

Texas City / World War II Oral History Project

Audited Transcript

Interviewee: Col. Thomas Sledge

Interviewer: Vivi Hoang

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[00:04]

Vivi Hoang: This is Vivi Hoang. I'm here with Col. Thomas Sledge. We are in the meeting room at Moore Memorial Public Library in Texas City, Texas. This interview is for an oral history project about Texas City during World War II. Today is May 22, 2012.

Okay. Col. Sledge, when is your birthday?

Thomas Sledge: My birthday is the 29th of December of each year.

VH: What year was that?

TS: I was born in 1921.

VH: Okay, and that makes you?

TS: Ninety years old.

VH: Ninety years old.

TS: This past December.

VH: Okay. And where were you born?

TS: I was born in Laurel, Mississippi.

VH: Okay.

TS: L-a-u-r-e-l, Mississippi.

VH: All right. And when did you and your family come here to Texas City?

TS: I was raised and went through all my schooling in Shreveport, Louisiana. I came to Texas City 1 September 1939. They tease me, all my friends tease me about coming on 1 September 1939 because they said Sledge invaded Texas City the same day that Hitler invaded Poland. (Laughs.)

VH: What do you say to that?

TS: So I've been teased about that for a long time. But I arrived here in Texas City on a bus 1 September 1939 and got off the bus at Lucas Café and asked them where my dad's drugstore was.

My dad has asked me to come down and work in his drugstore. So I asked them, "Where is Sledge's pharmacy?" and they directed me on 6th Street to the tallest building, the biggest building on 6th Street, which is Mainland Building. And I walked down to the drugstore and went in and saw my dad. He and I lived in the back of the drugstore.

[2:07]

VH: Oh, okay. So your dad came here before—

TS: Before I did. My mother and dad were divorced. And I was living with my mother in Shreveport. Then my dad, when I graduated from high school, asked me to come down and work in his drugstore. And back in '39 there weren't many jobs and they weren't paying very well, so I hopped on the bus and came down here when I was seventeen.

VH: I see.

TS: Started working as a soda jerker in the drugstore.

VH: What was your first impression of Texas City?

TS: A very small town. Only five thousand people at that time. I think it was about right around five thousand. And I'd left Shreveport, Louisiana, which had a hundred thousand people. I thought I really got into a small town.

VH: What kind of feelings did you have about that? Because that's a pretty big change.

TS: I beg your pardon?

VH: What kind of feelings did you have about that since that's a pretty big change to go from a city of a hundred thousand to a city of five thousand.

TS: Well, being in the drugstore business I met a lot of people. And particularly a lot of young people because my dad had a very nice soda fountain. He served sandwiches and things like that. So we had a lot of people coming in and buying drinks and ice cream and things like that. So I met a lot of people here and it didn't take me long.

My dad bought me a 1937 Ford four-door sedan. I'd had nothing but a bicycle before then. (Laughs.) So I was really impressed with being in Texas City and working in my dad's drugstore and having an automobile and meeting all these new people.

Having an automobile really helped out meeting a lot of people and having a lot of activity, which I did not have in Shreveport. We did not have an automobile in Shreveport; we rode the bus or the bicycle (laughs) everywhere we went.

[4:24]

VH: What kind of city was of Texas City like? You said it was small, but?

TS: Small—everything was concentrated on 6th Street and Texas Avenue. I mean, almost everything was concentrated. There was no Palmer Avenue with all of this. It was—everything was lined up on 6th Street and Texas Avenue.

At that time we had a lot of ships coming in. A lot of ships. And these people would get off the ships; they would walk all the way from the docks down there down through 6th Street all the way to my dad's drugstore. We had a lot of sailors come in and buy things and get things to drink and so forth.

So we had all kinds of stores on 6th Street. We had barber shops, cafes, grocery stores. And believe it or not, Texas City with five thousand people had five drugstores. Now that's a lot of drugstores for five thousand people.

