

**The American Fighter Aces Association**  
**Oral Interviews**  
The Museum of Flight  
Seattle, Washington

**Frederick Libby (Part 3 of 8)**

**Interviewed by:** Eugene A. Valencia

**Interview Date:** circa March 1962

### Abstract:

In this eight-part oral history, fighter ace Frederick Libby is interviewed about his life and his military service with the Royal Flying Corps during World War I. In part three, he discusses his time as an observer with No. 23 Squadron and No. 11 Squadron in France. Topics discussed include his experiences with the RFC after transferring from a motor transport unit, his early combat missions and encounters, and his first aerial victories.

The interview is conducted by fellow fighter ace Eugene A. Valencia.

### Biography:

Frederick Libby was born in the early 1890s in Sterling, Colorado. He worked as an itinerant cowboy during his youth and joined the Canadian Army shortly after the outbreak of World War I. Deployed to France in 1915, Libby initially served with a motor transport unit, then volunteered for the Royal Flying Corps. He served as an observer with No. 23 Squadron and No. 11 Squadron, then as a pilot with No. 43 Squadron and No. 25 Squadron. Scoring a number of aerial victories during his RFC career, he became the first American fighter ace. Libby transferred to the United States Army Air Service in 1917 and was medically discharged soon after for spondylitis. As a civilian, he went on to embark on a number of business ventures, including founding the Eastern Oil Company and Western Air Express. Libby passed away in 1970.

*Biographical information courtesy of: Libby, Frederick. Horses don't fly: The memoir of the cowboy who became a World War I ace. New York: Arcade, 2013.*

### Restrictions:

Permission to publish material from the American Fighter Aces Association Oral Interviews must be obtained from The Museum of Flight Archives.

### Transcript:

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### Frederick Libby (Part 3 of 8)

[START OF INTERVIEW]

00:00:00

*[First combat flight and first aerial victory]*

EUGENE A. VALENCIA: Well, Captain, on your first flight, after just coming down from an orientation flight and then going into combat, what was your—what were your feelings?

FREDERICK LIBBY: Well, the feeling, of course, naturally, was that—the first thing that occurred to me was what the fellows I had left early in the morning—now, [unintelligible], I left my base, motor base, in the morning about 7:30, and we were going up about 2:30. I've already had a flight and been down messing with the machine gun, which I knew nothing about. And now I'm going up, whether we have combat or not—I hope not. But we were going, heading for a three-and-a-half hour trip, which I learned when I got out to the hangar—was we would go over by Arras, below Arras, cross the lines and down toward the Somme and then cross back over at Albert into our own lines. And we were going into Hun Lands quite a ways.

EAV: Was it to be a recco flight or a [unintelligible] flight?

FL: Hmm?

EAV: Was it to be a reconnaissance—

FL: No, it was just a reconnaissance. It was no bombing at all. We had no bombs on the ship at all, for which I am truly thankful. I hadn't heard of bombs yet. Nobody told me about them yet.

But anyway, when I got out to the hangar—and I looked like a flier, whether I was or not, because I had Captain Chapman's beautiful flying coat and helmet and a pair of beautiful gloves. Anyway, Hicks [E. Hicks] showed up nonchalant as a schoolgirl going in an ice cream factory. He wasn't worried about anything. Flying coat over his arm, helmet cocked on the side of his head. And he didn't register any surprise when I told him that I didn't know a Hun ship from ours, which I didn't. I didn't know there was a difference between them. I didn't know anything about them. I said, "The only way I can tell is by the Iron Cross. When I see an insignia, I'll know he's a Heinie, but otherwise I don't—there's nothing I—" Well, he says, "I'll tell you something. No matter what happens when we get up there, every ship that gets near us, coming toward us, just don't give them the benefit of the doubt. Get your gun on him, and if he don't show something, take a poke at him. Because," he said, "our life depends on it." He said—

EAV: Now, Captain, if I might add at this time, if you were flying straight and a plane would come in from your aft quarter, what would be the action you would take to afford you the position?

