

Legacy Series Transcription
Transcribed by James Newberry
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James Newberry interviews Guy Gunter

Full Transcript

Interviewer: Okay, this is James Newberry, and I'm here with Guy Gunter on Wednesday, July 9th, 2014, at the Sturgis Library at Kennesaw State University. And Mr. Gunter, do you agree to this interview?

Gunter: Beg your pardon?

Interviewer: Do you agree to this interview?

Gunter: Yes, I do.

Interviewer: Okay, could you state your full name please?

Gunter: Guy Theron Gunter, Jr.

Interviewer: And Mr. Gunter, when and where were you born?

Gunter: I was born in Lawrenceville, Georgia, on June the 6th, 1918.

Interviewer: Okay, and where did you grow up?

Gunter: East Atlanta.

Interviewer: So could you describe for me East Atlanta and Atlanta in the 1920s, 1930s when you were growing up?

Gunter: I can't do much in the twenties, but-. The latter twenties I can, yes. It's the eastern part of Atlanta, Georgia. It's near East Lake. It's between East Lake and [clears throat] East Atlanta city. And I grew up on Marbut Avenue. 1535 Marbut Avenue, which is the end, the dead end of a street. And we didn't have much back in those days. And we bought the house. My father bought the house for \$2,900.95. And we paid \$100 a month, I think. But we had it rough. He was a policeman, and of course they didn't pay them very much money.

Interviewer: And what were your parents' names?

Gunter: Guy Theron Gunter, Sr. and Mamie Madge Gunter.

Interviewer: What did your mother do?

Gunter: She was a [the] housekeeper.

Interviewer: And did you have siblings?

Gunter: I have a brother and a sister living.

Interviewer: So, how was your family affected by the Great Depression?

Gunter: As bad as you can possibly be. We had it rough, but I was a kid so it didn't matter much to me. When we would return from school, my mother would have a pot of vegetable soup in the wintertime or a big baked sweet potato with a blob of margarine in it for us to eat when we got home from school. Course, they didn't feed you in school in those days. And we weren't to carry lunches because we didn't have that much food.

Interviewer: So what'd you eat at school?

Gunter: We didn't eat. We did without. We would go from eight o'clock in the morning 'til two in the afternoon.

Interviewer: And can you tell me a little about the school you went to when you were young?

Gunter: Well, the elementary school, and then I went to Murphy High School. That's a junior school. And then I went to Tech High School, and then I went to Georgia Tech.

Interviewer: And what did you study at Georgia Tech?

Gunter: Electrical Engineering.

Interviewer: And when you completed your degree...

Gunter: I never completed. I was working while I was going to Tech. I went to night school. And the war came along in 1942. They sent me an invitation to join the Army. They drafted me. I was traveling for General Electric Company at the time. I was the youngest salesman they ever put on the road. In Geo-. I had Macon, Columbus, Augusta south. But there weren't many people in Georgia, in that part of the country then. But I did alright.

Interviewer: What kind of a salesman were you?

Gunter: Electrical appliances. Well, back in those days, electrical supplies: wires, switchgear, transformers. All types of stuff to run an electric operation.

Interviewer: And you were successful?

Gunter: Yes. I made my quota... for two years. And then I had to go in the service.

Interviewer: And when did you meet your future wife?

Gunter: I met her at Ormewood Presbyterian Church in 1930, I think it was.

Interviewer: So you were still young?

Gunter: Little young, yeah.

Interviewer: And what was her name?

Gunter: Evelyn Davis.

Interviewer: So uh, when-. Do you remember when you heard about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor?

Gunter: Yes. I was at Tenasin's [spelling] drive in with a bunch of buddies. And I had a bunch of half bottles of whiskey in the trunk of the car. And we all got pretty well soused.

Interviewer: And that was after you heard the news?

Gunter: Yes.

Interviewer: What was going through your head at the time?

Gunter: Well, we thought the world's coming to an end. We didn't know what to think. We knew we're all going in the service. So life didn't look too bright for us.

