Joanne Wallace Orr

An Oral History

Women Airforce Service Pilots
Oral History Project

Interviewed by Jean Hascall Cole

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Introduction

Joanne Wallace Orr grew up in Longmeadow, Massachusetts, and New York. Before joining the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), she worked as a fashion model in New York and traveled in Europe during her summer vacations. She joined the WASP as part of class 44-W-2, which began training at Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas, in September 1943. Their class was one of the few that got to choose their assignments after graduation. Although personally asked by Jacqueline Cochran to enter B-26 school, she wanted to fulfill her dream of being in the Ferry Command, so she chose to be stationed at New Castle Army Air Base in Wilmington, Delaware.

As a ferry pilot, Joanne led a very busy life. She flew many different types of planes including bombers and pursuits across the continental United States. In addition to New Castle Army Air Base, she served at the following: Fairfax Field in Kansas City, Missouri, Romulus Army Air Base in Romulus, Michigan, Long Beach Army Air Base in Long Beach, California, and Love Field in Dallas, Texas. She also attended pursuit school in Brownsville, Texas, and checked out in nine pursuit planes.

Joanne married Robert D. Orr in December of 1944 a few days before the WASP were officially deactivated on December 20, 1944. They had three children. Her husband served as governor of Illinois from 1981-1989, and as an ambassador to Singapore from 1989-1992.

Joanne Wallace Orr
Women Airforce Service Pilots
Class 44-W-2

WASP Class 44-W-2 at Avenger Field, Sweetwater, Texas.

Joanne Wallace, Ruth Woods, Lorraine Zillner, Ruth Weller, Joan Whelan, and Phyllis Tobias.

Joanne Wallace Orr

An Oral History
Women Airforce Service Pilots
Class of 44-W-2

Interviewed by Jean Hascall Cole

This is an interview conducted with Joanne Wallace Orr, Class 44-W-2.

Orr: Do you want the story about going to the—I don't know what year it was.

Cole: I can give you a sample of how I—some little questions I use—but you know that isn't very important really.

Orr: I want you to research what year this would be. They opened the exhibit at the Pentagon. Because at that time, due to the fact, obviously, that my husband was the Governor of Indiana, they sent a plane for me to officiate at the opening of the WASP exhibit at the Pentagon. I couldn't have been—and that was very hard for me to pretend because I just couldn't have been more disappointed at our display. It was so minute—all the emphasis for the women at the corridor is specifically to honor women in the service in World War II. So they really concentrated on the nurses, and after that the WACs and a little of the WAVEs, and the WASP was just a little, tiny exhibit with our dress uniform; and no—

Cole: Not on a model or anything? Just the uniform?

Orr: I think it was on a model. It doesn't matter; that's all that was there.

Cole: Yeah.

Orr: It was very disappointing. And I had to—what was hard for me was to pretend how pleased I was and how great it was, when it was absolutely, totally invisible. And it didn't show what we did and it didn't list our services. It didn't list the fact that we are—were in all phases of the—all branches of what was then called the Army Air Corps. Before, you see, it became—the Air Force became its own service with its own academy. You probably don't go into all that on these.

Cole: Well, you know, just all the basic facts.

Orr: I mean everybody has to be aware that when the WASP were flying there was no United States Air Corps; they were Army Airforce.

Cole: That's right—Army Airforce.

Orr: And also they should be aware that we were a member of the BOQ and we were treated like officers, whereas we were civilian pilots. And it gives me an opportunity to

bring up the fact that I very much want to emphasize that the truth of this WASP being regular service has never, ever come out—the part where—my first assignment was Wilmington, Delaware, New Castle Army Air Base—NCAAB. And I remember the shock I had talking to some older women who said that they wanted to be civilian pilots because that gave them the privilege of getting up and getting married. And all I could think of at the time was the money that was being spent to train us, and what a great opportunity it was—and how lucky we were. And to hear someone say they were just like that—they loved having civilian status so they could get out and get married. That's never been—and I've had to fight—because of my position politically I was besieged with telephone calls and telegrams from Washington, D.C. to come and say—to come and testify about how badly we'd been treated. And we were never badly treated. And I know—

Cole: Some individuals in individual situations.

Orr: Of course, there's always that. But overall—and I've read about how awful it was that we gave our lives and did all this service and were never honored for it. Because to me that was the biggest bunch of bull—I served in four ferry posts—and of course I don't need to name them because everybody knows what they are.

Cole: Yes, I have them.

Orr: If you want me to name them: Wilmington, Romulus, Love Field and Long Beach, California, were our four ferry posts. And I served at all of them, and Wilmington, Delaware, Newcastle Army Air Base twice. And flew—was checked out on all the bombers and the word came through that all WASP who were ferry pilots had to go to pursuit school and fly pursuit or get out of the ferry command. That's all—

Cole: Ferry pilots?

Orr: I mean, hasn't all of this come up in your interviews?

Cole: No. No. See there are a lot of things that haven't come up.

Orr: I mean this is the most basic thing. God, it's lucky we're talking because—

Cole: That's why I was saying I know you have information—

Orr: Because where was I stationed, I think—I'm guessing, thirty-three of us—I don't mean thirty-three. Twelve of us were sent to the 33rd ferry division in Kansas City, Missouri, Fairfax Field. It was the oldest ferry division in the United States. And they heard that these WASP were coming, and they all, you know, it was a typical stampede. You know, the world had come to an end. Is this the kind of thing?

Cole: Yes. I get—

Orr: The world had come to an end because women were coming. Well, I was in luck on many accounts. I was tall to begin with, and so they—you know, I was—they thought there was somebody that could obviously fly a B-25. But I knew one of the men who was a member of the division, his name was Howie Johnson. I had known him growing up in Massachusetts. And so he asked me to be his copilot, but his reservation was so interesting. I forget what I had flown at the time that I got to Kansas City. I obviously had gone way beyond Piper Cubs, which I flew out of Pennsylvania, which we all did.

Cole: That wasn't your first assignment, then Kansas City?

Orr: No, no, no. It was about my third or fourth. See I had been in Wilmington and I had been in other places, and gotten—I was flying Beechcrafts to an engine Beech. And I had flown—I hadn't flown a pursuit, but I was—it was early on in my war experience. So he took off, he reached altitude, he trimmed the plane, and he sat—you know you could have put it on George—you know what George is, of course?

Cole: The automatic.

Orr: But you know, he said okay now let's see you fly this. And I said what do you want me to do? And he said just hold your heading and your altitude. Well, I mean—what easier thing could I have been assigned?

Cole: Yeah [Laughter]

Orr: Well, he said I'll be darned. And then he landed it. But that was my first flight in the B-25. I thought it was so amusing. It showed what they must think of women pilots. Well, I got checked out as first pilot very quickly.

Cole: B-25?

Orr: Uh-huh. The B-25J and the H. The B-25J had a 75mm cannon in the nose and was quite tricky. I mean everybody said you're first pilot on a J? That really brought respect. And I flew a lot of those and I flew them mostly to Savannah, Georgia, where they had the secret equipment put in by the British. The British picked them up from Atlanta.

Cole: I understood that you said at one point that all ferry pilots were supposed to go to pursuit school.

Orr: That's the rule; it came out.

Cole: When was that?

Orr: That was in the middle of my service. It would have been—

Cole: Because not very many—I've asked two—

Orr: I got out the day before the WASP were disbanded. Did you know that? I married Bob Orr on December 14th, and I think it was the 15th or the 16th that the creed or the rule—the announcement was made that the WASP was being disbanded. And I just—you know—grounded, you know, I was just, whew, like all WASP. Well, lord, I could have had two more days flying. You know, I was just frantic to think that I got out and they were being disbanded.

Cole: Think how I felt. You were only two days early.

Orr: Yeah. So in the meantime I had flown three trips—I had made three trips from Newark, New Jersey, to Long Beach, California, ferrying a plane—nobody knew this—without any sleep. I mean I could have really piled up—because I was getting out to get married and I wanted to have all that flying time. We were all crazy—fly, fly, fly. Just couldn't get enough. So I did that. And I can prove it; I can show you I flew from Newark—

Cole: Did you grow in Massachusetts? That's where you—

Orr: Longmeadow, Massachusetts.

Cole: You learned to fly there?

Orr: No. Well, I learned to fly, but you don't call it flying. It's like all those—

Cole: Little planes.

Orr: The forty-niners were the other—

Cole: Ninety-Niners.

Orr: The Ninety-Niners and the other group of women who thought they were such hot pilots. They had the toughest time—this is not recorded either. I never read it anywhere.

Cole: Who else besides the Ninety-Niners?

Orr: Everyone in my class should have talked to you about the fact that—the girls that had the hardest time and washed out the most—maybe I'm not truthful about the most, because there could easily have been another group that was a bigger group washing out than the Ninety-Niners. But the women—and they were older—a lot older than me—who had been flying the longest, and had the worst habits, who had flown races across the country, they could no more do Ss across the road than fly to the moon. They could not do Ss across the road with a ninety-mile—of course you never had that high a wind, but with a twenty-mile an hour crosswind, they could not balance their Ss and hold their altitude without crossing the ball and needle, and they were humiliated. Some of them talked to me, but not many because I was so much younger than they were. They were older women—

Cole: Are you saying they didn't have good training?

Orr: They weren't trained! Who said they were trained?

Cole: Not at all.

Orr: —the seat of their pants! Oh, my god! Their navigation was flying the Hudson River. Flying Highway 41. They weren't trained, but they were very important people. They won races, and they raced, and they ran around pylons, and they could go across country. I'm not saying they went East Coast—they didn't fly from the Atlantic to the Pacific, but your average Ninety-Niner or whatever—I'll be crucified for this—but

Cole: You named another group besides the Ninety-Niners.

Orr: Well, there are two women—the Powder Puff Derby. The women that had flown in the Powder Puff Derby. They were very seasoned, experienced, quote, quote, quote, pilots. And they only thought of themselves in these terms. They came into training at Avenger Field and thought they had the world by the tail, and were looking down on little peons like me who had never flown in a Powder Puff Derby. You got it?

Cole: Uh-huh.

Orr: They simply could not do chandelles and lazy eights, without crossing.

Cole: Some of them washed out?

Orr: Some of them? I think most of them. It was humiliating.

Cole: Nobody else has said that.

