. And what I did, I went through and picked out the dates that they had listed for alerts or for voluntary patrols or such that they mentioned your name. I was hoping that maybe you could shed a little more light on what happened on those particular times.

DC: Well, are you referring to the first one on April 14th?

RH: Yeah, April 14th, of course I figured would be the best place to start.

DC: We want this book.

RH: Okay, let me lift this rascal up.

DC: Old soldiers have the reputation that the yarns they spin about their experiences get better and better as the years go on. But I have some letters I wrote my parents from over there. I wrote one that day after. Yeah, this is dated April 15th. This is the first one, well first day we started operating the 94th officially, really. "On Saturday, Major Huffer informed the French Aviation, under whom this squad was working, that we would be ready to start regular patrols and alerts on the 14th. Alan Winslow were on schedule to be on alert from six to ten a.m. At six, we had our planes wheeled out and tested the motors to make sure the motors were running okay." Then, at the same time, that isn't written here, but at that same time, the first patrol was made by Captain Dave Peterson, Rickenbacker, and Chambers. They went out to the lines, but the weather was so lousy - low ceiling, misty, and what not, that they came back. There were no enemy airplanes there anyway. You couldn't see anything really. "The first two and a half hours were slow, but then things began to happen. At 8:45, the telephone rang and the message was that two Boche planes had been sighted some fifteen miles away, headed in this direction. You know that work Boche, B-O-C-H-E. I never

did find out exactly what it meant, but I'm sure it wasn't complimentary. That's what the French call - "At 8:50, I took off and had made a round of the field at 500 meters altitude when Winslow got into the air. He was to lead!" He was the one who had a little flying with the French before he transferred. "He was to lead. When he reached 200 meters, I was just getting into position behind him. It was quite misty. All at once he turned and I saw him chase a plane that wasn't over 300 meters altitude. It had black crosses on it. I heard him shoot." I don't think I heard him. I probably saw his tracer, I guess. Maybe I heard him; I said it did. "And they both went out of sight under my wings. I banked up 90 degrees and turned to get a view of below so as to go help Winslow, if necessary. It was lucky I did; for just as I turned I heard the pop, pop, pop of the machine gun behind me, and there was the other Boche shooting at me. For some reason or other, I saw his tail was turned away from me as he shot and thought bi-place." That means two-seater. People like to confuse it with bi-plane, but it isn't. "Bi-place, keep under it flashed into my brain. He turned out afterwards to be an Albatros mono-place. But I had guessed wrong. Instead of getting above him, which would have been easier, I kept below him, maneuvering so as to try to get under his tail without letting him point at me or get a shot at me from broadside." In a bi-place you see, the gunner passenger can shoot through a 180 degree arc behind the wings, above the tail, and through large arcs down at the sides. While the pilot can shoot through the front by aiming his plane just as we do. "It took over a minute to maneuver into position behind and under his tail without exposing myself right under him. Then I pulled my nose straight up into the air and let him have the bullets. And I think I got some in his motor for I saw some tracers hitting his nose. The next thing I knew he was diving at about forty-five degrees and I was behind him, but behind his tail. Then I got a good aim, pulled the trigger and held onto it. Two or three tracers hit in it. After about fifty rounds had been fired, a streak of flame came shooting out of the fuselage near the motor. I ceased firing and watched him land and crash in a plowed field, his plane a mass of flame and wreckage. I heard later the pilot had sense enough to unfasten his belt and was thrown clear of the machine, escaping with some bad burns and broken bones. Winslow had shot his Boche down. It landed and turned over in the plowed field on the other side of the air drome. I was so excited, but I was afraid to land until I had made a turn around the field. Note: (this I put in later) From take-off to landing the Winslow/Campbell flight lasted only four and a half minutes."

RH: That was pretty quick.