Interviewer: Did you want to fight?

Gunter: Yes, I wanted to go in.

Interviewer: So can you tell me about being drafted?

Gunter: Well, Evelyn and I went together for eleven years before we were married because we had several interruptions. Uh, what was the question now?

Interviewer: Can you tell me about being drafted?

Gunter: Excuse me. I was traveling for General Electric, and I got a call from my mother in Albany, Georgia, telling me I had an invitation to join the Army from President Roosevelt. So that was in July of '41, and I was to go in January the 2nd of 1942. I had applied-. It was wrong, it was September. I had applied in July with the Naval Air Station and was going to flight school. And they didn't have an opening until

April-. Excuse me, uh, February of '42. So they put me on hold, and they drafted me. They wouldn't give me a 30-day deferment. So I had to go in the Army. And I was fortunate enough to get in the Air Force. That was in Chanute. No, not Chanute Field. That was in Texas, the worst part of Texas. I can't think-.

Interviewer: Sheppard Field?

Gunter: Sheppard Field.

Interviewer: How do you describe Sheppard Field?

Gunter: Uh, the rear end of an elephant.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Gunter: It would rain on your head, sand was blowing in your face, and you were standing in water up to your knees. It was a horrible place.

Interviewer: And that's where you started training?

Gunter: Yes, and I had enough college so they would let me go to Link instructor school, which was a school for training pilots to fly instruments. And we learned to fly the Link instructor, which was a container like a box. And you'd put the pilot in the box, and you could twirl him around and rock him up and down. And he had to fly instruments. And you'd give him courses to take, courses to fly. And of course we didn't know anything about flying. We had no training. But we knew how to run the Link. So I went to Chanute Field, and I graduated there in three months. And they sent me to Savannah Air Base for instructing. And I tried to transfer from the Air Force to the Navy in route to or when I got to Savannah. But while I was in route down there, they changed the rules so you couldn't transfer from one branch of the service to another for flight training. So I was stuck.

Interviewer: Why did you want to transfer to the Navy?

Gunter: I wanted to fly for the Navy. I thought it'd be more pleasurable and more informative. And I could sleep between white sheets at night [laughs].

Interviewer: So you said you were at Chanute Field?

Gunter: Chanute.

Interviewer: Where is that?

Gunter: It's in Illinois. Champagne, Illinois.

Interviewer: And that's where the Link instructor class was?

Gunter: Yeah. Well, it was one of them. We had all kinds of schools there. They had a mechanic's school and several other schools.

Interviewer: And what did you do in Savannah?

Gunter: Taught pilots to fly Link, to fly instruments. And I was only there for 30 days. 60 days, I guess it was. And uh, the-. I went over to the school officer's office to take a test for Link, for uh, for some kind of training. It didn't matter what. I couldn't take pilot training because they had too long a line waiting to fly, learn to fly. So I went over and I took a test for armor, the armored division. And passed it. And I told the school officer I just had to fly. So I went back to my Link office. He called me that afternoon, and he said, "Hey, Guy. How would you like to be a glider pilot?" I said, "What is that?" He said, "You fly without engines." I said, "Well, do you fly?" He said, "Yeah." "Do you go overseas?" He said, "Yes." I said, "I'm for it." So I went back to the office to take another training test. They ran me through another test for the glider pilot training. And the following Saturday we cleared the base in Savannah, and I drove to Atlanta and spent the night with my family. And the next morning we drove to Hays, Kansas. There's a college there for girls, well, I think it was for girls back then. Teacher's college. And they gave us our primary training there. And that consisted of flying Cubs or Ronkers, tailor crafts [spelling]. And that means nothing to you, but it does to people that know about flying. And we had to fly from, land in wheat fields, and would outline them with smudge pots. And we'd have to land at night from one thousand to six thousand feet, dead stick, which means you kill the engine and pull the prop up so it stops wind milling. And then you go in and land. That's part of the training. We had a lot of other training too. Had a lot of day training. And that lasted for six weeks, I think it was. And after that we went to Lubbock, Texas, for basic training and advanced training. There they trained us in a Ronkers with the engine removed. They put a person, put the instructor in the middle of two students. And we landed those Ronkers without any engines for a while and did the basic training, basic training. And then we went into advanced. And they had some sail planes that we flew which were a lot of fun. And then towards the end of the training, they brought in the CG4A's. And that was interesting. The people that brought them in were fighter pilots, and they had never flown a glider. And they were scared to death of it. And they were supposed to instruct us, but they were too frightened. So we instructed ourselves. So we taught ourselves to fly CG4A's, which was the one we would use throughout the war. It carried thirteen troops, pilot and copilot. Or it would carry a jeep. Or it would carry a 155 millimeter Howitzer. Or it would carry a small 22,000 pound, 2,200 pound, thousand pound bulldozer. Which meant it was overloaded by 2,000 pounds. And the ones that got to fly that were dead ducks [laughs]. There were 109 of us in the first class at Lubbock. That was South Plains Air Force, they called it. And we were supposed to remain as instructors. Well, we get an order in-. We graduated in November the 10th, 1942. And we get orders to transfer us to Austin, Texas, where we had a lot of fun with the girls. And then we were-. I told