Orr: I don't know—let's cross that off the record about most of them because if you would print that it would sound like I'd made a study. It's just my imagination. Be sure you do this right because it's my imagination. But it was my observation that these women who I thought of as being so much older, and they were so experienced, and they were so cocky, just couldn't do—I talked to an instructor of mine. He said I just can't get over, Wallace, what a good job you're doing holding your altitude and your distance with that strong crosswind. And I mean, I was concentrating everything on learning instead of thinking of how I was better than everybody and thinking that everything was a breeze. They just couldn't hack it. Now don't—

Cole: Where did you get your training? Where did you learn to fly? Before you got into pursuit school—

Orr: Stormville. You got this from Madeline.

Cole: Yes. I've got the story of you meeting Madeline too.

Orr: My mother heard about the WASP and we went up to Stormville, New York, which is right across the river from West Point, and where _____[?] Thomas lived, you know in Pawling. It's right near Pawling. Stormville, New York—we flew out of a cornfield. And I—

Cole: You wrote that in the letter to me.

Orr: I hope I wrote something good because I had an instructor named Red.

Cole: You did.

Orr: I never got beyond that for you. I knew that was a colorful story.

Cole: Yes, that was good.

Orr: Because I could just see out two inches here and two inches—I knew I had to turn over a certain tree and a silo and a third thing, see, was where I turned? And then he got out and I could see it; it scared me to death. I'd had my six hours, you're supposed to have eight hours to solo, but he soloed me a—I forget what I wrote to you—

Cole: Six, I think you said.

Orr: It was six or seven hours. I didn't know anything, and I just had this little thing to look out of on each side. Then he was gone and he forgot to adjust the trim tab. It was adjusted for three hundred pounds, and I had started to advance the throttle and the plane is almost—and I thought what am I doing wrong?

Cole: Yeah.

Orr: I didn't know anything. And I kept forcing the plane because I knew it wasn't supposed to takeoff until a certain tree [Laughter]. I always knew that's the place we took off.

Cole: You were already off the ground.

Orr: I was off the ground in one inch. I mean, whew! Why wasn't I killed? I should have been murdered. So then I came in and got down and a storm came up, and I was forcing the stick to hold the plane on the ground—I was on the ground! And a storm came up and the plane just blew up in the air. And everybody's face, I can still see—was just terrified. And I went around, turned over the silo, and turned over the thing, came down the second time, then they all ran out and grabbed the wings.

Cole: Hadn't he told you about the trim tab—

Orr: Never, never. No.

Cole: My god. I did have a good instructor. He wouldn't solo me until eight hours on the button. But anyway, that's another story.

Orr: I could write a book about everything.

Cole: You were young then?

Orr: Yeah, I was—I was born in—I was twenty—42 or 43.

Cole: When you went in you were—you know our class had the highest rate of wash outs because I check them all.

Orr: I thought so. Do you know that I was a Wallace and I was in with the B's? My bay. Ask Madeline. Madeline and I—

Cole: But see, you weren't—

Orr: See I was with W's, and then it shrank and it shrank and it shrank. Until suddenly I caught with M in McConnell—Madeline Sullivan, rather. She was S—so S and W were close. S and W, she was Sullivan. And finally we were down in with the C's and D's when we graduated.

Cole: How did you pass me? I was H, for Hascall. Do you know, only—there were six in our bay; you know they all started out with six in the bay. Do you know our bay stayed five all the way through?

Orr: Really?

Cole: It was Hascall, Harris—Kate Lee Harris—Hawkins—

Orr: Sadie Hawkins?

Cole: Sadie Hawkins was in my bay. And Annelle Henderson that crashed the plane in primary.

Orr: I don't know about her, the only one I know about is Zilch—Zillner.

Cole: I've got her story.

Orr: Was a ballet dancer. I sent that in to you. Did she write her own?

Cole: Oh, yes, I was in Washington to see her.

Orr: —Is better than mine. I would love to someday take—

Cole: I've got all her words in quotes.

Orr: Take a minute and compare her story with my story because I wrote to you about her.

Cole: Yes, you did. And you even mentioned the guy that went out to get the cotton.

Orr: Oh, he went and picked the cotton and brought it to her and said here lady, dry your eyes, you shouldn't cry. She said but oh, that plane!

Cole: See she told me—that one little thing you added—it's funny how you get it all together because that one little thing you added about drying her eyes, she didn't mention that. She said he went and got me a stick of cotton. She didn't say that's what it was for.

Orr: I have a terrific memory. That's why it's good you're interviewing me. I have a terrific memory.

Cole: I'm just thinking that you told me, or I heard, that you had written in this letter that I wanted to clarify. You said—

Orr: That letter was so horrible.

Cole: Oh, no, no.

Orr: But I just couldn't get up to steam, you know.

Cole: You said there were bombers, pursuits and cargo types.

Orr: Yeah.

Cole: And there were four women only who flew all of those three. That you knew them.

Orr: But who are they?

Cole: You're the one who told me.

Orr: I know. But I don't know their names.

Cole: But was that in our class or was that in the whole WASP?

Orr: Total. Nobody in our class. Nobody—see, Madeline, for instance, was in the ferry command—who were the girls in our class in the ferry command besides Tobias?

Cole: I don't—

Orr: Do you have that record?

Cole: I've got that record, yes. Marge Gilbert sent me a lot of stuff—sort of organized.

Orr: Was she in the ferry command?

Cole: No. She was in B-26 school.

Orr: See that's where I was supposed to go with Madeline.

Cole: Oh, and who was it that she—

Orr: Jackie Cochran was so mad at me. She called me—she came down to Sweetwater. And she heard that I was holding out for the ferry command. And she called me in there and she said what's all this, Wallace, about you waiting on the ferry command? I said well—I don't know what I said I'll make up what I said—but I said, you know, we've been told over and over that according to our grades in ground school and flight time that we could get our first choice—according to our grades, flight time and ground school. And this is the first class that opened up for the ferry command in something like three, four, or five classes—

Cole: Yeah.

Orr: and I definitely want to be in the ferry command. But she said you're just what we need for B-26 school. I said I'm sorry. I realize it; I am tall—

Cole: Strong enough to handle that plane—

Orr: Strong—you don't [have] to be strong.

Cole: Yeah, that's true. Let me just take one more—

[BREAK IN TAPE]

Cole: —the only person. She couldn't talk anymore. She couldn't say anything. I want something on her.

Orr: What did she do? What did she do in this war?

Cole: She was with Marie Michell at Love Field.

Orr: What did they do?

Cole: Ferry command.

Orr: Oh.

Cole: Yeah. And she did fine. She has a map of where she went all over the country—ferrying. And she wouldn't tell me anything about Marie Michell either.

Orr: Is she alive?

Cole: Oh, no. Marie Michell was killed in the B-25.

Orr: I don't know these things. See, you know things I don't—

Cole: Well, we had three only—

Orr: It's not like you know things I don't know; you know many things I don't know.

Cole: No. You just haven't looked them up like I have. But right in front of this book—

Orr: I haven't looked up anything.

Cole: It tells who was—I've got them in here—I'll show you—In Memoriam—deceased members by class.

Orr: You look so pretty. I had pictured Jean Cole looking so differently.

Cole: Thank you.

Orr: You look so pretty. I pictured Jean Cole with more of a longer face.

Cole: See that's our deceased members by class. Two of those girls committed suicide in our class.

Orr: I didn't know that.

Cole: Eleanor Patterson—remember Patterson?

Orr: Now I have a daughter named for Susan Clarke, did you know that?

Cole: Yes.

Orr: One of my twins.

Cole: See, Susie was killed and Marie Michell was killed, and Betty Stine—now those are the three in our class.

Orr: What was Betty Stine—

Cole: She was killed on that cross-country, remember? Our cross-country trip is when we lost Betty Stine. She tried to get out of the airplane and I guess her chute got to oscillating and swung her against a cliff—

Orr: Are you kidding?

Cole: And some workmen saw [her] go down and got her, but I think she was dead before she got to the hospital.

Orr: I didn't know any of that.

Cole: So that was when we were there.

Orr: I don't remember that.

Cole: You don't remember that. It's amazing what you—I think I have a good memory, too—and you remember things, but you really sort of remember selectively. There are certain things you don't remember.

Orr: I didn't like her, and that's one of the reasons—because I cross everything out of my mind—

Cole: Yes. You can cross out—

Orr: If I don't like somebody. And I never dislike them enough to talk about it. I mean she never got under my skin. She never did anything against me. She never spoke against me. She never did anything, but I remember just always thinking she was a little—something. I don't know what I'm saying. Is this thing on?

Cole: Yeah, I just turned it on again. I won't say those things. I'll tell you—I probably won't use a lot of this, you understand. I take out parts.

Orr: Oh, yeah. I loved your letter. You said I'm just getting tired of this whole thing; I'm going to have to finish it [Laughter]. I thought, gee whiz that poor woman. She's been working on this thing and giving it her all for what? Two and half years?

Cole: Almost two years. Two years in a couple of months.

Orr: I'm so proud of you.

Cole: But I have an editor who is interested. And I'm still waiting to hear—

Orr: I'm dying to hear about Madeline—what she talked about. I'm so crazy about her.

Cole: Oh, she talked and talked and she was so funny.

Orr: Good.

Cole: She just went on and on and I just—and she was so busy she had to leave to go someplace. I had to run back out to the car and get another tape and bring it back in, and she kept talking and talking and she was going to make us some tea. She went out and turned on the hot water, and then she came back and kept talking; the kettle burned. She ran out and turned it off, came back, and I never got any tea. Then her husband came in—

Orr: He's a doll.

Cole: Yeah, he started to say something and she was like this [Gesturing] go away, go away.

Orr: He came to visit us. He just adored my husband and vice versa.

Cole: Oh, that's nice.

Orr: But she's so protective of him—Jerry.

Cole: Is she?

Orr: Yeah, I tried to get her to come. And she went to Hong Kong, but she won't come to Singapore. She's had a lot of—she's lived—she's had children that have lived in Hong Kong and she was down there last fall. Somebody got married, and she just won't take the extra dip and come to Singapore. So I haven't—

Cole: Well, I drove to her home in Menlo Park. I remember the traffic was terrible.

Orr: You're such a good sport.

Cole: You know, somebody talked me into this and they said it should be done. Did you watch_____[?] Charleston?

Orr: We saw each other, but—

Cole: You were sitting in the chair with a drink.