DC: Well, a few years ago I was invited up to a dinner the 94th was having. They were then a strategic Air Force, or whatever you call it, as an interceptor squadron, up at Sulfridge Field. The commander of the group took me and showed me all this fancy elec-

tronic set up they had for getting the early warning notices and their organization for getting the planes into the air in ten minutes or fifteen, and he said that they, what they're aiming for was, what they're trying to do was to be able to contact the alleged enemy planes in thirty or forty minutes. So I said well, considering the fact that our early warning device was two hand-cranked telephones connected by a wire, fastened to fence posts, trees, barns, and whatnot, and we had ours on the ground in fifteen minutes after we got the early warning notice, don't you think maybe that's still a record? And he said, "Yeah, I think maybe it is."

RH: Oh, I'd think so.

DC: Well, "I rolled up to the hanger, everybody who hadn't run to the fallen Boches was on hand to haul us out of our planes and to give us a slap on the the back." And I put another note in here: I recalled my mechanic Corporal Prinz, forgetting military custom shouted, "That's the stuff, Lieutenant, Old Kid!"

RH: Oh, that's pretty good.

DC: So, that was the first one. I don't remember any other alerts that - may have occurred.

RH: They had, of course, the April 23rd, they had mentioned that there was a bi-plane near Vernacourt at about 11:20 and that you had flown with Lufbery.

DC: I don't remember that.

RH: Okay. A lot of these, some of them had no report on the bottom of it. So I figured that they were incidental and really didn't mean anything. And then, let's see, May 3rd, going toward Metz, and you were with Captain Hall and Rickenbacker.

DC: Let's see, oh, I don't know.

RH: And later on that day it was with Peterson, Davis, Loomas, and Chapman.

DC: Oh, oh, was that May 3rd?

DC: Down one of them but Chapman was shot down...

RH: Was this...

DC: They got him.

RH: That may be it, because I don't remember seeing a reference to Chapman after that.

DC: No, he was shot down.

RH: Did you see that?

DC: Oh yeah, here it is.

RH: Okay.

DC: "About ten days ago," they say. Now this was written May 12, so that checks it out pretty much. "Five of us got into a royal scrap with five Boche planes and Captain Peterson went to take one of the Huns hurling down through space, but Chapman got himself into a corner and was brought down in flames. Just a week ago [May 5], Captain Hall got into a fight and was seen spinning down. But Ed Green saw him spitting out further down and we were pretty sure that his motor got put out of business by a bullet." What we learned out from Jim Hall. He was captured.

RH: Right.

DC: What we learned from him later after the armistice, was actually an anti-aircraft hit his motor and stuck there but it was a dud. And it put his plane so out of balance that all he could do was spiral into the ground and break both ankles and be taken prisoner.

RH: Yeah, I remembered that he had been taken prisoner.

DC: Yeah. Oh yes. He was a prisoner from then until - I bumped into him in Paris in December [1918] the next time I saw him.

RH: What have you got listed there? It might be easier than me just going through these dates, cause I have May 7th with Peterson, Davis, Loomas, and Cunningham. And then...

DC: And I was with them?

RH: Um-hmm.

DC: No, I didn't write anything between April 28th and May 12th. I do remember - April 28th I wrote, "I had two flights this week, with both runs successful. The first one I should have had he threw out a black smoke bomb, and I stopped shooting because I thought he was on fire. Foolish thing to do because then he got away from me. The second I chased about five kilometers inside his own lines but couldn't overtake. The next day I saw another one over the lines and went after him, but turned around when I discovered myself four kilometers behind the lines at an altitude of only a thousand meters, with a strong wind behind my back, nearly out of gliding distance." I did have a combat on the 18th of May that I don't think I've written about it. It was bi-place observation plane; I thought I got it, but I wasn't sure. It was later confirmed.

RH: Yeah, I have that down here. That was southeast of Verdun.

DC: Then, of course, the nineteenth [of May] was the one that came down on our own side of the line. Was that one part of the...

RH: Yeah, May 19th. That was an alert.

DC: Let's see, I think I have something on that. "I went out yesterday morning and got me another Boche. We succeeded on. We met over the lines north of here and had a nice fight. I soon succeeded in getting on his tail and started pumping him full of lead. It was an LVG bi-place so, of course, the observer started shooting back at me. I think I killed him soon, because he started shooting before I got very close to him. I kept on shooting and was about fifteen meters from him when his right wing crumpled up and he fell from 4,500 meters, hitting about a mile inside our lines. I tried to follow him down and watch him hit, but he went through a cloud and was going so much faster than I was that he had hit before I had got through the cloud. Ha! Realizing that it was up to me to strike for home and country," like they used to have on the posters, you know, "I struck for home at once."