my CO [Commanding Officer] that I was getting married that next Saturday, following Saturday. Evelyn was coming, gonna fly out to San Antonio. We had a chaplain to marry us. And he said, "I can't tell you anything," – this was Friday night – "but you won't be here Saturday [laughs]." This was the following Saturday. And I said, "Okay, I'll call Evelyn." So I called her and told her at nine o'clock Friday night not to come. So that postponed our wedding. And the next morning before daylight, we were on troop trains going to Virginia. And we sailed out of Virginia on December the 1st, I believe it was.

Interviewer: How did Evelyn feel about the marriage being postponed?

Gunter: She was upset [laughs]. But that was the second time. We tried to marry when we were seventeen, and her folks sent her off to college. And my folks said, "You ain't gone bring another woman in the house." So that settled that. That was the first time. This was the second time. Oh, the third time. The second time, I started traveling for GE at 21 years of age, and I said, "I don't know whether I can make it or not. Let's wait and see if I make it." So two years later we were-. When I got my notice they were drafting me, we were in Albany, Georgia, getting ready to buy a place down there. And uh-. So that postponed it a second time. This was the third postponement.

Interviewer: Was she beginning to wonder if you'd ever marry?

Gunter: If I'd ever marry?

Interviewer: Was Evelyn beginning to wonder if you'd ever get married?

Gunter: No, no. She-. We were dedicated. But I'm sure she wondered. She didn't know if I was coming back or not.

Interviewer: So you shipped out of Virginia?

Gunter: Yeah. Norfolk, Virginia on the Mariposa. And that was a beautiful luxury liner. Very fast. 21 knots. And we went over without an escort 'cause we had submarines all over the place, you know. German subs. We were aboard the Mariposa 45 days. 43 days, I think it was. And we went around the Cape of Good Hope into Egypt. We landed in Fayid, Egypt 45 days, 43 days later.¹ And Fayid, Egypt was where we were stationed. We had nothing to do. They had no gliders. They didn't know what to do with us, but they wanted us overseas. So we were on a British base, and the food was horrible. We had steak once a week. It was camel steak, and that comes from dead camels that are too damned old to work anymore, so they kill them. And the more you chew, the bigger the wad got in your mouth [laughs]. So the food was terrible. We stayed there for 30 days, I guess it was. And had a great time. And I met the family of King Farouk over there. We were in Cairo or in Cairo – three of us boys. And we were in the mosque. And this is a

¹ Site of British Royal Air Force base, RAF Fayid.