VH: Was there a lot of competition?

TS: They were located at different parts of Texas City and we all got along real well.

VH: Did they all stay pretty busy?

TS: Stayed pretty busy. Yeah.

VH: What kinds—how long were you here in Texas City before you left for the military?

TS: Well, I got tired of working in the drugstore. My dad kept that thing open from seven to eleven every day of the week. He never closed it. And our hours were long. So I wanted to try something else so I went to work at one of the plants out here.

I made pretty good money. The plants were paying better than most places in the United States during the Depression years. So I had a pretty good job there. I worked several months there.

[6:35]

Then my dad says, why don't I go to school. So I went to the University of Texas. And I was going to the University—I had one year in when Pearl Harbor happened. I dropped out of school that day, I came down to Houston, I got into the Air Force as an aviation cadet and went in at Ellington Field. This was in December 1941, right after Pearl Harbor.

So I left Texas City (laughs) when they sent me out to California to go through flying school. And then I was commissioned on the 4th of July 1942 on holiday. My flying class got our wings on the 4th of July. So then I was in the Air Force for the next thirty-eight years.

But I came back to Texas City periodically. But the time I was here, from '39 until I went off to the University—that was '40, '41. So I saw Texas City grow up a little bit during that time. They were coming out of the recession. And we had more jobs and more wealth here in Texas City because of our industry than most other towns in the state.

[8:16]

We had chemical plants and we had the tin smelter. We had chemical—Monsanto—we had a lot of chemical and a lot of oil. And we had good jobs and good paying. Texas City was starting to come out of it.

VH: You said you went to work at one of the plants?

TS: Uh-huh?

VH: Which plant did you go work for?

TS: It was Monsanto.

VH: What did you do for Monsanto?

TS: Well, I was a timekeeper for the contractor who was building the plant.

VH: What does that mean? Can you talk a little bit about your job, what that involves?

TS: Well, this is interesting. I would go to work at four o'clock in the afternoon and everybody's getting off work. Then I would collect all the time cards and I'd record these. It got so that (laughs)—I'm a little ashamed to tell this—but it got so that I could go out and do all of that in a short time. Not eight hours but maybe three or four hours.

Then I would go down to a night club and wait until time for me to check out. I'd go back, check out, and go home. (Both laugh.)

VH: You got pretty efficient. (Both laugh.)

TS: We had a nice nightclub out there. I can't remember the name of it right now. Starlight or something like that. It was well behaved, no big drinking, and all that stuff. But dancing, and music and a lot of young people. Had a good time there.

VH: Okay. Did you enjoy working for Monsanto during those few months?

TS: Yes, they treated me very well. That's when—that was the last job I had before I went off to the University of Texas in Austin.

VH: What did you study or plan on studying at UT?

TS: I was studying pharmacy because my dad was sending me up there and he was a pharmacist (laughs) in the drug store. He wanted me to take over the drugstore business.

[10:31]

VH: Oh, I see. I'd like to talk more about what Texas City was like during those few years you were here. You said there was a lot of business at 6th Street. In what ways was the city changing during that time?

TS: Well, they started building houses. They started paving the streets. You can't believe how many streets at that time, in '39, '40, '41, were gravel. They weren't paved. All of Bay Street up there where I live now was gravel.

Out here past 13th and 14th, all those, there was nothing there. Those houses have all been built up. The city just started expanding in that time period and of course World War II came along and that helped expansion.

VH: What kinds of things would you do for fun? What kinds of things would you do for fun?

TS: Oh, for fun?

VH: When you weren't working?

TS: Well, we'd go to Starlight, the thing, and went to Galveston a lot. Galveston had—we had one theater here. They had several theaters in Galveston. We could see more films.

Of course, they had the beach. That was fun for the young people, to go to the beach and do the things they're doing now. (Laughs.)