RH: That's good, that's good.

DC: Then we went up to take a look at that one.

RH: What was left of it.

DC: Yeah.

RH: Did you take any souvenirs off of it?

DC: Oh yes, I had a whole box full of them, but it got lost.

RH: Ah, that's a pity.

DC: When I went to the, after I was wounded, after the squadron descended, I went down to Colombey les belles, which was the supply place for our sector. But after I was wounded, they made me come back to the United States, supposedly to give them some pointers about training and I didn't get back until, well I was on the Atlantic going back when the armistice was signed. But I never saw that box again. As a matter of fact, Colombey les belles was the place where, after the armistice, the other squadrons flew all their airplanes in there, piled them up and then burned them. There was no use for them.

RH: Yeah, I can understand.

DC: French didn't want them; we didn't want to ship them home.

RH: So they just burned them.

DC: There's a whole pile of Spads there. They set fire to them.

RH: Oh, I'd love to have one of those now.

DC: Have you heard about this place up here at Red Hook, New York?

RH: Red Hook?

DC: Yeah.

RH: No, I haven't.

DC: Well there's a fellow up there named Cole Palen who has World War I airplanes. In the summertime he puts a show on, on Sunday afternoons.

RH: Old Rhinebeck Aerodome.

DC: Well, yeah. It's just beyond Rhinebeck. It's not far to go if you want to look at it. I think he's got a lot of these old things in buildings there. They may be dismantled. I think in the winter time he sometimes takes the wings off.

RH: And starts repairing.

DC: Yeah. There's a Nieuport 28 there that's, the last time I saw it he had it in a sort of a small shed museum place. And it was advertised as Douglas Campbell's airplane, because it was the same type, and they put this ring on it and my number ten.

RH: Is the color scheme on that one accurate?

DC: I don't remember. I don't think they put my red and black cowling. This is my accurate color scheme, this one. Except that the fuselage colors are a little too bright there. They were really duller than that. But I had my cowling painted that way.

RH: Oh, that's pretty. That is pretty.

DC: We were, I don't know whether anybody told us we could paint cowls to suit ourselves. We did anyway, nobody told us not to.

RH: Right, right. That is pretty. I have a friend that I'm hoping will lend me all the color schemes that the 94th had. I'd like to do some 1/48 scale drawings of all the members of the 94th, of their aircraft.

DC: Oh really?

RH: Yeah, if I could and if I can collect them. And then put that into the thesis, because that is very much a part of the squadron, you know what they did with them. I'd love to have that in there.

DC: Well, I don't remember any of them except my own.

RH: Yeah, well that's understandable.

DC: Reed Chambers dressed his up after the armistice as the American flag, with the colors and stripes, and stuff. That was when the squadron moved up to Colblénz, in the army of occupation.

RH: They had an article, I think it was in Cross and Cockade, on those colors afterward, and they were pretty. Let's see, we have here May 20th, and 21st, and 22nd were alerts. Let's see, it looks like the 22nd was with Loomas and Eastman. Then there was on the 24th a voluntary patrol.

DC: Well, I haven't got the dates here, but this was written on May 20th. It said, "I had four combats with bi-place on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. And though on Saturday, I'm sure I hit, but I didn't think I'd write it down and had to beat it, because I was alone and some Huns were coming. It seems however, that the machine came down at that place and time." So it's possible I'm credited with it. Yes I was. That made three.

RH: And I can check the date on that. If you wrote that...

DC: Huh?

RH: I can check the date for that, because if you wrote the letter, what was it, the twentieth?

DC: I wrote the letter on the twentieth, yeah. I said I had combats on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.

RH: Right. I can check the calendar and find out what the dates were on those, so that'll be good.

DC: Then the next one I wrote on June 2nd, and described my fourth one, which in some ways I thought was the most interesting of the lot.