sideline, but anyway. We met these young people there, and they wanted-. We had on our pinks and greens. That's the uniform we wore. Looked like something out of Hollywood. And they wanted to take us over to the, to their-, one of their mansions for a tea that evening. And we'd all been drinking. And Tom Lockard was with us. And Tom was 6'2", state trooper from California. And he was 'bout drunk, and he comes over to meet them. And he burps a big loud burp. Well in that mausoleum it just reverberates from wall to wall to wall [laughs]. So it embarrassed the fool out of me. And I apologized and told them we weren't in a condition to come over there [laughs]. This is something I shouldn't bring up. Anyway, after Egypt we went to Tripoli. Tripoli to-. Stayed there a couple of weeks, I guess it was. And we went to Blida, Algeria, which is outside of- 60 kilometers outside of Algiers. And we flew copilot on C-47s while we were there. And we would fly flights from Blida to Casablanca, Blida to Gibraltar, Blida to Cairo. And they were long flights, boring. And we stayed there for 30 days, and then they gave me an assignment to take four, eight glider pilots down to Accra, South Africa, which is on the Gold Coast. We assembled two gliders down there, and we were gonna fly them back to Blida, which would be the longest towed flight in history. We assembled the gliders in 30 days and flew them back to Blida, and when we landed there, there were gliders all over the field. While we were in Accra, the Allies had opened the Mediterranean so the ships could go in and out. And they had dumped a bunch of gliders in Casablanca to be assembled. So we had a historian with us to write everything, see? He wrote about the birds and the bees in the jungle and the mountains, and said a little squib about gliders. He didn't do much for us [laughs]. So we didn't get any credit for that – longest glider flight in history...towed flight.

Interviewer: And did you meet other historical figures while you were in Egypt?

Gunter: No, I only met the family of Farouk. But in the meantime after the-. I started meeting different people after we got back from that horrible flight. We flew one day over the desert eleven hours, and that was rough. Bouncing back and forth. Everybody got sick, and you'd fly while one threw up [laughs]. And then he'd stop throwing up, and another would get in there. So it was horrible. Anyway, after that they sent us to Carawan [spelling], transferred the group over there to train the British glider pilots to fly our CG4A's, which we did for 30 days, I guess it was. And while we were doing that, we got to meet General Montgomery, who had gotten credit for winning the war in the desert. He was the worst general we ever had, the British ever had. But he's a little bitty short guy...one of these guys that takes apples to school teachers [laughs]. And after that we would train the British glider pilots, and on Friday nights they would get their ration of Scotch. And if they'd give us their ration of Scotch, we'd let 'em fly from the left seat. And then they came up with the Mission to Sicily. And 36, well more than that, volunteered to fly as copilot with the British into Sicily, which we did. Out of the 36, 16 of us got back. And the reason for that is, the American tow pilots went into the Bay of Siracusa, where we were gonna land in Syracuse. And there was anti-aircraft fire. And I got hit in the face and the leg. And they said, "We can't go