Then we had the dike out here, which was a nice place to go. But there weren't too many places to go in Texas City itself at that time.

[12:25]

VH: I see. That's why you would go to Galveston, for example.

TS: That's what having an automobile made a big difference in my—me having fun.

VH: Definitely. I can see that. Let's see. When you were working for your dad, can you describe the pharmacy, just the building that the business was in?

TS: Well, it's still the biggest building in Texas City, where my dad's drugstore was. We had the pharmacy in the back and he and I lived in the back of the drugstore. We had a big soda fountain with stools where people could sit on and we could serve them.

He had a big cosmetic section where all the ladies in Texas City could come in and buy their cosmetics, things like that. We had a news section with all the magazines. Had all the things that you find in drugstores nowadays but not on a level like Walgreens or CVC [CVS], nothing that big. But we all the medicines and things that people wanted. We gave it to them.

And we used to sell a lot of things to the seamen. Seamen would walk all the way from way out there by the dike, would walk all the way through town. They had nothing to do while they were unloading or loading up a ship. Most of them were bringing oil in and unloading it, or chemicals. So we sold a lot of stuff to the seamen.

Now they had a big hotel, the Southern Hotel, out there. Had a couple houses of prostitution out there in the north, that part of town. And Texas Avenue was very busy back in those days. More so than it is now. Been a lot of changes in Texas Avenue and the western part.

[15:01]

VH: What kinds of things would the seamen come in—what were the most popular things that they would buy when they came?

TS: They'd buy a lot of cosmetics, I guess, take them back where they came from. They would buy, let's see, some books off the shelves. But mostly cosmetics, if I remember correctly, yeah.

VH: And you said you were a soda jerker, is that correct?

TS: I was a clerk, I did everything. (Laughs) Yeah, I was learning how to do it; my dad was teaching me how. But my dad was funny about his money. He would never pay me a salary. He would just say, "Go get whatever you want." That put the heat on me and bothered me.

That's one of the reasons I went out and got this job at the plant, because I got a weekly paycheck and knew what I was getting. It bothered me that my dad says, "You go get what you want, when you want it." You know, I didn't feel comfortable with that.

VH: I can understand that. You said you had a soda fountain in the pharmacy? What were some of the flavors you had?

TS: Oh, chocolate sodas. Boy, that was a favorite. And we had one of the best brands of ice cream that was available in the whole Houston area. It was expensive, but it was good ice cream, and people knew it. They would come to the drug store and get ice cream cones and sodas and everything made with this ice cream.

VH: Do you remember what brand it was?

TS: I don't remember the brand. But it was the highest-priced ice cream you could find in Texas City, but it was good.

[17:10]

VH: What were some favorite ice cream flavors that your—?

TS: Oh, strawberry and vanilla and chocolate. And then fountain Cokes were real popular. Rather than buying the Coke in the can or the bottle, you make them up out of the soda fountain. I remember you make cherry Cokes, you put a little cherry flavor in it and you put the Coke together. We experimented a lot. And I'd always have my friends come in and they'd always try and con me out of a free drink. (Laughs)

VH: And what would you say to that?

TS: Sometimes I'd give it to them, sometimes I wouldn't. But they knew if they stayed around long enough, I'd give them something to drink. (Laughs.)

VH: During this time, with the unrest going on abroad, how aware of the news were you? Was that something that you kept up with?

TS: I'm sorry?

VH: During this time, were you keeping up with the news? Is that something that you were interested in?

TS: Oh yeah, I was very interested in aviation, in the Air Force.

VH: So you already knew at that time.

TS: Oh, I was interested in aviation from the time I could read and understand. My mother took me up on a flight when I was about ten years old on a big airliner, what they had back in those days, it wasn't that big.

But I built model airplanes when I was growing up. I was really interested in aviation. So when the war came along I jumped into the aviation part of it.

VH: So did you always know that you would go into the military and—?