Orr: But I was so disappointed in Charleston—about the women at Charleston. I saw that in the picture in the paper. They all were in slacks and weighed about three hundred pounds.

Cole: There were some heavy ones.

Orr: Somebody turned to me and said would you believe these women were the cream of the crop when we were in the WASP. And I said it's really hard to believe.

Cole: We all get old. You know, I grew up right down here in Rutland.

Orr: That's so neat that your sister is here.

Cole: She's still in Rutland. You know Vermonters—we just stay forever. Well, let me see. The other things I want—you were first assigned, then—who was it I talked to and said—I will love her forever, Jo Wallace, because I was the last one and I was able to get into B-26 school because she didn't. Was it Toby?

Orr: Couldn't have been Toby. Toby was in the ferry command with me because—she was from Kansas City with me in the 33rd ferry group. We shared a house. That was the most amazing experience of my life. There was a doctor that really was crazy—a doctor in the Air Corps, and he died, and his widow took in pilots. And she said Toby and I could live with her. I had a suite upstairs with a bedroom, sitting room, porch, bathroom and all music—wonderful sound equipment to play records. And it was a great experience. I didn't see any of Toby; she had her own suite in this house. We saw very little of each other, and when I'd come home on the table in the hall [there] would be just this whole array of keys for Jo Wallace—all from officers in Leavenworth—I'd just keep meeting them and they'd go off on a trip and leave their car for me. And so there'd be a line up of all these cars every time I came home. I could just pick any car, but of course, I was always off flying. I remember all those keys and all those cars and all those guys.

Cole: Who else was there with you? Now, you're talking about Kansas City.

Orr: Yeah. This is Kansas City.

Cole: Toby?

Orr: I don't know!

Cole: You don't remember the others.

Orr: No! We don't have a picture.

Cole: That's another thing I want to see. Do you have any photos with you—you might send me some.

Orr: Sure. I have a picture of me in my uniform.

Cole: That would be nice.

Orr: And I have a picture that Bob has at Avenger Field in a zoot suit leaning against a plane that he adores. It's very flattering.

Cole: That might be nice.

Orr: I like it because it's flattering—because I look so young.

Cole: I would like this because several people mentioned you in—

Orr: I don't know why because I hadn't hit my stride then. I was very—I don't picture that I was anybody much until I got out of the Air Corps. Although I suppose it was molding me—the experiences that I had. For instance, I was on temporary duty in Wichita three times flying the twin engine Beech. Did you ever fly one?

Cole: No.

Orr: Well, it was the most popular plane in the Air Corps. And it was the CO's plane. Every CO, that's commanding officer, at every field, every field in the United States, they put in an order for a twin engine Beech. It was solid—a 10 I think it was called—a C-10.

Cole: Oh, an AT-10? There were AT-10's and 11's that were small twin engines.

Orr: Twin engine Beech—it was a C-45. It was called a C-45, which was cargo. But it was a staff plane. Every CO wanted that plane to impress people to pick up and take—and when I would deliver these planes, these men, the commanding officer of every field, would demand to see me and want me to go to the Army-Navy game or go to a ball, or go to Canada with them, or go somewhere with them because they were so excited to finally get that plane. I was sort of like—I had nothing to do with it.

Cole: You delivered it.

Orr: I just delivered it. The Navy sent two men to deliver these planes, and the Army sent one woman. That made you feel good. I think it was during this period that I probably developed a great deal. Although I had been to Europe every summer growing up and lived in New York, and modeled, and was very sophisticated—worldly was the word you used. I didn't feel that way. When I'd lived in Boston, lived in New York and was very involved with the arts, but I think having these experiences in the Air Corps probably contributed—

Cole: Let's see—what you're saying—the C-45 is a cargo plane. The C-47 was also a cargo plane.

Orr: No, a C-47, sweetie, is a Douglas. I delivered Douglas planes—

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGINNING OF TAPE 1, SIDE B]

Orr: I flew them all. I flew them out of Norman Field in Oklahoma where they were made. And I flew new ones and I flew war wearies[?] I remember delivering a plane that had been in the European theater that was assigned—that three men turned down because the gear was not functioning. And my creed was I'll take anything. I'll show them. I think all of us women felt that way.

Cole: Oh, yeah.

[BREAK IN TAPE]

Cole: Now, when you went to pursuit school, was there just one pursuit school?

Orr: Yes.

Cole: No—there in Gainesville, Texas—

Orr: Brownsville, Texas.

Cole: Ruth Adams, was she there when you were there?

Orr: No, there wasn't any other WASP.

Cole: See, she went to Brownsville, to pursuit school. She flew 51s, 39s, 40s and 47s.

Orr: That's Bell. 47 was out of Birmingdale, Long Island.

Cole: But I meant overall.

Orr: That's the Thunderbolt. I checked out of nine.

Cole: Pursuits?

Orr: Pursuits. There were only nine.

Cole: Let's see you name them.

Orr: I've never tried. [Laughter]

Cole: Well?

Orr: I couldn't possibly. You'll have to get the record and check on—

Cole: I can check on that.

Orr: But you named a good many of them because there was the—

Cole: The 51 was the—

Orr: —the Mustang. The 51 was the Mustang.

Cole: That was dangerous according to Ruth Adams. She said they were not—

Orr: Oh—I flew the B and the C and D Mustang. They had a cute, little square wing.

Cole: Uh-huh.

Orr: But it wasn't the Mustang; it was the—maybe it was the Mustang—the tech orders read that the plane was so fared—do you know what that means?

Cole: No, not really.

Orr: That's f-a-r-e-d.

Cole: Yeah. I know the word, and I know—

Orr: Well, the plane—the wing was so fared that if you put an 80th of an inch of wire, stretched a wire across the wing, the plane wouldn't take off. I remember that just as if it was I'd read it yesterday.

Cole: Why?

Orr: Why? Well, it was so finely tuned. The wing was so fared that if you stretched an 80th of an inch of—

Cole: Oh, I see.

Orr: —wire across the wing it wouldn't takeoff because it would disturb the airflow.

Cole: Well, she said at one time they had orders to because they'd been catching fire on takeoff.

Orr: I didn't know that.

Cole: No. Not catching fire on takeoff. They had been stopping—

Orr: It was the P-47 that was so combustible.

Cole: —quitting on takeoff.

Orr: That I had my accident in.

Cole: The 47?

Orr: Uh-huh. In Stormville—I mean at Brownsville. I crushed all these teeth in.

Cole: Tell me about that.

Orr: Because the tech orders read that the plane was so combustible that—

Cole: The 47?

Orr: Uh-huh. The 47, the Thunderbolt. Very high wind. And it caught on fire. A male pilot taxied across the runway in front of me when I was cleared for takeoff. I missed killing the pilot by about two inches at the most. I sheared his whole engine off. My tail way was up—I had ninety inches of mercury, and my tail way was up. And this pilot taxied across—see they wanted to condemn the woman pilot. But the tower had the recording that I was cleared for takeoff, but they didn't do a thing to the male pilot.

Cole: Of course not.

Orr: They had the recording in the tower that I was cleared for—my tail way was up. Okay. So my plane burst into flames and I could see these men coming—running, but they wouldn't come near me. And I couldn't get my—I got my earphones off, and my throat mic. But I couldn't—oh, I got everything off—I couldn't open the hatch. That was it. And it was just getting bright orange, and I was starting to cook. And I just fought and I fought to open that hatch, and these men were standing there—wouldn't come near me to get me out.

Cole: Afraid it was going to blow up.

Orr: Yes! I finally got it open. Tore everything off. Got out on the wing and fell onto the tar—what is it they call it—tar? The runway. And of course, got off—but my teeth had been pushed in by the gun sight. You see when you are taking off in a pursuit, you have—your straps are in an unlocked position. I had my straps on, of course, and the seatbelt. But they're unlocked—remember the last thing you do at takeoff is throw this lever that says "lock" then your shoulders are locked against the back of the seat. You have to put it in "unlock" to lean forward and make your last minute arrangements like lock your tail wheel or whatever has to be done prior to that moment that you takeoff, and then you're supposed to put it in lock. Well, mine was in unlock. Well, I'm training, who thinks, you know, it was my fault. So I was thrown forward and hit my teeth on the gun sight, which is a black, raw piece of metal that was just raw that the gun sight sat on right in front of you. And so I hit—oh my god, I was so upset about my teeth. But I thought my nose had been smashed. I had the two biggest black eyes—that's when I met Mrs. Orr for the first time. I went—

Cole: Did they get you away from that airplane? Or did you just get yourself away.

Orr: Well, I fell to the ground. It's a very high wind. I fell and then those "brave" men came and picked me up and put me in a car and took me to the infirmary. Where I apparently kept saying, where's my nose? I thought my nose was gone.

Cole: It probably hurt.

Orr: It didn't hurt; it was gone. It was numb.

Cole: Squashed in?

Orr: It wasn't anything. I just couldn't find it. It was just absolutely numb from fantastic—

Cole: Did they have an investigation then of that accident?

Orr: No. It was dropped because he was a man and I was a woman.

Cole: That's amazing.

Orr: Oh, yeah. Everyone in Brownsville knew about it—

Cole: Ruth had an accident in a 47 too. She hit a tree on takeoff.

Orr: Oh.

Cole: It didn't develop enough power.

Orr: It hit a tree? You mean she didn't go off the runway and hit a tree.

Cole: No, it was just not climbing fast enough.

Orr: Oh, you mean after takeoff. I thought you said on takeoff.

Cole: No, she got it up and came around, and—

Orr: Oh, my first flight in a P-40—is what the Flying Tigers flew, you know.

Cole: Uh-huh.

Orr: They used to paint the tiger on the face, and it's the only airplane whose hydraulic system only—because it's an electric system—only runs when you press the electric toggle switch that's below the gun, or above the gun, you know, on your stick. You have the press to fire the gun, and another one you press so that when you takeoff in this P-40, in order to up the gear and flaps, you have to up the gear and flaps, see gear, flaps but then they don't move until you press the electric—connect—circuit to go through the

system. To do the job. And you know, it was my first flight in a pursuit, and you don't fly a buddy system in the pursuit.

Cole: No.

Orr: And I'm all alone, and I'm heading on a south p-setting to Mexico, and the one thing they told us in class was never—you want to write this?—was never—under any circumstances—ever have a forced landing in Mexico because they put you in jail and they won't let you out. And I'm on a south p-setting, heading for Mexico. And I've upped the gear and upped the flaps, and I'm sitting there and the cylinder head temperature is going up—well, it's out of the orbit! And I'm just clipping the tops of the trees. When you said she clipped the tree that made me think about this.