in, it's too hard, too difficult, so release!" I said, "Man, we're gonna land in the water." He said, "That's too bad. Either you release, or we're gonna release you." And about that time the rope came flying back towards us. So we had to land in the water. We were in the water overnight holding on to the glider. And there was the British colonel, the lieutenant in charge of the armored division we were taking in. He said, "Lieutenant, will you pray for us?" I said, "Hell no, prayer for yourself. I'm scared to death [laughs]. I'm praying for me." Three of the boys came up to him and said, "We want to swim ashore." He said, "I can't say that." He asked me, "What do you think, lieutenant?" I said, "If they can make it, let 'em go." And so they did. But we never heard any more from them. I bring that up later. And we were picked up the next day by a Greek destroyer. And they took me into Algiers to the hospital. And of course the only thing they know to do in these army hospitals is cut your leg off if something's wrong with you. And that's what bothers me about all these veterans coming back from the war in Afghanistan. They're taking so many legs off. They were gone take my leg off. Of course I had gangrene set in my, in my groin, and a knot as big as my fist in purple and blue, those beautiful colors, going down my leg to my knee. So I got up when they told me what they were gone do and dressed and went back to my base. And there was a lieutenant Bud Yavlow, doctor, and I told him to put hot compacts on my leg. I thought that would cure it. And they did. And he operated on me two days later. He didn't operate. He just punctured the area and drained, let it drain, which hurt like the dickens. And it wouldn't get well in Tunisia. We were in Tunisia then because the [garbled] are so dirty over there. And I went back to Sicily, or rather, the base-. The group moved over to Sicily after the operation. We'd been in the desert so long. And it healed in 30 days. So it shows if you've got good clean air, you're okay. Anyway, we were in Sicily, and they-. I wrote a letter to Washington complaining about Sergeant Sam. That's what we called him as a nickname for this general who was towing me. And they sent me up to Command, 9th troop carrier Command, in Palermo, Sicily, to fly these old, 40-year-old men around – the island officers and field grade officers, in a Fairchild 24. So I did that for a couple of three months. And then they sent us, sent me back to the base to get ready to send us up to England. This was latter part of '43 and first of '44. And while there a C-54 came over with President Roosevelt in it. And he came over to do whatever he was gonna do to Patton. And a bunch of generals were waiting there for him. And when Patton came up, they all walked away from him. They wouldn't have anything to do with him. So when President Roosevelt got out of his C-54, they put that covered, whatever board over his seat in the jeep so he could sit in it. And they drove up to the generals and spoke to all of them. And he said, "George [Patton], get in the back and ride around with me [laughs]." That was the reprimand. So after that we had him in our-. We were stationed in Castelvetrano [Sicily] then, and the power pilots-. There was a big difference between power pilots and glider pilots. They got all the breaks, and we didn't get any. They were in permanent barracks in town. We were in tents out on the airport. And we had an officer's club set up and had a bar, and they wanted us to use our bar for President Roosevelt and General Patton and the others. And we told them we could do it if they paid us for it. So President

Roosevelt – I'll never forget it – he says, “Boys, we don't get whiskey sours like this at home anymore. We sent 'em all over here to you!” And he winked. And Patton said, “Give me another one of these goddamned martinis [laughs]!” And he looked me and said, “Boy, don't I know you?” I said, “No sir.” I'd met him before. But that's another story. That's funny though. I'll tell it. Before I left Command, General Williams called me in and says, “Do you know anybody that speaks Italian?” And I said, “Yes, Aldo Garoni.” He's a captain down at this field where Patton had his troops, training them. And he said, “Call him. See if he'll go with us.” So we went over to Naples for Colonel Gavin's first star. And of course Aldo went. I flew down to that big field, and of course there's no airport there, and I landed in the field. And Aldo was there waiting in one corner of this big damn field. And here comes Patton in his jeep with flags waving and the sirens blowing and lights flashing. He gets out of the jeep, and he says, “God [garbled expletives]!” I won't repeat what he said. He said, “You'll kill all my troops! What the hell are you doing down here anyway?” I said, “General sent me down here to get Captain, Colonel Garoni.” “That Hollywood so-and-so!” He didn't like the general just because he had a P-51 as a personal plane. And anyway, when I get back, he says, “Get this blanket-blank airplane out of here right now! And I mean now!” I said, “Yes sir.” We got in, turned the damn thing around, and blasted the hell out of him. [Laughs] So that's why I didn't want to tell him that he'd met me before. I get back to the headquarters, and General calls me in and says – I figured he's gone chew me out – he says, “Guy, did you ducked [spelling] him off good?” I says, “Yes sir [laughs].” Now that sounds like bull, but that's a true story. [Long pause] Let's see, from there we went up to England in Oct-, March of '44 to train for D-Day. And they sent me down to my base-. We were based in Cottesmore, England, 316th Troop Carrier group. I was in the 36th Squadron. And I can't think of the damn-. The thing-. D-Day just blanked out on me. I don't know why. But we trained, and we took a, flew a pathfinder group, the 82nd Airborne into-, south of the front. 25-30 miles south. We didn't see any action much there. And we were out of that-. By the way, the 5th of June when the weather held up the invasion, Eisenhower was at our base. I did not meet him, but I got to see him. I was as close as I am to you right here. He came over to our base and visited. And I can't think of the name to save my life now. I been trying for two days. And we went in at 12:00, took off at 12:00 at night and landed about 1:00 or 1:15. And the only problems we had was a little bit of light fire which we took care of in a hurry. And we were out of there in five days.