RH: Yeah, most of the stuff from up until that...

DC: Yeah, May 27th. I hadn't written for two weeks [since the 13th]. I said I had been too busy making the world safe, the Democrats. That was another gag.

RH: Another gag.

DC: Wilson's safe for democracy. "The first week of the two was pretty dull; for though the weather was fine, the Boche stayed in his nest. But the last week has been good. On Monday, John Wentworth and I went on a voluntary patrol, leaving the ground just after breakfast. As we usually do when the sun is on our side of the lines, we climbed to a fairly high altitude rather far inside our own lines, twisting, turning, and alternately raising and lowering the nose of the plane so as to see better." You never flew straight when you're up in combat area, because if a guy was 6,000 feet higher than you, he could get down right behind you in a few seconds after the last time you looked around. And of course, you couldn't look all the way around. Even young people like we were wouldn't look quite 180 degrees. So we were always going this way, looking.

RH: So you could catch that blind spot. I've got it right here as May 27th when you went with Wentworth.

DC: Ah, ah, "White bursts of anti-aircraft shows over the lines in the middle of our sector." That was something that I don't think maybe people realize it. The anti-aircraft very seldom hit anything in those days. But they were useful to us because the German shells all broke with black smoke; the allied shells, the high explosive shells, broke with black smoke, but the shrapnel shells - oh no, I'm wrong. On both sides, the high explosive shells broke with black smoke, in all directions, smoke. The German shrapnel shells also broke with a white smoke going in all directions. But the allied shrapnel shells broke with the white smoke going off all like in a tube...

RH: Like a tracer.

DC: Yeah, so you could tell which was which. Very often, you know, a small airplane like they were in those days was just a little spec if it was five miles away, you know, and you might not see it. But the anti-aircraft could help you find it. Or if you saw a German anti-aircraft bursting in considerable numbers way off in the distance, you could figure some pal is over there; you had better go over and help him.

"White French bursts of anti-aircraft shows over the line in the middle of our sector. We made a beeline for the place, making a couple of turns now and then, to make sure that there were no Boche planes at higher altitude than the bursts. Now getting close to our objective, we rooted attention on that part of the sky. There was a little yellow jacket with black wings and orange body circling around among the shrapnel bursts. That's an albatross, there's another one, the third and two further down - five in all.

The nearest one of the top three was the best target for he was separated from the rest, and possibly he doesn't see me. Down goes my nose for a dive with the motor singing with increased speed, and the wires whistling. I'm 300 meters from him now and he doesn't - oh yes, he does see me and puts himself in a spin before I shoot. I'm in a vertical dive over him and put a few shots in his direction, although it's not much of a chance to hit. Don't follow him down too far ol' boy, because the other two are just waiting for that. I pull out of the dive, and my speed carries me up two or three hundred meters that I lost. There are the other two of the upper three, just turning to run into Germany." Well, everything that was on the other side of the line, we called Germany. "I'm pretty close now, and the rear one turns over on his back in a pretty renversement and dives. I guess I'm supposed to follow him, so the other one can turn and dive on me, but I'll just keep chasing the one that's left and see what happens. John is back there, will take care of the first one if he tries to come up at me. Getting within fifty meters, I lean on the trigger and see tracers hitting the Boche machine. He turns and dives at the same time, and I try to keep the tracers hitting him, but I have to break all the principles of aerial flight to do it. Now he's staying, and I don't know where the other two Boche are or where John is, but those other two allied planes that I saw just before the fight must be here by this time. So I'll climb up and out of the maylay to get a comprehensive view of it. The comprehensive view shows four Boche clipping their Mercedes motors so they will carry them home a little faster and three Americans running after them hell bent for election. The fifth Boche seems to be, oh, for the love of Ike, what's that down there? It looks like a piece of Boche wing fluttering down, and there's another piece, and way down there the body, with a couple of stumps of wing on it, giving the pilot the fastest and shortest, and most unfortunate ride he ever had. Though probably he has been shot and doesn't know it. That last one I shot must have been rendered unconscious and gone into a spin with full motor which could easily overstrain the wings. The Boche are too low and too far back now and the Americans have turned back, so I pick up John and we go home."