Cole: Yeah.

Orr: And I'm heading for Mexico City—

Cole: You didn't get enough—

Orr: And I pulled out the instructions—what to do your first—I mean what—the emergency instructions. And I had to hand pump the gear. And on the P-40 they have a thing called pop-ups on the wings that are color-coded. The pop-ups are like little sticks. And they show you the degree your gear is up or down. When the gear is up, they're flush. So I'm looking out at these pop-ups and the cylinder head temperature, and I think, well I'm going to crash in Mexico and go to jail. Never did I think about this electric switch.

Cole: Oh, you didn't push that—

Orr: Well, that's the point of the story. That's the whole point of the story—is that I'm so upset about the cylinder head temperature and the pop-ups and the gear being down—and I carefully gear up, you know, which you just automatically do on takeoff when the plane leaves the ground. So I'm over the Gulf of Mexico. And I'm working like a dog—I'm still over Mexico—and finally the pop-ups are flush, the gear is up, and the plane just brings up and the cylinder head temperature starts to go down, and my flaps are up. So I climb up and reach an altitude whatever it says your first hour in pursuit. I pulled out the sheet. Climb to such-and-such altitude and practice simulated approach and landings up in the—oh my god, I would never let the gear down and have to crank it up again. And I'm sitting there and I'm on bearing [?] and feeling the plane, and all of sudden it comes to me: the electric switch. So I put the gear—reduce speed, get way slow, and put the gear down and press the electric and down comes the gear and up come the pop-ups. And I'm sitting up there at eight thousand feet—look just like a Cheshire cat. But what a close call!

Cole: Wouldn't that be scary.

Orr: Well, because I could've crashed if I didn't finally—I was so strong I was able to pump that gear up manually. I feel like crying—I mean it was really dramatic.

Cole: You didn't even have to tell anybody about that really, did you?

Orr: Never. Never! I felt so ashamed.

Cole: Well, did you have other crashes or other close calls?

Orr: Yeah. Yeah, I did. I was such a cowboy. We had a group of us—where were we stationed? I don't think it was the group in Kansas City. It was in Independence, Missouri, near Truman's home. And they had this whole bunch of—what were the planes? I don't know if they were pursuits—they weren't bombers, of course. They were not bombers. But there was a group of planes they wanted to ground and put in mothballs in this field in the middle of Kansas. And a group of six of us—it was so boring. We'd fly the plane down—I forget where we were—it would help wouldn't it? If I could remember who we were and where we were—

Cole: You don't remember who was with you, either?

Orr: No.

Cole: But see you had so many experiences, you can't remember them all. Do you by any chance—

Orr: But you said do I have an experience. We were so bored; we were flying these planes down to this field and then the truck would come and get us and put us in a plane and fly us back—we'd take another—we did about, oh at the most, I imagine either four or five, it was a short distance. So, I think we did up to four or five planes a day—maybe four. So, you know, we'd fly it down, get in a truck and they'd fly us back up all together, and then get the plane and fly it down.

Cole: Yeah.

Orr: We were so bored we decided to fly under some high-tension wires. And my—I was misjudged—I misjudged—I think another plane came too close to me being funny.

Cole: Yeah

Orr: For the fly formation. And I moved away, it's my recollection, and a wire wrapped around my wing, but it didn't make me crash. It severed and I was able to go ahead and land where the planes were being stored. And the guy didn't give a damn. He didn't say well, what you done when he saw the wire on the wing. This plane obviously wasn't fared to the 80th—

Cole: It wasn't any P-51. [Laughter]

Orr: It wasn't any P-51. It was some old clunker they were putting to bed. And we were so bored that we were flying formation, flying under high-tension wires, and I remember going down near a creek. Under the high-tension wires there was a creek. I can remember looking down and seeing this creek. But there were no trees, you know, or anything.

Cole: Yeah.

Orr: And then another time—the only time I ever buzzed my house—which is in Longmeadow, Massachusetts—I delivered a plane in that area. There's an army airfield where—I just thought of it; I almost thought of it and forgot—Windover Field, I think.

Cole: Windover Field. I remember Windover Field. I've been in that field.

[BREAK IN TAPE]

Orr: And it was Sunday when all the golfers were out. So I buzzed the golf course—our house was on the golf course. And I got to my house and there were a bunch of people around the pool and they all jumped up and waved. And there was a man on the golf course said that must be Jo Wallace; I'm going to report her. And the three men playing with him said if you do, you'll be—they were going to wipe him—you know. I lived there. Everybody adored me. And this guy was going to report me. They told me about it later. We told him what we'd do to him if he ever did a thing like that. It's illegal, but I wasn't getting too low.

Cole: —wasn't dangerous.

Orr: No.

Cole: Do you remember at all the sequence of where you went, and then where you went and then where you went, and so on?

Orr: Yeah.

Cole: Can you?

Orr: But it's unimportant. I started at Wilmington.

Cole: Wilmington, yes.

Orr: New Castle Army Airbase, and I ended there.

Cole: But then they sent you from there to various other places.

Orr: Oh, I had temporary duty at Kansas City, Fairfax Field flying B-25s for several months.

Cole: And then.

Orr: Because I flew the J and the H. And I also was in temporary duty three times in Wichita flying the C-45 Beechcraft. And that was fun for me because not only—we flew them alone and the Navy sent two pilots, but Mr. Beech had known my dad and sort of looked out for me and had me to dinner.

Cole: How nice.

Orr: Made me feel important.

Cole: Then from there did you go to pursuit school? Brownsville.

Orr: At Brownsville, I left—

Cole: And then after Brownsville—

Orr: At Brownsville I was restationed at—this is hard to remember.

Cole: Ruth said she went from there to some place in New York where they were—

Orr: Oh, Bell, where the Bell aircraft. I was there partly. Bell Aircraft—

Cole: Preparing—

Orr: The factory was in northern New York. I also was in Farmingdale for a while, flying the Thunderbolt. And when I delivered one of these C-45s to the president of Sikorski plant in Bridgeport, Connecticut, he said have you ever flown a helicopter? And I said no. And he said do you want to get checked out? And I said I haven't got time. But he said you have to check me out in the Beechcraft because I've never flown one and I haven't—I'm not—I haven't flown anything but the helicopter. So I stayed around there a while and checked him out, and then he flew me up to Springfield and my parents came to meet me. I hadn't seen them for over a year. They lived in Longmeadow—Springfield. And I spent the night with them, which was illegal. And while I was there, the call came that Susan Clarke had been killed. Her parents lived in Cooperstown, New York.

[BREAK IN TAPE]

Orr: And she invited me to ride with her in her golf cart. _____ [?] particularly. I just want a favor. If you could find someone who was at that reunion—there were two or three women who took thousands of pictures. I'd just give anything if you could find one of those women—and I don't know how to do it except through you—who could

resurrect some of the pictures they took of me and Jackie in her golf cart. Because so many people took pictures of us together. I don't why she chose me either. I mean I was nobody.

Cole: Do you remember—

Orr: At this reunion.

Cole: —Rose Puett Potter at all? Rose Puett.

Orr: No.

Cole: She didn't know—really she was the most isolated of all and so I'm surprised that she talked to me. But she was very gracious, and she's made a lot of money since, so she's fairly—pretty wealthy.

Orr: What does she do?

Cole: Real estate.

Orr: Where?

Cole: It's California.

Orr: Oh, you've had the most interesting experiences.

Cole: You can't imagine how exciting it was going up the California coast and interviewing these people—from Mad Sullivan to—

Orr: Did they pay for you? I mean how did you—your expenses?

Cole: No, I put it all in my own expenses. And I've stayed—

Orr: I feel like we should pay your expenses.

Cole: Well, let's wait until it gets published, then we'll see.

Orr: Yeah, divide it up between everyone.

Cole: But I don't think there'll be any money—I don't think it will be big seller.

Orr: Do you have a husband?

Cole: Yes. And five children and grandchildren.

Orr: Right now?

Cole: Yes. He's—in fact, he's on his way to Middlebury.

Orr: Middlebury, Vermont?

Cole: He was a Middlebury graduate.

Orr: Really.

Cole: So was my daughter. One. One daughter. Then he's going on up to Shelburne, and I'm going to meet them—

Orr: Do you want all this on this?

Cole: No, I'll just cut it out when I—it doesn't matter.

Orr: Do you think you could hold out the slightest glimmer of hope for me to try to dig into—with all your conversations I'm thinking it might not be that big an effort for you—to see who was at that reunion. I don't remember what year it was even. But I remember Madeline and I going. I remember the motel where we stayed—was just neat and had a little balcony overlooking the pool. And that we had such a good time. And we had that—I played golf with Jackie—was in her golf cart. We played golf, and that her husband was charming and we—I can remember sitting in their living room in their house. And she served lunch or dinner, then this chuck wagon thing outdoors. And that's the end of that memory.

Cole: Well, I can—

Orr: Who would've taken all those pictures?

Cole: Well, that's why I mentioned this Rose Puett. She was there at that meeting, I think. And she worked for Jackie Cochran afterwards. And she had things—she had things that she made me shut it off and tell—that she was not going to have on any record whatsoever.

Orr: Why?

Cole: Well, she wasn't—about personal things about Jackie and her husband and that sort of—

Orr: Did you read Chuck Yeager?

Cole: I have not read that.

Orr: You haven't? That's my favorite book.

Cole: I am going to read it—my daughter's got it—

Orr: And the things he tells about Jackie is why I brought it up.

Cole: Yes. And there's probably a lot of—when I read that—

Orr: What did Puett, what's her name Puett?

Cole: Rose Puett.

Orr: You'd better shut this off.

Cole: I'll shut it off for a—

[BREAK IN TAPE]

Cole: I'm going to turn this back on now, so—

Orr: Absolutely muffling. You know, we didn't want to know—we didn't want her to stop. So we were all hysterical putting the pillow over our heads. She'd say, okay, unbuckling belt. Find belt. Unbuckle belt, unbuckle belt, zip open fly, or button/unbutton fly. She'd go through the whole cockpit procedure. Then she said Sitting on toilet. Going, going, going. But she was so funny. Everyone was scared of her.

Cole: You know she's dead.

Orr: No. But I wouldn't want to put that in the book.