Interviewer: How did you stay awake for the flight?

Gunter: Well, we had a little fight. The fighting was up north of us.

Interviewer: But for the flight. It was late at night.

Gunter: Oh, twelve o'clock, yeah.

Interviewer: And how did you stay alert and awake?

Gunter: [laughs] You scared to death [laughs]. Well, we also took Bazedril [spelling; perhaps Bazedrine]. And you take a Bazedril tablet and a shot of scotch, and your eyes get that big [laughs]. And you don't sleep for days.

Interviewer: And it was on your birthday.

Gunter: Yeah. June the 6th. And they sang "Happy Birthday" to me on the way over. And then we worked our way out, came back on one of the troop carriers, ships out there. We were back in England in five or six days. So we didn't do anything in Holland. I mean in...Normandy to speak of. Nothing to brag about.

Interviewer: How many troops were in your glider?

Gunter: Thirteen.

Interviewer: So after that, did you go back to the Mediterranean?

Gunter: Yeah, but that's a story-. I went back to my outfit. It's out of Redding. I can't think of the name of it. And they transferred us back, transferred me back to 316 troop carrier group in Cottesmore [England] to prepare for the invasion of southern France. So I went back and flew in, down the-. No, they did-. I flew out of Redding again. That's where I flew out of. And there was a-. The day that we went over to in the, D-Day, the night before, this chaplain came up to me. Fitzgerald. He said, "Lieutenant, you mind if I pray for you?" He said, "I'm Catholic, and I know you're Protestant." And I said, "I don't care. I wish everybody would. I'm scared to death." Anyway, after we got back he and I became big buddies, and he was going to go down to Italy with us. We were going to fly from England to Italy for the southern France invasion. And he's all set to go. And he-. I told him I'd take him to Rome, and we'd go and see the pope and all this. I'm just talking [laughs]. And they said, "We got enough Catholic chaplains down in Italy. We don't need anymore." So he didn't get to go, at least he thought. We flew to southern, to northern Si-, Italy, cut out a place for landing, built a field there to land and take off. And I'm just lying in the tent one day. We were in tents. And I hear a high-pitched Irish voice. It was Fitzgerald hollering, "Lieutenant Gunter! Lieutenant Gunter!" They had to send another flight down, another plane, and he got on it. So I was able to take him into Rome, to the-. We called it "Gonorrhea Gardens." It was a officer's club. And uh [laughs], we sitting in this little ol' upstairs things looking down on a dance floor. And they bring these little teenage girls in to do dances for us. And they'd have on flowers over their upper part and lower part. And that'd be about all. And he was sitting there enjoying the hell out of it. He looked around at me. I was pulled back of him. I was enjoying watching the guy that wasn't supposed to do that [laughs]. And he said, "You son-of-a-bitch! You tricked me, didn't you?" And I said, "No, don't worry about it." Anyway, we got to see, and we got to meet the pope. Pope John