FL: Well, [unintelligible] with a front gun—in other words, using your front gun, which we had—back when I hadn't any idea whether I'd ever use it or not. But you've got a big radius in that F.E.2b. There's a tremendous radius, as I—the whole front there. Unless a machine is coming from the side of you, why, your pilot will just throw it over on one side to a slight bank and you've got all the thing to shoot him with in the world. You've got a big radius. A pilot don't have to turn much with that. The only [unintelligible] that back gun was in the case when you're in a formation, well back of the lines with the wind against you, like we used to have happen—it always happened. The wind was always against us. And short of petrol. Your best bet was to try and keep them off your tail, whether the—and we tried to protect each other's tail.

But Hicks said, "Tomorrow, you'll go down the adjutant's office, and there's silhouettes there of all these different planes." And he said, "The thing you want to study most is the Albatros and the Fokker and the Roland." He said, "Those are the three most deadly at the present time."

EAV: Is that the Fokker D-7? Was that in operation?

FL: No. That wasn't in operation then. This was the other—the early Fokker. The monoplane. The single-wing ship.

EAV: Oh, yes.

FL: And the Albatros was the C.III at that time. Two-seater. And the Roland was a single-seater. He said, "You ought to watch your—those three ships are the most deadly." But he said, "Regardless of that, anything. Shoot at anything that comes near you, unless he's—if he's one of ours, he'll throw his tail up and you'll see what his colors—right quick." But he said, "There's certainly—better be safe than sorry." He said, "Just don't let them." But anyway, we drew the—which I didn't know anything about at that time—but we drew the worst position in the field. He flew the back upper escort, up top of—just a little top of everybody but back, higher—

EAV: Now, Captain, you mentioned that he drew. Was this a matter of drawing...?

FL: No, I mean that was his assignment. They assigned him to this ship. When I say he drew that, I mean that's the assignment that the squadron commander gave him in the flight.

EAV: What was the briefing time before a flight?

FL: What is—what?

EAV: The briefing? Would you all assemble and discuss—

FL: Oh, no. I wouldn't assemble anywhere. The flight commander had received his orders from the major. And the major briefed him on what the score was. Then the flight commander would tell his—he had five other pilots, and he had, naturally, six observers. Each ship had an observer, and each ship had—there were six pilots and six observers on a flight. So he would brief the boys on where they were going and what they were doing and what their position would be and the formation going over. And the point of these ships was always to try and stay formation as much as possible—humanly possible. Because whenever you got overseas, over the lines, then you were in a—you'd split up the formation. If you couldn't get back together, that's when the trouble started because you're always on their sides of the lines and that was the thing they always tried to do and always hoped for. And a lot of them would hang back, these great aces, and wait until they got a lone wolf. And that was one thing that Baron von Richthofen made his great reputation. And I could tell you more about that later, but I'll tell you when I finish this one.

EAV: Well, Captain, may I ask this? On your takeoff, what was the typical takeoff? Did you take off singly or in pairs or—

FL: I was just going to tell you. When we got in the ship, we started to takeoff. He told me where our position would be. Now, he said this. He said, "Your main thing is to be alert and watch for anything. Keep your—" And he said, "Don't concentrate on any one spot, but look around." He said to see everything that's in the air and don't ever let anything get near us. But he also said, "When we take off, we'll fly individually and rendezvous over our own airdrome here at 10,000 feet." Now, he said, "It'll take us an hour. It takes us an hour to get to 10,000, and we'll climb separately. But when we rendezvous, we head right for the lines, across the lines and down—"

EAV: And this was in the spring of the year?

FL: Yes. It was 1916.

EAV: It was cold. And you were exposed, 10,000 feet.

FL: Well, I mean—

EAV: [overlapping/unintelligible] degrees per thousand, 30 degrees colder than the deck.