RH: And that's it.

DC: Then the next day, the 28th, Rick and I, "Rickenbacker and I found six enemy planes and attacked. Four of them ran away and we fired at one of the others simultaneously, making him spin down and crash into the wood on the German side of the trenches. The other one tried to play a decoy for the four who were waiting behind their lines, but we didn't bite. Rickenbacker got credit for that one."

Now, Wednesday morning, whenever that was, I had the pleasure of saving an English plane and the lives of a pilot and gunner. "A group of British bombers had gone far into Germany before daylight and one of them got separated from the bunch on the way

home. I was patrolling the lines at eight a.m. and saw a plane coming out of Germany with two Boche on his tail. He was in a bad way and I dived on the enemy just in time, for the pilot was already wounded; the Huns ran away. That afternoon I received a very nice message of thanks from the British squadron. I may have gotten that one, but I never knew. I barely started shooting when he dived suddenly. I was facing the sun and I couldn't see where my tracer bullets were going, so I never claimed it. I reported it."

Well, oh Thursday was the 31st. No, Friday was the 31st. "Thursday morning, about four of us had to mix up with five Huns, but without results. Friday, I found two bi-place observation planes on this side of our lines and had a fight with one of them. We maneuvered all over each other for about five minutes, and we got our shot away all his ammunition without hitting me. Then I brought him down inside our third line trenches, together with the troops, for, he tore up his map and stood up to take his medicine." I really didn't like to shoot him in cold blood like that, but he had been taking pictures of positions for an hour. You don't...

RH: You don't question him.

DC: War isn't like that. They very often speak about chivalry between allied and German pilots, but when you were up there, there wasn't any. The only thing we really did for each other was every once in a while they would drop a note over and tell us when one of our guys were captured or dead. I did the same thing for them one time.

RH: That was basically...

DC: Put a sandbag with a big long streamer, bright ribbon on it, tossed it, went pretty far back and tossed it over the side. But, I have to be damned careful, they might shoot me down while I was doing it. They didn't know why I was over there.

RH: That's right. And you were taking a big chance by going that far in the line.

DC: They were expecting me to be doing something less pleasant.

RH: You're right though, it's usually mentioned about the chivalry and such as what went on. I guess in some cases opportunities were there. You know, if he hadn't taken those pictures over the lines it may have been a different story.

DC: Well, no. You're up there to get - well, I don't know. He wouldn't turn around and go back. He was trying to get home with his pictures.

RH: Well, then you had no choice.

DC: Chambers and Taylor back later on, I think long about October, got a German plane to land, an observation plane and forced it down. There were two of them. They'd get in front of it whenever it started to go toward Germany. Well, the war was almost over then and I guess the Germans knew it; they weren't as scrappy, maybe, as they had been

RH: Now, that would have been the only other thing that, you know, if you had someone else there, you could have easily brought him down, captured him.

DC: Well then, let's see, you got anything on Willard Hill? Joe Hill, we called him.

RH: No, but go ahead.

DC: He got badly wounded on Monday [June 3rd], whenever that was. Friday was the 31st. "A bullet of the armor piercing type split up on the seat of his plane and tore a big hole in the flesh of the tire. He landed alright, just this side of an entrenchment, was taken to the hospital, he was getting on but was layed up for some time." He was pretty well crippled for life. "He was lucky though, there were about twenty-five bullet holes in his airplane. We figured that one of them missed his cheek by two inches."

RH: Wow! I have something here on June 2nd, about Davis being killed.

DC: Oh yeah. Well I've got something here. It's not in these letters, but in 1919, the secretary of his Harvard class - they were having a reunion - he wrote me and wanted to know if I could give him some particulars about Davis. "On June 2nd, just after lunch, I led a patrol of four Nieuport single-seaters over the lines to protect a group of British bombers on their return journey from the factory town down the Moselle Valley. Over Thiaucourt, we attacked seven albatross Pflaz single-seaters and had a lively dog fight for about five minutes, under which the Huns withdrew. Early in combat, I had noticed Bill being enticed under the main flight by a Hun he was attacking, but lost sight of him a moment later. After the Huns left, he was still with us, but just as our formation was getting together to continue our patrol, he burst into flames - probably from the delayed reaction of an incendiary bullet which was lodged somewhere in his machine. From our altitude of 2500 meters, he had no chance of getting down before being burned to a crisp. All we could do was sit there and watch him suffer. He retained control of his machine until he was down 800 meters from the ground, but at that point, it fell hopelessly out of control and crashed a couple of miles west of Thiaucourt in a massive flame of smoke."