XII, I think it was.² Little bitty guy. Everybody'd kiss his ring. Well, I didn't kiss his ring. And he asked me a couple of questions. Pretty sharp guy. And Fitz got to meet him, so that was a highlight for him being overseas. And after that we went into southern France. Of course that was an easy mission. And we had anti-glider and anti-parachute poles, pine trees that they'd planted in the big field we were going to land in. So we landed the gliders in between the poles. [It] sheared the wings off, which was an advantage to us because it stopped our forward motion, where we could get out of the glider in a hurry. 'Cause there's always somebody mad at you on the ground, shooting at you. Then after that we went back to England and got ready for the Holland invasion, biggest invasion we ever had. 1,876 gliders. And we went into the 21st of September, I believe it was. We were in there 21 days. It was a long steal. But it worked out all right. We held the bridge at Grave. As we were flying in, we went 45 miles behind the front. And we flew over Veghel, which was an anti-aircraft school for the Germans. And the pilot called me and said, "Hey, Guy! They're shooting at me up here." I said, "What the hell you think they're doing to us [laughs]?" Anyway we-. That was a good show. We stayed there 21 days. And then when I came out, the glider pilots brought truckloads of prisoners with us, to a prison camp near Belgium, in Belgium. And we stayed in Brussels so long they sent MPs [Military Police] over to get us. None of us wanted to go back to England [laughs]. And after that they wouldn't let me go into Wiesel. That was the last mission we pulled.

Interviewer: Why didn't you want to leave Brussels?

Gunter: Fun [laughs]. Beautiful women [laughs].

Interviewer: So what would you say were the best parts of that time, flying those missions in Sicily, in France, and in the Netherlands?

Gunter: The Netherlands. See they gave us milk there when we landed. We never got any milk. The farmers would bring the milk out to us, bring-. They'd start pouring it in our cups, bringing it out in teacups. They'd start pouring in our mess kit cups. We just had a ball. They were nice to us.

Interviewer: Did you meet the German prisoners?

Gunter: [Laughs] I didn't meet them. We carried them, carried 'em in the trucks, yeah.

Interviewer: So, did you have any communication at this time with your family back home and Evelyn?

Gunter: Oh yeah. Evelyn and I broke up overseas, while I was overseas. I thought D-Day would be rough. And I just wrote her and told her she ought to start finding somebody else. But when I came back home-. Well, before that we were in

² Pope Pius XII reigned from 1939 to 1958.

Reims, France. And then we had VE [Victory in Europe] Day.³ And that's funny one. I had my little motor scooter that I had mechanics build for me, that I designed in Paris. I was riding up and down the streets of Paris on VE Day with a beautiful young lady named Mademoiselle Eveline on the back and had a ball [laughs]. Then they sent us home, and I went home on a Victory boat, one of those horrible things. And when I got home, Evelyn came over to the house to see me. I didn't know she knew I was at home. Somebody told her. And anyway, she said, "You ought to go to church tomorrow." And I said, "Yeah." So we went to church, and we started going back together again. Then we had our first night out was at the Biltmore Hotel. They had the patio outside the back. They had a full band every weekend. And it was great. So she asked me if I was going to marry her. I said, "Yeah, but when we get out the service." She said, "I can't wait any longer." So I said, "I'll give you an answer tomorrow," which was Sunday. I went home, and I didn't sleep a damn wink. Got up in the morning, and father was milking the cow. He says, "Let me finish dripping this cow, and we'll go up and tell your mama." Went up and told mother and Gerry, my sister. They cried, "You just been home one day! You don't know Evelyn well enough!" [Laughs] And I'd known her eleven years. Then I went over to her house to get her, and her folks were having breakfast. I said, "Where's Evelyn?" "She's upstairs getting dressed for church." I went upstairs, and she's sitting there in that shimmy thing, they call it, in her skirt, fixing her face. And I said, "You want to get married next Saturday?" She says, "Are you kidding?" I says, "No." She said, "Yes." So that was it. And we had the wedding at her house. We had 200 people there, and it was a real nice wedding. Had a chaplain. And, of course everybody's giving her drinks. Went out these-. I belonged to the athletic club. We went out to East Lake, and they were all giving her drinks. She'd get drunk every night, she didn't mean to. Didn't just get drunk, she'd get sick. We didn't consummate the wedding until three days later [laughs].

Interviewer: So did you, did you get a job after that when you got back? What did you do?

Gunter: Went back with GE.

Interviewer: Went back to GE?