FL: Well, I know what you got—well, you got—I had a good leather flying coat. I had a beautiful flying coat and a helmet and [unintelligible], what have you. And of course,

later they issued—which I didn’t have at the time—it was a—those sheepskin boots that you’d put on, and they were the most wonderful thing in the world. I brought two pair back here to America with me. They come up to your hips, and there’s nothing like them. They’ve got a special sole and don’t slip or slide or anything else. And it’s a beauty.

EAV: Well, I just wanted to bring this out. Here you were exposed, the spring of the year—

FL: Well, we were—of course we were. Naturally, I wasn’t cold. “But the first 10,000 feet,” he said, “you can just take it easy. And the best thing I would suggest is that you look around the ground and spot landmarks and look at your map.” I had a map they hand you, all made up with where we were to fly and where [unintelligible] was and where the Arras-Doullens, Arras-Saint-Pol roads, and all the rest of it. Well, that was one of the finest pieces of advice I’d ever had because I did have an hour and the first thing I did was concentrate on where we were. And when we got on top of the lines, he said, “I’ll show you—when we get on top of the lines, I’ll show you the lines.” Never been near those, except on the ground.

The Arras-Doullens road and the Arras-Saint-Pol roads were great roads running from Arras back, and they are just as straight as a string, with trees—there’s poplars on each side of them. You couldn’t miss them in the world, and they became a landmark which saved my life many times.

EAV: I presume this was a clear day, then?

FL: Hmm?

EAV: A clear day?

FL: Oh, yes. This happened to be a beautiful day. And we took off and got our climb—but during that 10,000 foot climb, I had many things to think about. And your second time in the ship and with two machine guns that you had never had any contact with before in your life hanging up there, one on each side of you, and going over somewhere you don’t know where you’re going. I’m a new boy entirely. I’m wondering what those four babies I left that morning down at my old unit were thinking about. And amusing thing, we went right square over where I had been early in the morning. This was all in one day.

So we finally get up to 10,000 feet, and they rendezvoused over our own airdrome. Captain Gray was leading formation, and Price [Stephen Price] was the second leader, and we had the top place. But it’s amazing how easy those F.E.2bs fall into place. They know their spot and just fall in. And Captain Gray starts for the line, the boys fall right into the spots where they’re supposed to be and that’s it.

Well, we begin to get towards the line. When we got close, he showed me the trenches down there, which was no man's land and which was some places narrow, some places wide, and all the trenches. Oh, they're horrible, with their [unintelligible] and the rest of it. That I knew about, but I had never seen them from the air and they were quite—I've got pictures of them. They were very—quite a deal. But I was then on my knees, and I began to lose interest in the trenches because I realized what each one would do—[unintelligible], I figured.

And we just barely got over the lines—and of course, crossing just a little below Arras, we just barely got over our lines and onto theirs and a little past theirs, going into their Hun Land—when, all of a sudden, I look up and here's a guy I see coming toward us. And he's coming like the dickens, and these white things coming out of the thing—or spots coming out of his gun, which I don't know what they are, but I learn later it was tracers that he was using in this thing—and puffs of stuff. So I had flopped the guns on my left side, and I realized it must be a Hun. I had a gun on this side of the handle, and I flop it over here to this side to get to him. He's coming from this angle toward us.

EAV: Now, he's coming in forward?

FL: Just a little above us and coming toward us—coming right straight at us and shooting at us. So I flop the gun over to this clip on the right side, and in my excitement and everything else, I missed the clip entirely and fell back on my backside with the gun on top of me. I don't get a shot off. Well, this all happened instantly, so I kick the thing off of me, and when I come to and get up, the Heinie has gone into a bank, a steep bank, and I can see two Iron Crosses and, in between, a fuselage of a ship. So I simply press the trigger, and again, I forget to take my finger off. I let it all go. And he goes down on about his business. Well, we go on about ours, and formation isn't broken up yet. The boys are all right. But we quickly get into our spot again.