RH: Yes, indeed, that's a fact. Lord. That'd be a rough way.

DC: Then on June 5th, I got too careless. "At nine a.m., I took to the air and had been up only ten minutes when I saw a boche far in our territory, at great altitude. It took about fifteen or twenty minutes to climb up to him. And then we had a fight. He was a bi-place, but did some fine maneuvering and I did some poor shooting. So, between the two, he got away. Then almost immediately, I saw another machine of the same type at a high altitude and went after him. Again it was a case of good maneuvering on his part. We fought some 5,200 meters all the way down to 500. He had a jam apparently, about halfway through the flight, and so just at the end, I approached him from a dangerous angle. He had fixed the jam however, and shot at me as I turned away, putting about eight bullets in my airplane. I heard a loud crashing sound. I felt myself hit in the back. It appears that the bullet struck a wire just behind me and one of the fragments lodged in the flesh in my back. Fortunately, it didn't disable me in flying and I made a beeline for home, landing safely. Inside a half an hour, the bullet had been located by X-ray. I kicked against taking ether, so they used cocaine for local anesthesia, and I never felt a thing. The wound was perfectly clean and they sewed it up tight." And so I never got back again. I went on leave after I got out of the hospital down at Beritz. I succeeded in getting tomamine poisoning down there. It held me a couple weeks. When I was headed back for the squadron, well all officers who were, what they call, casual officers who were not with a unit had to report in at a certain place. When I got there, they told me I had to go to the United States and get some advice on training. I couldn't get out of it. I think I wept plenty from a lawyer's office when he told me. It may have saved my life.

RH: Yeah, you never know.

DC: It probably did.

RH: You never know. Let's see, well we mentioned the fifth victory, didn't we?

DC: The fifth was on the 31st. This was the sixth. Well, I got credit for this because I apparently put an engine out of commission. He landed in no man's land when the artillery finished him off.

RH: Yeah, disintegrated what was left.

DC: That was number six.

RH: The work that you did in the United States, then the training?

DC: Well, no, they wanted me to give them some pointers on some training, suggestions or something, because they couldn't understand why the guys had had primary training here, and what they considered a little more than primary training, had to have secondary training again when they got over there. So I was in Washington for a week or two, then they sent me out to San Diego for the air service. Still the Aviation Section of the Signal Corp at a big school in North Island. The training program was better than anything I'd ever been through, but they were flying the Jennys, you just can't maneuver.

RH: Which I'm surprised, of course I'm sure they needed them at the front, but...

DC: I almost did myself in once out there. I thought well, they'd go out over the Pacific Ocean and shoot at these three balloons, you know. So, I tried that one day to see, I dived on one and, God damn it, I almost couldn't pull it out. I had to take both hands and brace my feet on the rudder bar and put my back into it. So how are you going to teach people to combat?

RH: Really, when they can't do that.

DC: Then I went back to Washington - I don't know, red tape or something - and they - it took me over a month to get them to order me back to the squadron. I didn't get on a boat until the eighth of November, I think it was.

RH: Oh, so that put you in the ocean when it was all over.

DC: I went and joined the squadron. I had to go A-W-O-L to do it. Nobody cared; the war was over.

RH: Yeah, they...

RH: Why didn't they send maybe a couple of Nieuport 28's back to our training section? I seems to me that would have been a good move, because we had Jennys back at Pancho Villa's time, at this time when we were doing that, and they were worthless then.