Cole: Oh, I won't put that in the book. I've been careful.

Orr: At least she was very—she was lusty. She was a lusty Texan. And I was a New England, pretty conservative. And I really didn't know what to make of her.

Cole: Well, Ruth—I went to Texas and taped her.

Orr: You taped her before she died?

Cole: Yeah. I taped her and two months later she was dead.

Orr: Oh, gee.

Cole: I didn't know that she had only one lung left.

Orr: Is that right?

Cole: Yeah. She lost it from smoking. Like her sister did. So I was very glad that I got her, and I wrote back to her sister, Betty, who she was living with at the time—

Orr: Did you? You write the nicest letters. I don't see how you find time.

Cole: I zip them off on the computer and push the button.

Orr: And I just think you're wonderful. I'm really so proud—I told Bob.

Cole: Well, I hope this is going to be good. I'm a little worried that when it gets out somebody will say, oh, that isn't right or that isn't right. You know, things like that.

Orr: Yeah. I don't think I want to put in a book—think about it—when I say four or five of us checked out. They're probably—I don't know that there maybe three, or twelve or fifteen. See, that's not a factual remark.

Cole: It's hard to catch these—I've got to check—

Orr: It's a guess.

Cole: You know Mary Ellen Keil helps me. I write to her frantically and say, Mary Ellen, is [this] right? Or can you check on this for me? She's great about it.

Orr: Oh, she's great. I mean, I could be so far off base, but so many people have told me that. But I don't know. You could just tell Mary Ellen Keil or don't—I have no idea.

Cole: But you have flown a lot of these airplanes.

Orr: I checked out—I did not check out on B-29, but I have flown it in the left seat for the strategic air command in Ohio. They asked me twice to fly the B-29. And it just seemed like old hat. I just looked at the tech orders and took it off and landed it, and it was just as simple as flying off—I couldn't believe it after I'd been on a plane so long. Men were worried.

Cole: This was—

Orr: Oh, this was about ten years ago.

Cole: Where's my paper, I was going to ask you some more questions.

Orr: Right here.

Cole: Look at this one. This was supposed to be yours; you're supposed to look at it and see have any—

Orr: Oh, okay.

Cole: But it isn't—I don't really need to know these things so much I find out, after I—

Orr: Well, why did I start flying—I don't think anybody gives a damn.

Cole: No. No. See a lot of these aren't really important. This was just to get people to start talking, and if they slowed down, to have something to say.

Orr: Right.

Cole: But actually I just did want to check to be sure—

Orr: Why did you join the WASP? [reading the paper] Well, because it was so exciting. It was such an opportunity to do something that was once-in-a-lifetime. Of course, you didn't even know it at the time. And it has nothing to do with being a feminist. You know that's what startles me—is—starting, I don't know how many years ago, I got my first comment made to me about—oh, you know, you were ahead of your time, and you were doing something, you know, that no other women had ever done. I never thought of it that way. I never thought anyone else did either. That I was doing [anything] ahead of my time, or that nobody else—I just thought, oh, here's the chance to get into the Army Air Corps and learn to fly and I was picturing being in the Ferry Command and ferrying planes. Everybody thinks—and of course you run into this—that all the WASP were ferry pilots.

Cole: Oh, no.

Orr: Of course, there was a very small percentage. I don't know if you'll want to use this for the record, but I'll tell you a story because it's not only true, but similar stories I've had. And I'm sure you've had too. Bob was campaigning for governor and we were in a tent, and this woman came up to me, and I should have known the way she was sort of—the expression on her face—and the way she was acting, and she said, Mrs. Orr, I understand you were a WASP. And I said yes. And she said well, my best friend was a WASP. Were you a ferry pilot? And I said yes, I was a ferry pilot. Well, she said she was a ferry pilot, of course, you know her. She said Betty Hammond—of course I'm making up a name. I said no. I'd love to meet her. Okay, she said I can't believe you don't know her. And so she gave me her phone number. And I call up and a man's voice answered and I said is Betty there, or whoever the name. And he said no. And I said well, I'll introduce myself. I'm Mrs. Orr and I was told to call your wife because she was a ferry pilot in WWII. He said what? And I said does your wife fly? Oh, he said she had some Piper Cub lessons once. That's a true story. This woman, by the way, that asked me if I knew her, she was so mad at me—this is true—that walked away and she said I think this is perfectly awful. She said you couldn't have been a WASP if you don't know my friend. And she walked away and was very rude to me.

Cole: Some people claim that they were when they weren't. That's true, we've had much worse than this—

Orr: Really was rude to me because I didn't know Suzy Klutz who was her best friend who was a ferry pilot. And she said if you don't know her then you just aren't anybody. I said gee, I'm sorry about this, but I'd love to meet her.

Cole: Then you find out that they really weren't.

Orr: Everybody who knows somebody comes up to me all the years since 1944 and says well, don't you know so-and-so, they were a ferry pilot. And either they didn't fly, or they weren't in the Ferry Command. And of course I didn't know everybody in the Ferry Command either.

Cole: Oh, no. You didn't know all of them.

Orr: So that's true. People just think that if you're a WASP then you're a ferry pilot.

Cole: Now, after you got out of the WASP, did you still do any flying? I think you've done something.

Orr: Yeah. Yeah. I had a Bonanza and I had a twin engine Cessna 210, I think it was. I flew, but I realized that it was just purposeless. I would put a bathing suit in the plane and fly over to Cincinnati, St. Louis, Kansas City, sometimes I'd even fly to the east of Cincinnati, have lunch with a friend and fly home. But I mean, my husband wanted me to be a chauffeur—he wanted me to be a charter service. And I took a bunch of ministers to Pennsylvania once—they were going to Pittsburgh to hear a man preach in his church, and then wanted to come back home. I thought this isn't for me. I'm not built to be a chauffeur for anybody. I'm just not going to do it. I wasn't that keen—my interest in flying—I mean it wasn't my life any longer. And you know about pilots, of course. How some people you meet their life is flying. They'll do anything if they can just get up in a plane and fly. Well, I don't think I've ever been that hooked. Although I loved what I did. And I felt very, very grateful. That's what hurt me about all the women that didn't feel grateful for that training. It was priceless.

Cole: Oh, it was priceless.

Orr: And I never thought that anybody owed me anything.

Cole: No. No.

Orr: When I was given all that excitement.

Cole: Of course, I think it was nice that they were given the status.

Orr: Yes, I do. I do.

Cole: I think they deserve—they were given—what's the word we—veterans.

Orr: Veterans status.

Cole: Also gives you a little—I mean you can buy a house if you need another one now.

Orr: Yeah. I have four condominiums—no three condominiums and house.

Cole: That's enough. But anyway—

Orr: I didn't know that. All I've heard was about free burial and if you wanted to go to school.

Cole: Yes. And go to school. Well, you know if you're a veteran you can buy a house cheaper, with veterans status.

Orr: I didn't know that. I'll tell Bob that. I'm a senior citizen, though. I'm over sixty-five.

Cole: So am I.

Orr: And I always forget to use that. In some places you can ski for nothing.

Cole: Especially when you're over seventy. Are you still skiing downhill?

Orr: No.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B]

[BEGINNING OF TAPE 2, SIDE A]

Cole: The only thing better than this is a computer. I don't know how I could live without it. Now, we're going. [About] Susie, I wanted to ask you because you said it was sabotage. She had sand in the carburetor—

Orr: Yes. Sand in the carburetor. Greenville, North Carolina.

Cole: And I saved this until—Greenville, North Carolina. And I have your letter. But some people say well there was a lot of sand in the carburetor in those airplanes in those fields and all. Was there any kind of proof—

Orr: There wasn't a single person that did not say she was killed because of sabotage.

Cole: Was there any investigation or anything like that.

Orr: Not that I know of. If there was, I didn't know about it. All I know is what I heard at the time.

Cole: And what kind of airplane?

Orr: And I wasn't allowed to go to her funeral. I think it was a S-24.

Cole: India-13. Somebody keeps telling me that and then the other people say no.

Orr: No. Oh, no. Oh, no. It wasn't a trainer. It was one of those D-24s—Douglas Dauntless.

Cole: Douglass Dauntless. That's in your letter, too. So I have that. So that should be—well, you know, Byrd Granger—Byrd Granger's book is really about finished. I think—she's doing this complete history of the WASP.

Orr: Is she?

Cole: Quite a prodigious thing—really. She's been working on it for ten years.

Orr: It's interesting because I have four books on the WASP and there's one that was—Sky Blue—Indigo Blue?

Cole: Oh. That's a Janet Dailey book—*Silver Wings, Santiago Blue*—

Orr: And she had so many mistakes in it that I could not believe—did I write in my letter about her biggest mistake? I don't know whether I would have put this in a letter. I read the book—four people sent me that book. People send me things all the time.

Cole: That's a popularized version. She made money on that book.

Orr: Well, she says in the book that our uniforms were made by Neiman Marcus. And I thought, that poor benighted soul. She's probably never been to camp. Or been to a school that has uniforms. Because Neiman Marcus doesn't make anything. They allowed the WASP—the women enrollees to pick up their uniforms at Neiman Marcus. They had to have a central pick up place. It's like when you go to camp—

Cole: Yeah.

Orr: Neiman Marcus—Schiaparelli designed the uniforms—

Cole: Oh, I didn't know that.

Orr: Oh, yeah! They were Schiaparelli. You didn't know that?

Cole: No. So that's a piece of information I don't have.

Orr: Schiaparelli designed them, and I don't know who the manufacturer was; but the outlet was Neiman Marcus. But in the book she said Neiman Marcus made our uniforms [Laughter]. I'm in merchandising—my family was in the department store business—so that's where I come in—why I took umbrage—

Cole: Oh, sure. You know these things.

Orr: with that particular remark because, of course, I remember going to camp. You had to go to certain—Altman's or some store in New York City—see, or the one that was the children's—Best & Co.—they always had—

Cole: Bests—Madeline worked at Bests.

Orr: I don't think she worked at Best, but she could have.

Cole: That's what she told me because I was having trouble—is it Bests, b-e-s-t-s?

Orr: B-e-s-t. It's Best. Best & Co. All our children, you know, all my clothes came from Best when I was growing up. But anyway, that's enough of that. Chuck Yeager's book for me is the only one about flying that—it's just a spellbinder. These other books—they either don't tell—goes way back. Right after the first WASP book came out, I'd never been so disappointed. And I thought—and I read another after that—

Cole: What about *Those Wonderful Women in Their Flying Machines*?