TS: I had to tell my dad. I was studying pharmacy but I knew that I had to get two years [of college] before the Air Force would accept you into flying school. The war came along, they changed all that; they'd accept you immediately. But before the war, you had to have two years of college before you could go into flying school.

VH: So your dad sent you to study pharmacy but your plan—

TS: But I was going to (laughs) get the Air Force. Because the Air Force didn't care what your two years was in, but they wanted you to have two years. But that all changed when the war broke out.

VH: Do you remember where you were that day when Pearl Harbor was bombed?

TS: I was going to a class in pharmacy at the University. Let's see, I don't remember exactly where I was but I was engaged in studying. That particular day, I don't remember where I was.

[20:27]

VH: Do you remember how you heard the news?

TS: Oh, it got around real quick. I don't remember all the details but I knew the next day, I packed up and came down to Houston and enlisted.

VH: So your reaction was immediate.

TS: Immediate.

VH: What was kind of running through your mind at that time?

TS: Well, a lot of things because we were trying to figure out what had happened and what we were going to do and it was sort of panicky. Everybody wondering, well, where do we go from here? What are we going to do?

VH: Did you tell your dad right away what you were doing?

TS: Oh, yeah.

VH: What was his reaction?

TS: I called him and told him immediately what I was going to do. And he agreed with me.

VH: Tell me a little bit about—(sound of Mr. Sledge pulling out some old documents).

TS: (Bumps microphone.) There's a picture of me, "Sledge's Pharmacy," see.

VH: Oh my goodness.

TS: He had that put in the paper.

VH: Oh, okay, after we talk do you mind if I get a copy, make a photocopy of that?

TS: No, you can do that.

VH: Okay, great. When was that photo taken?

TS: That's when I was going through flying school out in California.

VH: Oh, okay. Where—

TS: But my dad, I sent him the photograph; he put the article in the paper. And that was in the Texas City paper.

VH: I see.

TS: (Bumps microphone.) He kept up with it. He was very interested in what I was doing, and how I was doing. He had no regrets about me going into the Air Force.

We had, at the time that I was here, a good friend by the name of Colonel Moore, H.B. Moore. This library was named after him. I really knew them very well. And there's quite a story behind Col. Moore. He had been in World War I and he knew my dad and he knew that I was gone overseas.

[22:57]

When I got over to India, that was my first assignment to fly combat, Col. Moore knew I was over there. I had written my dad and told my dad, I says, "We can't get any binoculars over here and we need binoculars so that we can see the enemy aircraft, and see targets on the ground." Col. Moore says to my dad, "I'll send him some."

Now, to this day, I'll never know how Col. Moore got those binoculars to me so fast but he sent me his binoculars that he had used during World War I and I carried them on all of my missions that I flew after I got them. I brought them back home and I donated them to the library. Well, something has happened to them and I've never been able to find them.

VH: Oh, no. I did not realize that.

TS: But anyway, Col. Moore was looking after me by sending me these binoculars.

VH: Wow, that's amazing. That's a great story.

TS: He was a nice guy.

VH: I'm sorry, were you going to say something?

TS: Hm?

VH: Were you going to say something?

TS: Well, the Moore family, they were very prominent in Texas City when I came. And the Noble family, who owned the Texas City National Bank, I got real friendly with them. One of my best friends was Bill Noble, the son, the older Noble that owned the bank. They were really good people and people that I enjoyed and went with to a lot of functions.

[24:48]

VH: Tell me about your military experience. You said you signed up and you trained in California?

TS: Trained in California.

VH: Where in California, exactly?

TS: Victorville.

VH: Okay.

TS: Victorville, California.

VH: What was training like for you?

TS: Flying every day, dropping bombs, navigating, learning how to fly the airplane, how to do this and do that. It was fast, but enjoyable.

VH: Was it what you expected?