DC: Well, I don't know. I don't know why they didn't. The French military air attach

in Washington had an older Nieuport. It was type 27 there, which I flew a few times just for fun while I was there. I don't know why they didn't do that. It couldn't have been shipping space. Shipping space was awfully tight going east, but coming west it was empty. I don't know why they didn't. Oh well, I don't think very many Nieuport 28's were made, since the French didn't use them at the front and then the Americans changed. They were probably all the ones available were used in flying schools over there. I'm sure they must have sent a lot of them Issoudun.

RH: Oh, sure, because the 28 was probably a better performer than say the 27 was.

DC: Yeah, it was faster, except for this fabric coming off, which wouldn't have been too good for acrobatic field. It was strong enough. I always thought, it was strong enough for a pilot who, by nature understood forces. But there were some who didn't and just threw airplanes around. There are always people like that. Well, you know people drive a car sometimes, they speed it up and put the break on. They don't have any feeling for the machine.

RH: They abuse it and in turn it will collapse on them. That's a pity.

DC: I have a picture there over the piano of that April 14th combat, which was painted by a French guy who was one of the French instructors, flying instructors, sent to Issoudun when we first started. We got six or eight French instructors to start the thing off. He was one of them. He was also a painter and after the war, I think through Jim Hall, who contacted him and was going to have some of his combats painted - through Jim Hall giving him information about this April 14th combat, and he painted a picture of it, which is quite good really. He got out his regular flying maps and he got the roads and the woods and...

RH: Everything's accurate.

DC: Fairly accurate. Not completely.

RH: I'll have to see that. I'd like to see it. I'll have to take a look at it. I've got some questions that I pulled out of Major Hartney's book on Up and At Them, that I thought might be interesting on social life and things like this that I would like to put into my thesis to try to give it more than just details to it.

Flight discoveries, well, you mentioned Lufbery's training technique and how he took you all up and would show you things in the air.

DC: Well, he would show us how. Of course, he couldn't talk to us. There was no communication between airplanes or between airplane and ground. But he would take us up and we would follow him. The instructions were stick with him, don't leave him. Follow him. If he leaves the combat, he may have good reason for it. And then when we got back down he would tell us why he had done this and why he had done that. I don't know whether you've read somewhere or whether - a lot of people, I don't think, realize that one of the things you had to learn to do was how to see airplanes. You know, as I say a small airplane some distance off was just a spec. If it's a German you want to know it's there. You may have noticed or tried some time, if you're focusing on a point over there, say you're looking in the clouds to see if you can see an airplane around it, and there's one off here, you won't see it. But if you don't focus and just stare around with a vacant stare like this, anything that moves, you'll see it right away. And you have to learn to do that.

RH: That's interesting.

DC: There were a lot of guys who probably would have had fine records if they had sheer good luck, if they had lived through enough patrols so they could learn that.

RH: Learn that perception to be able to do that. That's interesting. That's worth noting. How close together did the pilots become in the 94th? Were they pretty close?

DC: What?

RH: How close together, as far as...

DC: Friendship you mean?

RH: Exactly.

DC: It was a close knit group. Well, we kept in touch with each other by letters and things for three or four years after the war. Then we sort of had our - doing our own thing and lost track of each other. But later on, long around the fifties, after World War II, we got - some of us got together every once in a while. I still correspond with two of them. There are only about four besides myself still alive. Eddie Green and Bob Katz. Eddie Green is the only guy who was a pilot when we started on April 14th who is still alive besides myself. Katz came up in June I think. Eddie Rickenbacker, well, I didn't see very much of for years. We were both in the airline business and I used to bump into him in Washington sometimes. Sometimes we were on different sides of the

fence with the Civil Aeronautics Board. But after we were both retired, we used to get together three or four times a year and have lunch. Reed Chambers too, but he died before Eddie. He died in '72, I think. Eddie died in '73. Eddie Green I still hear from every once in a while. He became the architect for the state of Pennsylvania. He did a lot of their buildings.

RH: I had written a letter to Eddie.

DC: He lives in a place near Harrisburg, in a place called Dalphne - Sasquehane River.

RH: I had written to him and tried to get his phone number to call him, but I had never gotten a reply from the letter.

DC: We were a pretty close knit bunch. Well, if you had been through that kind of thing you would have a bond, you know.