Orr: Was that it? No, it doesn't sound like the one that I read. Something "fly."

Cole: Oh, Winifred's—Winifred Woods' *We Were WASPS*. I've got that book, and it was pretty much—

Orr: It was so awful, and then as I said I read probably three of the WASP books, and I said to Bob, I keep wondering if I was a WASP!

Cole: Well, I think that we're going to get this right.

Orr: These experiences don't relate to me!

Cole: Let me ask you—

Orr: Remember when we went out, we went out in a truck. I remember that. Went out to the—what did we call it?

Cole: The auxiliary fields.

Orr: Auxiliary fields. And a great big wooden, wind tee—and sitting beside it to get in the shade.

Cole: Yeah.

Orr: And going around the building—there was a building, I remember us trying to get in—

Cole: A little one.

Orr: A little one, trying to sit in the shade to get out of the sun.

Cole: I have pictures of us sitting on that wind tee—some of us.

Orr: Yeah. Right.

Cole: So I remember that, and some of the people have told me some other stories—

Orr: But I wish I knew who I liked, or who I went around with.

Cole: That's what—

Orr: What's the matter with me?

Cole: You know the one person I wish I could get now—a few of these people I can't get—one of them who really sort of annoyed me was Mimi Lindstrom. Remember Mimi Lindstrom?

Orr: No. I don't remember her well. Was she in our class?

Cole: Yes.

Orr: Obviously, but what—

Cole: Well, I talked to her on the phone in Austin; I have a son in Austin.

Orr: Yeah. Tell me.

Cole: And I'd start talking to her and ask her about it. And she sounds very pleasant, very nice. Well, but she really didn't want to say anything, and she didn't want to—and finally, she'd say, I'm sorry, I have to leave now. And she'd hang up!

Orr: Oh.

Cole: So I went away. I came back to Austin a second time and I called her. She said maybe next time you're here. So I came back to Austin a second time.

Orr: That's really rude. That's rude.

Cole: And I talked to her again, and she did the same thing again, and I finally said I just can't.

Orr: I would say, what's with you?

Cole: Well, I don't know what's with her. And the other person I can't get is Rose Reese. Do you remember Rose Reese?

Orr: Yeah. She was a pill.

Cole: Well, anyway—

Orr: I mean, Rose Reese—my mind says she was a pill. I don't remember what she looked like.

Cole: Mary Ellen Keil had some good things to say about her, but she's just—she's just gone paranoid, sort of.

Orr: Oh, she is?

Cole: Yeah. She wrote me a letter, and returned my letter, and said don't come and see me, and I don't—

Orr: Do I know Keil?

Cole: Mary Ellen?

Orr: Does she say she knows me? Or maybe you never asked her.

Cole: I don't think I ever asked her exactly.

Orr: Okay.

Cole: Do you remember her?

Orr: No.

Cole: See, she's been at the meeting. Of course, she was our secretary for a while. Now she's on the board as something or other.

Orr: Yeah, I know. I know she's a VIP.

Cole: But she's very efficient and very bright.

Orr: And I know I've spoken to her. But I'd be curious if she thinks she knows me. Because all we do—we said hello. I never knew her in training.

Cole: No. She was—and I didn't very much either. But she was in our group. And when I—

Orr: I'm trying to think who I ran around with. I wonder if it was just in our bay.

Cole: Well it was you and Sullivan—somebody says, those two were the most popular. I'm remembering a quote almost. That was Rose Puett. And Marie Michell and Kit MacKethan were sort of a—kind of a pair—and they were very popular. And she said, of course, you always wanted to be with the popular girls, but I never was.

Orr: Who said that?

Cole: Rose Puett.

Orr: Oh.

Cole: She grew up in an orphan asylum.

Orr: She did?

Cole: Absolutely. Isn't that amazing. Anyway—

Orr: It's amazing that she got in the WASP

Cole: Let me just look and see if there's anybody else I can see that you might remember to tell me about.

Orr: Well, of course, Tobias didn't mean a thing to me until we got on the ferry command together and we got to know each other.

Cole: How about Shorty Stafford? I have something on her from Zillner. She was ferry command.

Orr: I never saw her in the ferry command. We always missed each other.

Cole: She and Zillner flew together quite a lot. I have something about her.

Orr: Is that right?

Cole: Yeah.

Orr: Well, I had no connection with Shorty, but I remember the name, and that she was short.

Cole: Now there's two people—yes, she was. I liked her. I remember her.

Orr: Yeah. Very nice, but I don't—

Cole: And are two other people that I have nothing on at all because they're both dead. They both died of cancer.

Orr: Is that right.

Cole: And that's Mary McCallum—Mary McCrea McCallum.

Orr: Oh, she was pretty. Seems like she was very pretty and dark.

Cole: And then an Alice M. Montgomery.

Orr: Alice Montgomery was not pretty, and she was tall. And had straight dark hair. And was nice, plain looking. But I don't know a thing about her.

Cole: See, that's too bad that you have to leave these various people out. Kay Cleverly I remember, but she died too, and I have no information on her.

Orr: Boy, a lot of people died, didn't they?

Cole: Oh, yeah. A lot of them are gone.

Orr: Jean, Jean—god, what you know.

Cole: Well, I try to bring in—

Orr: And our class are the biggest wash-outs.

Cole: Yes. Over fifty percent.

Orr: That's what I tell people. But sometimes I get carried away.

Cole: But I think it's more because it was starting to wind down right about then, actually. We were washing out more.

Orr: Oh, boy, I knew that every—and then a lot of people don't—I hope this comes out in the book, about the fact that we had double check rides. A lot of people aren't aware of that.

Cole: Double check rides? How do you mean that?

Orr: Yeah. You didn't? I did. We had civilian and army check rides.

Cole: Oh, yes—oh, yes—that does come out.

Orr: And nobody else that got their wings in other—during the war—had double check rides. So that you had two men, both of whom had one idea in mind was to wash you out—giving you those check rides. And in fact, one guy, one time, had come in and was just doing check rides. And he said to me I'm going to pass you, but my only idea when I came here was to see how many of you women I could wash out. He said that.

Cole: Was that an Army check ride.

Orr: Yes. I said why did you pass me? He said because I had to.

Cole: Well, he had some integrity then.

Orr: Don't you love it? Oh, I'll tell you something I could put—this is all on now? [indicating recorder].

Cole: Sure. Everything's on.

Orr: When I was in basic training, I had—well, first of all, did I write you about primary? I had Helen Montgomery the only woman who was a former glider pilot champion, and I didn't get to—taxi.

Cole: Yes. Someone else had her I think.

Orr: I didn't get to taxi—for days!

Cole: Yes. You told me some of that.

Orr: And I came in the ready room and I said I got to taxi today! And everybody looked at me like, what are you nuts—we've been taxiing since the first day! And anyway, so I got to basic—I don't know his name—but he would holler at me. He'd say, he'd sing, lay that pistol down, babe. And then he'd say, Wallace, get your head on a swivel, get your head on a swivel! Don't you sit there like a stuck pig! I remember that—it came to me last week.

Cole: Is that right? I could find out who that was because somebody else told me he sang Pistol Packing—

Orr: Yeah. He sang "Pistol Packing Mama." And he'd say, Wallace, don't sit there. Put your head on a swivel! And I'd go like this [turning head], that's it. That's it. More of that action.

Cole: Isn't that funny.

Orr: He'd say don't sit there like a stuck pig.

Cole: Tell me more about your instructors because it's pretty interesting about these instructors.

Orr: I don't know much more. Then I got into advanced, and I had a real smoothie.

Cole: Who did you have? Do you remember?

Orr: I don't remember any of my instructors' names except Helen Montgomery because she was a woman. Maybe the only woman.

Cole: No. Is she—

Orr: Were there other women at Avenger Field?

Cole: —at first thought there was only one, but there were other.

Orr: There were?

Cole: And I didn't know—and you know, they were all in the second flight. Nobody in flight one had any women instructors. I don't know why that happened.

Orr: Well, it's interesting. It's good for you. I think all adversity is good for you, you know, the longer I live—something good comes out of that.

Cole: What do you think about all those instructors?

Orr: What do I think about the instructors?

Cole: Yeah. Do you think mostly they were—some people had some good instructors, you know, that were helpful to them.

Orr: Oh, you mean good in that sense.

Cole: Yes. Your opinion—

Orr: I didn't know if you meant whether they molested you sexually, or—

Cole: I haven't heard stories of that, although I've heard Ruth Woods say that one of them was a touchy-feely type.

Orr: I never ran into one.

Cole: No, I had that problem.

Orr: No. And I'm surprised because I'm the kind of person, because of my personality —I always knew growing up, with my sense of humor, and I loved to egg people on, and

I loved to kid people—and I loved to say oh, you sexy—And I can remember that I would say, in other words, oh, you sexy thing. And see, some men took that to mean—

Cole: Pick up on that.

Orr: You know, and they would make assumptions. But it didn't bother me because nobody ever made me feel that uncomfortable as a result of it. But—it was a dumb thing to do, but I never, ever remember any pilot—and I remember going out to that house on Sundays, and Ruth Humphreys, who was ahead of us, had a station wagon we called the Blue Bar, and she'd put—we'd put a case of coke and some liquor in and we'd go out to this cabin. Did you ever go?

Cole: I went to a farmhouse once that had a party.

Orr: But it was on the lake.

Cole: No, not this one.

Orr: And this was not—this was several times. It was hard to get a day off, right?

Cole: Yes.

Orr: Just when it was rainy or something we'd get an occasional day off. I don't recall ever getting regular Sundays—

Cole: Oh, no.

Orr: No. Or Saturdays. But I don't know what day it would have been, but we'd go out in the Blue Bar, which was Ruth Humphreys—

Cole: She was from a different class.

Orr: Yeah, she was ahead of us, either one or two classes ahead—along with Caro Bosca—Caro Bayley—and there was a whole group of them: Sammi Chapin.

Cole: See, those are another class.

Orr: Yeah. They were all another class. What I'm saying is that I don't know if they were one or two classes ahead of us because I spent a lot of time in their bay. In fact, they roped me one day—they knew my mother was coming and they roped me and put me on the floor and poured a bottle of peroxide on my hair. Because they knew I'd be getting the hell—getting the devil from my mother. [Both laughing] I've seen—all of them I still see.