Gunter: Stayed with 'em six months. Went in business for myself. Gunter-Johnson Electric Supply Company. And we sold wire switchgear. Stuff homes-. For electrical industry. And then after three years my partner wanted to sell out. And it was a buy-sell deal. I bought first. Then he wanted all cash. I said, "No, you broke-. You didn't live up to a gentleman's agreement. I'll have to think about it." So I decided to let him have it. Well, he didn't have the cash. He had four children. So he had to pay me my salary for a year before he could get it together. And we had a branch in Savannah. He closed Atlanta and kept Savannah open so he could pay me off, which was a mistake. And then I went in the business I'm in now after that.

³ May 8, 1945.

Interviewer: And can you tell me what that business is?

Gunter: Appliances. We sell appliances.

Interviewer: So tell me a little bit about your time in Cuba?

Gunter: We went over there for ten days. Ran out of money. Had to wire back, have the family wire me money. We had a ball in Cuba, but before that-. Yeah, before that I met Batista.⁴ I went over on-. I bought a little airplane after we went in business. And I flew over to Havana, and I sold 'em a carload of rubber tape. Electrician tape. And he's a gentleman. He was a Shriner and a fine man as far as I was concerned. Cuba went to hell after he left 'course.

Interviewer: So did you, did you enjoy yourself in Havana? What sort of things did you do in Havana?

Gunter: No, well, when we went over on, after I sold my business, we just had a ball. We went to nightclubs every night. During the day we visited around different places. We just had a great time. [Garbled] beach is nice. It's all a great country.

Interviewer: So tell me about your family today?

Gunter: Well, I have two sons and a daughter. One son's a chiropractor. The other son's a preacher. My daughter works for me. And my daughter doesn't have any children. She doesn't want any. She has horses and dogs, and that's her life. She's married. They been married 34 years now. Very happy. My son, the chiropractor, he's the oldest. He's doing well. He just got married a couple years ago to the gal he should've married the first time [laughs]. That was his fourth marriage. And the preacher son took a church from less than a hundred to 1,200 in ten years. He had five or six hundred kids attending on Sunday. Had taken it from hundred members to 1,200 members. And then he hired this pretty little secretary, and you know what happens [laughs].

Interviewer: So who is running your business?

Gunter: My grandson.

Interviewer: And what's his name?

Gunter: Theron.

Interviewer: So he's named after you?

⁴ Fulgencio Batista was the dictator of Cuba from 1952 to 1959, when he was overthrown during the Cuban Revolution.

Gunter: Well, the middle name, yeah.

Interviewer: So when you think about your service in World War II, how does that make you feel today?

Gunter: I feel great. I feel like I should've done it. I had a good time, and they paid me.

Interviewer: And why did you share your experiences with me today?

Gunter: I don't know [laughs].

Interviewer: Just felt like it?

Gunter: I guess so. I liked you. You were nice. Yeah, just tell you-. I'll tell you why. You came over and you were nice and polite and you seemed interested. And I think somebody should be interested in World War II. Especially the glider pilots. We were the asshole of the Air Force. Excuse the French. Nobody wanted to tow us 'cause they had to tow you at 120 miles an hour. At 120 miles an hour, the C-47, which towed us, ran hot. It would still fly, but it ran hot. That scared 'em. So they didn't want to tow us, but they had to. They didn't have any choice. We were-. When we graduated we were graduated as flight officers. Well, there'd never been a flight officer before. So they paid us twenty percent overseas pay, and the regular officers only got ten percent. That t'd everybody off. We were a bunch of wild Indians, I guess you might say, the glider pilots. They-. You had to be crazy to be one, I guess. Or a little bit on the nutty side, to get into something without an engine. But we were doing our duty. But getting back to you, you were a nice young man. You seem interested, and that's the only reason I drove way the hell up here. This is dumb, I'm thinking, driving up here. Here, I'm driving up here to carry on a bunch of crap [laughs].

Interviewer: Thank you, Mr. Gunter.

Gunter: You're welcome.