RH: I would think so, I would definitely think so. Of course he mentioned in there the need for, in the air, unity and a smooth chain, kind of like coordination.

DC: Yeah, but that was pretty hard when you couldn't communicate with each other. You could figure out before hand what the squad - if it was a big group like all three flight of the squadron on the same patrol - you could figure out before hand what sort of formation you were going to go into combat with. But once things got milling around, you were pretty much on your own. I would try to follow what was planned, but maybe the plan wasn't any good.

RH: Maybe it was time to improvise.

DC: You couldn't even holler at a guy and say, "Hey, there's somebody about to shoot at you." You had to watch.

RH: No that's right. You had to watch. You had to be on your toes. That was one thing I was going to ask about - the individualism in a dog fight, and you just answered that.

DC: Well, I was never - since I was wounded in June, it was a pretty quiet sector where we were, you know, that Toul sector. I never really got into one of those big ones that they had later where the whole squadron or several squadrons were involved. I never got into one of those. So I really can't give you much information about that. From

what I heard, they got to be pretty much of a rat race.

RH: Yeah, they got really tough for a while there.

DC: They call it "rat fucking" in those days.

RH: Did the engineers from factories ever come down to look at different problems or anything like that?

DC: I don't know.

RH: I didn't know - he mentioned the need for that in there.

DC: Well, every squadron had its engineering officer, some of them may have had two, I don't know. We had a gunnery officer. But how much, whether they got in contact with the Nieuport people or the Spad people, I don't know. The pilots in the squadron didn't pay much attention to that. The company was taking care of their - you ...

RH: You were aware of it...

DC: You knew your crew was doing the work and keeping it up. In every airplane, you took it and flew it and fought and when you came back on the ground somebody else's job to get it ready for the next time. One interesting thing, I don't know whether anyone explained much, the ammunition that was made for these machine guns was - manufactured ammunition was not quite accurate. I think, I guess there were two gunnery mechanics for each flight with six planes, maybe there were three. I don't remember. Between patrols, every cartridge that they were going to put in the chain of cartridges, they tested the flange and the slit of the neck of the machine gun, you are going to catch hold of and pull it out, because otherwise, some of them that were too big and would stick in the chamber when they were fired. Others, if they were too small, would split and stick, or if this flange was too thick, it wouldn't eject and then you were stuck. So that every cartridge was tested before it was put into the ammunition belt. It wasn't really a belt, it was a chain which had little aluminum links and each cartridge was the pin that held the two links together. So that when you fired your gun, both the empty cartridge and the links would fall through a shoot over the side.

RH: That's interesting. Because most people, like you say, feel that it is some type of belt.

DC: Well, the infantry had a canvas belt for these Vickers machine guns, but in the airplanes it was a chain that the cartridges themselves held together.

RH: Let's see, what else have I got here? Were you there when Foulois and Lamb came by on their inspection?

DC: When what?

RH: When General Foulois and Colonel Lamb came by?

DC: I don't think so. I can tell you a funny story about Issoudun though.

RH: Go ahead.

DC: This was back in October 1917. One day just after lunch, General Pershing showed up unannounced. That was the time when the Royal Flying Carpenters had just finished their barracks and were occupying it. They were still a little sore about having to work this menial work. It was after lunch and they were having a rest period and so then, most of them were in their bunks in this barrack, when suddenly General Pershing, accompanied by Jim Miller, who was then the commander of the post, appeared at the door. Captain Miller said, "Attention!" You know, because everybody jumped out of their bunks and stood up at attention on the floor, except one guy way back in the far corner who couldn't see what was going on. In that moment of silence, when everybody was at attention, his voice came out of the corner shouting, "Who in the hell for?" Pershing was not amused.

RH: No, I could imagine that he wasn't. "Who in the hell for?" That's good. Let's see. We talked about the May 7th patrol with Edwin Green. That was the last one for Hall.

DC: Oh, no, I wasn't on that one.

RH: Yeah, okay.

DC: That was Green, Rickenbacker, and Hall.

RH: I guess that's it. I was trying to think of...

END OF INTERVIEW *****