Cole: Well, the reason I was sort of interested in the instructors, and I almost, if I'd had time, or depending on what publisher gets this—I almost wanted to interview a couple of the instructors—

Orr: I wish you would. Well, to finish the thing, I really got off the subject didn't I? I would go with Ruth in the Blue Bar with this class ahead to this cabin and they had the instructors come. And I supposed there might have been in all—five instructors. And everybody sat on the beds and talked and laughed, but there was no funny business. Nobody kissed. But it was the thrill of doing something, you know, you could have been expelled if anybody knew you were seeing an instructor.

Cole: Yeah.

Orr: And I remember feeling very much on the fringes because I never, ever had a date with an instructor. But I would go along with the girls and, naturally, watch what was going on with the instructors. I probably was disappointed that nothing ever happened. I don't know.

Cole: Well, perhaps there wasn't much of that because the instructors were afraid they would get fired.

Orr: Oh, yeah. Everybody was very good. I've never been anywhere in life where anybody wasn't very good; so I can't compare it. I've never seen anybody in grass—I've never seen anybody really, kissing—all the years I went to college—

Cole: I was also thinking more of—yeah, we grew up in a more strict time.

Orr: People just went to parties and drank a lot of—everybody behaved.

Cole: Isn't that funny?

Orr: I don't know one girl I can think of that ever went to a boy's room. The whole time I went to college football games.

Cole: Oh, I can. In college. But that was way back.

Orr: Well, I didn't know them. I heard about them, but I didn't know them.

Cole: Did you think they were good for instructors?

Orr: I thought my instructors were good, mostly. Although I—

Cole: They must have been. As you say, you had some tough ones.

Orr: My instructors must have been okay and very careful because of the fact that I got very high marks on my check rides. And I felt confident. I did a lot of night flying. Did you?

Cole: Yes. Yes.

Orr: And in B-25s, I remember flying over Kansas City so much at night.

Cole: Hmm. Is there anything else I want to be sure to get from you.

Orr: That's a good question you were asking, that I kept sort of getting off the subject for you. Was about instruction—

Cole: You didn't keep any diaries?

Orr: Mother threw them away because I told her to. I could kill myself.

Cole: Yeah. You can't—

Orr: Apparently, I wrote some really good letters. Because she kept saying, don't you want me to save your letters? Like I said oh, no. I'd give anything—

Cole: Nobody has any. Nobody that I've interviewed have any diaries—

Orr: Really?

Cole: Yeah. Isn't that a shame.

Orr: I've never kept a diary, per se, but I did write, you know, when I wrote, I would probably tell a lot of stories.

Cole: Well, I also have a question down about verbal or physical abuse. Some, you know, one instructor used to give stick beatings. I saw Nelle's legs all black and blue—Nelle Henderson. In training.

Orr: I never heard that until this very second.

Cole: Well, Nelle, would—I think Nelle would have said that too.

Orr: Is that right?

Cole: But really, there wasn't too—of course, there was a lot of verbal abuse in the airplanes, I suppose.

Cole: Another thing was the condition of the airplanes.

Orr: Well, when I look back on it they were pretty rickety.

Cole: They were pretty bad, weren't they?

Orr: They weren't the best. I mean, how many girls had engine failure on takeoff? They'd say, now, if you're taking—if you're going over Sweetwater Lake, you'd better be careful and always have a spot picked for forced landing. I was told that so many times. And then of course, they'd get you up in altitude—I forget what kind of altitude—and cut the engine and you'd have to—

Cole: Oh, sure.

Orr: That was good training.

Cole: Yeah. That was good training.

Orr: Yeah, but those are good questions.

Cole: Do you remember Anne Berry at all? I was just wondering.

Orr: Yes. Anne Berry—there's a name. Was she in our class?

Cole: Yes. She gave me some good—I went out to the vineyard to interview her. She lives on a vineyard.

Orr: What's her name?

Cole: Lesnikowski.

Orr: Oh, no. Is that Polish or Czech?

Cole: Polish.

Orr: What'd she tell you.

Cole: She's a very sort of precise woman.

Orr: She used to be quite pretty.

Cole: Well, she still looks great, I think.

Orr: —medium height and quite pretty.

Cole: Her hairline goes back a little.

Orr: She never was a close friend of mine, but I certainly remember.

Cole: She was interested somewhat in the social aspects of this. She was saying, now, we never had any black women—of course, you know, back then it was enough that we had white women in there, I thought.

Orr: That is funny she said that.

Cole: And then, well I—at the time, I wonder about the Jewish prejudice thing. Because I can remember one instructor saying, those Jewish girls can't fly. And he was washing them out right and left. Texans, you know.

Orr: Was Thorena[?] Jewish?

Cole: Yes. I think she was, but she was the only one I knew that got through. Because I knew a few others. Well, anyway.

Orr: I didn't know any Jewish people.

Cole: But that's not—that's only if somebody happened to notice it. I'm just trying—I don't think there's anything else.

Orr: God, isn't that interesting.

Cole: What about—do you have anything to say about instruments, or hood flying, or anything that happened.

Orr: No. I spent a month flying the Abilene range. Did you?

Cole: Well, we sure flew the range.

Orr: I flew the Abilene range for one month after the primary basic advanced two, two and two—

Cole: We had bass instruments.

Orr: I had instruments and flew the Abilene range.

Cole: Yeah. I remember the A and M.

Orr: —and got the Boyt[?] card.

Cole: Of course, that's all wiped out now. There's no such thing anymore.

Orr: No, of course not.

Cole: Well, the thing is—now you don't mind if I'm going to use some of this in the book?

Orr: No. I don't want to sound—I don't want to come off critical of anybody, that's all.

Cole: I know, you don't want to—

Orr: be critical of anybody. I hope I haven't made any critical remarks about anybody.

Cole: No. But it was pretty interesting about the instructors because some people had very definite opinions—I remember most of my instructors.

Orr: I don't. I remember Helen. I don't remember—she had a very quiet, unprepossessing personality. And she knew her own mind, and she had her own way of teaching, which was not to let you taxi until she felt confident that you knew what you were doing with that plane. I mean, I can understand where she was coming from. Although it was funny—I found out that everybody else taxied automatically from the first day. And I just remember basic, the shouting all the time, and singing. And the instructor in advanced, all I could say was he was good. But I don't remember his name. Now Madeline Sullivan she remembers instructors. She's talked to me about instructors and she'll say to me—she doesn't understand, why don't you remember so-and-so and what we used to think about him? And I said I just don't.

Cole: Did you fly out of any of the California bases too? You must have—

Orr: Long Beach.

Cole: Must have flown out of Long Beach. Now, you were—the only other thing I think I was going to ask you was—I'm trying to think of the different kinds of planes. You flew B-25s; you didn't fly the B-26.

Orr: Uh-huh.

Cole: You did?

Orr: Yeah. A lot more.

Cole: How did you fly B-26s although you didn't—you weren't sent to B-26 school.

Orr: Ferried them. B-26 school had absolutely nothing to do with ferrying. But B-26 school was for towing targets, or whatever they did.

Cole: Right.

Orr: When I flew B-26, I was a ferry pilot. I picked it up at the factory and delivered it to a field around that.

Cole: You had to check out on that. They were saying that was a tough plane to fly.

Orr: Yeah. That's why it was called "Flying Prostitute."

Cole: That's a new name for it. It was the widow-maker, too.

Orr: I never heard that, during the whole war—during my entire period as a WASP everyone referred to the B-26 as the "Flying Prostitute" because it had no visible means of support.

Cole: Very good.

Orr: I never heard anything else. I ferried about three of them.

Cole: See, I have a whole chapter on the B-26 practically. Because twenty of our girls went to B-26 school.

Orr: I know. And I almost had to do that.

Cole: Twenty was kind of a lot, but only thirteen graduated.

Orr: But I mean, as I said in my letter, and I almost thought it might sound demeaning of Anna, which I would never ever want to do—is that she succumbed and went to B-26 school, but she never got anywhere. I mean, compared to—

Cole: —flying a variety of airplanes.

Orr: For checking out on a variety of airplanes, going to pursuit school in Brownsville, and she got a husband. But she didn't have—the only way to get the experiences that I've ever heard of was to be in the ferry command. Because every time you're on base, you're always upgrading yourself—they call it transition school. And every ferry base had a variety of planes, and when you were there for any length of time you always checked out in a new—something you hadn't checked out in before.

Cole: I don't think Zillner ever checked out in—

Orr: I don't know a thing about Zillner.

Cole: But see, she was ferry command.

Orr: What'd she fly? I've never asked her.

Cole: They were delivering a bunch of small planes, like PT-19s. Flying all the way across the country.

Orr: See I never did that. That's where I got into the real big stuff right away.

Cole: It almost seems—

Orr: I fly like B-17s and B-24s.

Cole: You were in 17s and 24s?

Orr: I've flown them—checked out in them.

Cole: As first pilot?

Orr: Yeah. I was checking out.

Cole: Because Anne Berry, now, was flying as—but she never got checked out in the 17—

Orr: Oh, I did.

Cole: And she said she liked those planes, and knew she could fly them.

Orr: Who wouldn't let her, I wonder?

Cole: Different places that just wouldn't—weren't letting women do it.

Orr: Wouldn't advance the women.

Cole: Yeah.

Orr: I feel very lucky because of my height.

Cole: Maybe that's—look at little Ruth Adams, you know.

Orr: See, I was—everybody wanted me. Everybody wanted me. Really, that's the truth.

Cole: Then you really did have—some of them had some fairly bad experiences. I mean, you know, as far as prejudice and having trouble with the commanders, commanding officers and things like that.

Orr: No. Because of being in the ferry command—there wasn't any opportunity for that because you would deliver a plane and come back and you'd have a plane waiting to—

Cole: Another one waiting to go, sure.

Orr: It just was a constant thing.

Cole: It was very tiring, apparently.

Orr: —sitting around, and being, having any kind of personality conflict with your CO because you never saw him. Except when I got caught. When Susan Clarke was killed and I went up to Cooperstown to see her parents to console them and explain to them why I couldn't come to the funeral. And I couldn't bring her body, go down and get her body, they wouldn't let me.

Cole: How did it get home?

Orr: The Army took care of it.

Cole: The Army did?

Orr: The Air Corps.