TS: Yeah, yeah. And then when I graduated on the Fourth of July, I was then sent out to bombers. I got into bombers, and that's what I trained in and then I went to India in November '42 and spent almost two years in India and flew forty-five missions over in India. Then came back and was going to get out.

VH: Came back to—?

TS: Came back to the States and had assignments at different air bases. I was going to get out and about that time, I started testing atomic bombs. I was out in the Pacific testing bombs and then I got involved with the Korean War, teaching people how to drop guided bombs.

[26:23]

Then during the Texas City Explosion, I was getting ready to take off on a twenty-hour mission in a bomber up at Fort Worth, I was stationed at Fort Worth, and all of a sudden we had the engines all running, all four of them, going out at the end of the runway getting ready to take off, and the operations officer came out and did like this (gestures), that's "shut them down."

We were out at the end of the runway getting ready to take off. And he climbed up the ladder into the cockpit and he says, "Hey Sledge, we've got bad news. We just heard your hometown's been blown off the map." Those were the words that he used.

So I immediately got off the airplane, ran home. Had a brand-new baby. Left the baby with a next-door neighbor. My wife and I took off, came to Texas City. Got here in time for the ones to blow up at midnight. Took in my dad's drugstore. He had sold the big drugstore and bought a—built a smaller one down on Texas Avenue. It was caved in.

Couldn't find him. We couldn't find my wife's folks. I was in uniform; I had no trouble getting in Texas City. They were holding everybody else out but being in uniform, I had no problem. So finally located, after a lot of calling and so forth, my dad was in Galveston and my wife's folks had all gone to Alvin, where they had relatives.

[28:09]

But I stayed here for seven days and I looked at every body available looking for my wife's relatives, which they never found, one of them. But I looked at every body that was available, which was a horrific experience. Had buckets with bodies in them and all of this down at the gym. I had to go down and see if I could find this guy and see if I could identify him, which was a horrific experience, examining all of those bodies.

Then I was getting ready to get out of the Air Force. My wife bought a house up on 14th Avenue. I was going to get out. They sent me out to an atomic bomb test and while I'm out there, the Air Force came to me and said, "We would like to give you a regular commission." What that means is that you're guaranteed thirty years. They cannot push out, no way, you're guaranteed. They wanted me to stay in. Well, I couldn't communicate, from being out in the Pacific on this—Kwajalein, this little island—with my wife to talk to anybody about it.

I knew that (laughs) my dad had a drugstore that he wanted to give to me. But I knew he'd keep his thing seven to twelve every day and I didn't want to be tied down. I loved flying and all this, so I accepted. And, of course, had to sell the house we had bought up here. My dad was disappointed (laughs) that I stayed in the Air Force. So I stayed.

[30:04]

Then, when I retired, I was still young and wanted something to do. The Air Force said, "Are you interested in the ROTC?" where we train young people. I said yes, so they said, "Well, we're going to set one up in Texas City if you can sell them." Well, I couldn't sell the school board. They would not buy it. So I went to Dickinson and they bought it.

So I set up an ROTC unit over at Dickinson and ran it for seven years. It was great. We won every honor you could win. It's still going strong now after all these years.

VH: When was that? When did you start it?

TS: Oh, that was in 1970, during the '70s. And then the kids started to get to me a little bit, so I decided to retire for good. (Laughs.) But I enjoyed my ROTC, working with them, with the young people.

VH: When did you—I'm told that you give talks, public talks, about your military experience. Is that right?

TS: Yes, uh-huh.

VH: When did you start doing that?

TS: When I was going over, at Dickinson, people would come in and ask me to talk to the retired teachers, talk to—different outfits would ask me to come, talk to them about it.

VH: What are some favorite stories that you like to share?

TS: Oh, golly. (Laughs.) I'd tell them combat stories. (Takes out paperwork.) Here's a little thing—you might want to, you can keep that. It's a résumé of things I did while I was in the military.

VH: Oh, okay, great.

TS: You can have that.

VH: Do you want me to keep this, or I can make a copy?

TS: No, I've already got, I've got copies.

VH: You already have—? Okay.

TS: You can have that.

VH: Okay. Wonderful.

TS: But you need to make a copy of that (gestures to newspaper article).

VH: Yes, before you leave. I'll do that.

TS: But your question was what would I talk to these groups about. I would give them a little history of what I'd done in the Air Force.

But I had a very interesting Air Force career. You know, sometimes a guy gets in the Air Force and he's a mechanic and he stays a mechanic for thirty years. Or he's interested in

one particular subject and he stays working in that. But I got involved with guided missiles. I got involved with atomic weapons. I spent five years in Pentagon. I went to Air War College. I flew in the B-29 bombers, the B-36 bombers, the B-17—all the big bombers. Never got into fighters, but all bombers.

[33:01]

But I had a very diverse, interesting Air Force career. It never got boring. And had a lot of different experiences.

VH: Do you have any favorite experiences that you like to share with your audiences?

TS: Oh, I had different things happened during flight. I can think of a lot of little things that happened that I would relate to an audience.

VH: Can you talk—

TS: For example, on our way to India, we had a B-24 and we were loaded down with all of our personal stuff. We had five airplanes that flew in formation from Nashville, Tennessee, to Calcutta, India.

We went down to Puerto Rico, down into South America and across the Atlantic over to Africa, across Africa into Cairo and then across the Middle East into Iran and over into Karachi, India, and then over to Calcutta. Well, a lot of things happen on a trip like that, you know.

I remember one, our co-pilot, bought a monkey down in Brazil.

VH: Did you say a monkey?

TS: A monkey. He was, said, "This is going to be our pet." Well, the rest of the crew, there was nine of us on the crew, we weren't too happy about having this monkey running all over the airplane. Well (laughs), I still laugh when I think about this. The monkey was not the most hygienic monkey you'd ever seen. We didn't like him fooling around with our sandwiches, our food. He was trying to get into everything.

Well, the monkey was up in the cockpit and he got on the co-pilot, the guy that bought him, got on his shoulder, and he urinated on his shoulder. The co-pilot opened up the window and out goes the monkey, right out over the Atlantic. (Laughs.)

[35:26]

VH: Oh my goodness!

TS: So that got rid of our mascot. (Laughs.)

VH: Took care of that problem.

TS: But stories like that. (Laughs.) Lot of crazy things happened.

VH: Oh my goodness. When did you return, when did you first return to Texas City after you had left to, you said—

TS: I got home in November of '44. I went to India in November of '42 and spent almost two years there flying forty-five combat missions. Came back here and they sent me to California for six weeks, what they call rehabilitation to get you back into the United States and get rid of all that war-time stuff that you've been fighting for, you know, getting your insurance, your medical, all that, checking you out.

Well, they did that and then they sent me to Galveston and I had a suite of rooms over in the Galvez in November '42. 'Course, coming over here to Texas City I knew a lot of people and had a good time. So I stayed there a month.

VH: Was it—?

TS: This was in '44, late '44.

VH: Was it a big adjustment for you, having just flown all these missions to come back to—

TS: Yeah, but not as bad as it is today, where these guys go over and they serve a tour and then they come back and they go back. But I did have to go back for Korea. But I didn't have to go back during World War II one time. Now, if the war kept going, why I probably would have had to go back but fortunately, it ended with the atomic bomb going off.

VH: So you were gone for two years and when you came back, how had the city—

[37:40]

TS: They sent me to different fields to train guys who were going over for the first time. Using veterans to train new people.

VH: I see.

TS: You understand what I'm saying?

VH: Mm-hm.

TS: I mean, we tell them how it is over there. Here's what you do, how you do it, so forth.

VH: That first time that you came back and you said you stayed in Galveston for a little while?

TS: Uh-huh.

VH: What did you notice about Texas City that was different?