Cole: See, some of them said they had to chip in—who—I can't remember if it was Marie Michell or not, but they had to chip in to send her body home, the Air Force wouldn't do anything. One of the bodies they had to send home—

Orr: Well, you know, if the truth were out, if you really got into it, I don't know who paid to send her body home. I mean, I don't—

Cole: It's because we weren't military.

Orr: Right, right. Oh, I know all that. I mean, that's what we're talking about here. And probably her father paid to have it sent home. I just jumped in and said something because I didn't know it was important. But if you really got into it, I'd guess probably her father. I don't know. Because that's the last I've ever—after I talked to them at that time when she was killed—I think both her mother and father are dead now, and I haven't been back to Cooperstown. So I haven't been in touch. I think I was in touch when we adopted the twins, in 1949. And I was in correspondence at that time—said I was naming one of the twins in Susan's memory. So they knew it. And that's, I think, my last—I haven't kept up with them.

Cole: See, you didn't say anything about B-17s and B-24s—where did you fly those?

Orr: Well, I flew them so seldom that I just don't think about it because I was on a roll getting checked out in bombers and I was flying nothing but B-25s for several months. So that's my main memory. I did check out the 17, the 24—I never checked out in the B-29 although I flew it.

Cole: Very few were checked out in that 29.

Orr: I never was checked out in it. Then I was sent to pursuit school and got checked out in all the pursuits.

Cole: Now, let me say—first, what do you think about—opinions about the whole program or things you'd like to say about it.

Orr: Yes. I think we were extremely lucky. And that—

Cole: I agree, I agree.

Orr: And that Jean Cole and Josie Orr were just two of the luckiest women in the world—that we were able to take advantage of such a—better than wonderful—program. So educational, and it gave us such skills that even if we don't continue flying I feel that the discipline was so good for everybody. How's that?

Cole: That's great. That's great.

Orr: I think everyone should be saying this.

Cole: Everybody has. Everybody has.

Orr: If somebody doesn't say it, I think they were just wimps or something.

Cole: No, everybody has. But some of them—the only other things—some of them have said they were just almost devastated when the program was over. It just sort of wiped them out because that was their whole—

Orr: This is understandable because it was so absolutely consuming—your whole body and mind were wrapped up in that program, and I got out to get married.

Cole: So you had another—

[END OF TAPE 2, SIDE A]

[BEGINNING OF TAPE 2, SIDE B]

Orr: —the first week after we were married, it's so childish when I think about it, how desecrated I was when I could have had a few more hours of flying if I just waited and hadn't been married that week.

Cole: Oh. [Laughter]

Orr: I mean, it's sick!

Cole: Was he a pilot, too?

Orr: No, no he was in the Quartermaster Corps. But I was very—

Cole: Sick about it—[Laughter]

Orr: I wish I could think of the word.

[BREAK IN TAPE]

Cole: So you flew—

Orr: I flew alone. I did not have a copilot. The C-47 was just a great big Piper Cub. They land—just like they land themselves. And I was—they parked me on the apron, and I was filling out my papers and I was in the cockpit, and this airline plane came and parked beside me, which was funny for an airline. And of course, everything was so different in those days. Nowadays an airline would never park so willy-nilly next to transients. So the pilot—the window was open and the pilot turned to his copilot and he said well, he looked over at me and they waved and I could hear what they—well, he said in a loud voice, I guess they found us out. I'll never forget that. Meaning that the pilot of the C-47—of course, the airlines, and that was way back in the 40's, always let on what a difficult plane it was to fly, you see. They wanted everyone to—they didn't want their mystery, secret, discovered how easy that plane is to fly. The other experience I had—I was delivering a plane, I think it was one of the Douglas planes, to Dorval Air Field, and I came and it was dusk—did I put this in the letter?

Cole: No.

Orr: Because this—I have just a few stories, and this is one. It was dusk, and the guy—had a long day and I was tired, and I brought my papers in to be signed and he handed me this thing—I didn't know what it was and I went to my hotel. It was a prophylactic kit, and I'd never seen one. And it said—the instructions said go to your room—[Laughter]—what else did it say? See, I didn't know what it was. And so, anyway, it was about a week later and I delivered another plane to Dorval Field, and it was the same guy—and see, I'm not going to tell the story exactly right. But the gist of it was that he looked up and saw me and said weren't you in here last week? And I said yes. And he turned bright red and he said I am so apologetic. He said we'd never had a woman in here before, and it didn't occur to me we'd ever have a woman. And he said next time will you please speak? Sort of clear your throat—speak—and let us know. I won't do that again. And I said well, I thought it was very interesting, because I'd never had anything like that happen before. And he said well, I hope you won't.

Cole: Isn't that funny?

Orr: Yeah. That's true. That was cute. Dorval Field.

Cole: Dorval?

Orr: D-o-r-v-a-l. That's the main field in Montreal. Where you land.

Cole: See you have lots—you're remembering more stories.

Orr: Yeah.

Cole: I wish—

Orr: You'll have to ask Bob some of my stories. He's heard them all these years.

Cole: Well, you know, if you miss any, let me know.

Orr: Yeah.

Cole: And you don't know any stories about any other women that were in our class?

Orr: No.

Cole: No.

Orr: I never was with one—I never flew with another woman. You keep saying so-and-so flew together.

Cole: Yeah.

Orr: I never did.

Cole: Well, see I think it was at B-26 school they gave us—

Orr: I always had—either I was a copilot for a man—see that's why I'm glad I didn't go to B-26 school.

Cole: Yes.

Orr: You're beginning to see how little they got—they experienced in the world. They just did that—they were in that school.

Cole: They did get sent from there to other places afterwards.

Orr: Oh, I know. But not like I was, you see. But I'm always scared to get into it with Madeline, and I'm very proud that I never have to this day—she'll never say that I've made her feel, you know, I've never brought it up with her, how much more I was able to achieve and to check out in and experience by being in the ferry command.

Cole: Because she wanted—I think one reason she wanted to go there—I think she said she wanted—she wanted twin engine time. How much more you got.
Orr: Oh, that's the point.

Cole: That was to be sure she got—

Orr: Yeah. Yeah. But she's never told me that.

Cole: I think she said that.

Orr: When we sat down together—because we were the two class officers, you know—and when we sat down together I said are you crazy? I said they're going to send us to B-26 school. But I said, you know, the rule that we've been told is according to our grades in ground school. We can demand that we get in the ferry command. And she said I just don't want to do that. I just don't want to do that. She said you go ahead and do whatever you want, but I'm not going to do that because they want us to go. And Jackie Cochran has spoken to us. She called me in and said you're just what we need; you're the right height, and we want you in B-26 school. She had just got that opening and gotten permission to send girls, and she wanted to send the best, she told us. And they wanted—they had to be tall. I don't know if any short people were sent to B-26 school—

Cole: A couple. They had to—finally got down to some that were not as short as I am.

Orr: But they really put up a case, and I really thought—I went to Dedie; I went to Dedie and I don't know if I cried or what. I said I don't think this is fair. They told us blah, blah, blah. And I said now this is the first time—our class, the first class in so long that they're going to allow some openings for the ferry command. And I insist—and I really was vehement, that I got into the ferry command. But Madeline said she just—it wasn't worth that much of a fight to her. But she never told me—but that was the way—she figured that that's the way she'd get in twin engine time. Because—who knows who makes all these decisions anyway. Where I went, and what I flew, and who looked after me, and—everybody was nice to me. Everyone was nice to me and I was a good girl, and you know, I didn't cause trouble.

Cole: Well, I'm trying to think if there's anything—can you think of anything else you want to get on this tape while we're here.

Orr: I haven't thought of anything for years. Isn't that awful!

Cole: Oh, come on. I'm sure you have.

Orr: No. No. I haven't thought about the WASP. There was a time when, years ago—see, now its 45 years, 46 years, right? Since we got out. Forty-six years. '44—December '44.

Cole: That's right.

Orr: What I'm trying to tell you is that for years there everybody wanted me to fly their planes. And I just got weaned away from flying over about a ten-year period. There was about ten years that I just wasn't even interested and particularly in little planes.

Cole: You know what's funny? I want to go back to little planes; isn't that funny?

Orr: Yeah. Well, that's not funny, that's good. But you see, I didn't want to. And most people have small planes. How can they afford anything else?

Cole: That's true. You can't.

Orr: And Bob's sister—Bob Orr—sister married a guy from Milwaukee, Al Trostill, and he bought a B-25 at the end of the war. He got it from an airline in Texas, and it came with a set of all new Pratt & Whitney engines and the whole thing. And he let me fly it, and I flew it. We went up to Nova Scotia, and we went up to Vancouver. I flew that B-25 down to Naples for about six winters. I flew it down to Naples, Florida. There's a strip there we could get it in. And after he died, and the plane—I just lost interest, and nothing was fun.

Cole: So you're not flying. You don't fly now?

Orr: No.

Cole: You know there's some still do—I went to Indo____ [?] about a year ago. A couple of these WASP came in their own plane, landed, and they're still flying around.

Orr: Our age.

Cole: Yes.

Orr: Well, they're all our age.

Cole: No.

Orr: As long as you've got your marbles.

Cole: There's no reason they couldn't still be flying if you wanted—my daughter has an airplane—she flies—but small; they have tail draggers. They're into these—which are now called "antique" planes.

Orr: Yeah. Of course.

Cole: She has antique planes.

Orr: That's darling. Like the cars.

Cole: Yeah.

Orr: Have you seen the group from Harlingen perform? With all the World War II planes?

Cole: No. No.

Orr: You ought to. Well, they go all over the country. They're stationed—they're based in Harlingen, Texas.

Cole: Harlingen, Texas, sure. That's where—

Orr: And it's called the—I always forget their name. It's nothing but World War II planes. And businessmen own them, and they go all over the United States. They come to Indiana. And I've flown as the B-29—and they have one flying B-29. It's—the name is Fifi. And it's made up of the parts of twenty-eight other B-29s.

Cole: And it's in Harl—?

Orr: Harlingen, Texas. It's the only flying B-29 in the United States. It's owned by—

Cole: Where is that close to?

Orr: Harlingen? It was one of the WASP bases. I know several girls that were in the WASP were stationed in Harlingen, flying navigators and bombardiers. Childress and Harlingen.

Cole: My daughter's in Dallas. They have a little strip and a hanger.

Orr: What's the command called? Damn it.

Cole: What?

Orr: This group in Harlingen. They go—

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