TS: Oh, been a lot of changes. Traffic signal lights, new cafes, a lot of changes. I don't remember specific ones but just new grocery stores and then they started paving and getting the streets like Palmer Avenue.

People don't believe it when I tell them I used to hunt birds at 9th and 9th, right up here at 9th and 9th.

VH: Because there was nothing there.

TS: There used to be a swamp there.

VH: It must be amazing for you to see what the city has turned into from when you came.

TS: (Laughs.) That's why every time you see big heavy rains, why 9th and 9th up there floods. That used to be a swamp in there.

VH: Oh.

TS: They've never been able to get enough stuff in there to fill it up. They keep working on it all the time, trying to solve that problem. (Laughs.)

[39:20]

VH: Did there seem like there were more people here?

TS: Oh yeah.

VH: You could tell.

TS: It had expanded quite a bit. Now the library and the police station were all down there on 6th Street, about 6th and 7th, something like that. I don't remember the exact thing. Seem like I remember the library being a very small, one- or two-room library. But I think we've got the most beautiful library here, anywhere I've ever been.

VH: Well, thank you. Well, sir, those are pretty much the questions I had. Is there anything that you'd like to talk about?

TS: That—I can't think of anything. Let me take a look at some notes.

VH: (Sound of microphone being bumped.) Okay. I'm just going to run and grab something really quick. I'll be right back. (Sound of door opening and closing.)

[40:54]

TS: What are you doing now?

VH: I'm plugging it in for a little more juice. Let's see here. I'm going to move you back because this is too short, so I'm just going to move you a little closer to the wall. There we go. (Sound of adjustments being made to recording equipment.)

[42:03]

Okay, what was it that you had wanted to talk about?

TS: Well, I think the things that made the biggest impression on me in Texas City were the chemical and the oil refineries and how efficient they were. They could get a job done. I had no idea about working in a plant, and watching these guys day to day, how they were putting things together, complicated things, and putting it out. And during the war time, boy, they were working hard and they were really working for this country.

VH: While you were working at Monsanto, did that—

TS: They were just building the plant but I watched them at other plants. Sometimes we would deliver medicines to a plant and I could go into the plant and watch these guys. But Monsanto was just being built. Ford, Bacon and Davis was the outfit that I worked for where I was a timekeeper.

VH: Did seeing those plants, those people at work, did that have any influence on you when you went into the military, seeing how efficient they were?

TS: Well, I knew that I didn't want to do that type of work. I knew that I wanted to get into aviation, one way or the other. I wasn't sure what branch of aviation but I didn't want to work in a plant. I didn't want to work in my dad's drugstore. So I've done what I really wanted to do. I've never been disappointed working in the Air Force.

Now, I didn't enjoy working in the Pentagon for five years. That was a very demanding, demanding job and a lot of pressure and long hours. I was a war planner, deciding how

many missiles, how many bombs we'd put on certain targets in Russia. Had a lot of heat, a lot of pressure and had to brief a lot of high-powered generals and tell them what was going on. It was a tough, tough job. But when I left the Pentagon, I could go anywhere I wanted to go.

[44:53]

VH: Where did you go?

TS: I was looking for a nice spot to live, so I picked Colorado Springs, Colorado. Went out to what they call NORAD, North American Air Defense, and they made me chief of the space division there. And my office was responsible for all the early warning missile warning stations and for all space activities, keeping track of everything in space. Great job, good job.

I bought a beautiful home, 3,000 square feet home on an acre of land there. Colorado Springs is a nice place. I enjoyed my tour of duty there. That's where I retired from.

VH: How long were you up there?

TS: Three years. So, like I said, I had a great career, don't regret any of it.

VH: Okay. Well, thank you so much, sir. Did you want to talk about anything else?

TS: No, I think that about covers it.

VH: Okay. Great. Well, I appreciate your coming in today.

TS: Well, thank you for asking me. I'm honored.

[46:13]