In the meantime Hicks, in doing this, hasn't [unintelligible] a bit. He hasn't changed his position or he hadn't showed any sign of getting away from the Heinie. He just stayed where he was.

EAV: What time of day was this, sir?

FL: This was about—we had been about 30 minutes—oh, it would be about 3:30, I guess. We had been an hour—

EAV: [overlapping/unintelligible].

FL: ...an hour getting our climb, getting to where we were and coming over. I would say about 3:35 or 3:40. But anyway, I [spilt?] the drum. We were in formation. We go on

about our business. I don't see nothing else. I keep watching for more Heinies. We go on into Hun Land, down the Somme, cross over to Albert. And when we get across, why, Captain Gray fires the white light, which is everybody go in home alone. You can cut up—your formation is through, and you can go in singly. And—

EAV: Was there any advantage to that?

FL: What?

EAV: Was there any advantage to that, Captain?

FL: They always did. You always did just—when your formation was through, why, there was no use to stay in formation going home. The Heinie never come across our lines, so—

EAV: Oh, I see. You're on your side now.

FL: You're single, and you're going home any way you want to. I used to—when I became a pilot, I used to take that thing and [unintelligible] down around—I'd hedgehop and round La Basse canal, visit the nurses and wave at them coming home. When I was all through, you know, and the time was over, I'd fire a light and everybody would go home the way you wanted to. You could go anyway. If you're in a hurry to get home and get a scotch and soda, why, you just cocked her back and headed for home and side-slipped in, and that was it. You're in. Get there ahead of all of them.

But anyway, just as we come back into our lines and the white light is fired, why, Hicks reached over and gently taps me on the head and sticks out his hand. He's got—well, I'll shake hands with him. God, I'm glad [unintelligible], too, so I shake hands with him. Brother, I'm just happy to see you, is about the whole affair. But he seemed so pleased. I didn't know what's the matter—what he was so pleased about.

But we fly back, and we get back there. There's only two ships that beat us in: Captain Gray, the leader, and Price, the second leader. They were both on the airdrome when we come in. But I see quite a little crowd down around the hangars. We land. As we pull into our place, the sergeant major, says "Libby, Colonel wants to see you. Colonel Shephard. And I'll take you over to—" Oh, I didn't [unintelligible]. "By the way," he says, "congratulations." I don't know what it's all about.

So Hicks said, "I'll wait here, Libby, because I want to help make out this report." See, every observer had to make a report, and I never made a report. But Hicks wanted to be sure that I made the right kind of report, I guess. But anyways, he said, "I'll wait here for you." And I went over, and the Colonel didn't leave any doubt. He said, "Stout show, Libby. Congratulations. When they go down that way, they don't come back. He went

down in flames.” In other words, the whole 47 must have hit the petrol tank or something—

EAV: You didn’t know this?

FL: I never knew one thing, but I had sense enough to keep my mouth shut. I didn’t—I never knew it. I didn’t know that we got a Heinie or anything. When he went down, flames evidently broke out just like he’s going about his business, and I was hoping he wasn’t coming back. But I got a drum on there, got it ready, and I was through with him for the day. And I was just hoping he was going on home for his schnapps.

EAV: That’s wonderful, Captain.

FL: But anyway, we got this Heinie. Well, from then on, my stock went up, of course, naturally. And the Colonel was so pleased. And the reason he was there—and you wonder how he was there—the artillery observation had reported back to our squadron before we were ever—hardly over the fight. Hardly before we’d see our observation machines and our observation balloons and our observation artillery. They reported back, and the way the artillery get it, they get it on the iddy-umpty. There were ships flying back and forth that were doing—that’s the way they directed their antiaircraft—or I mean their—not antiaircraft, but their artillery fire to the other side. So the squadron knew it, and the Colonel had driven from the wing up there. And he was so thrilled with the whole thing. Well, of course, that gives you some feeling of a little confidence.

EAV: You bet it does.

FL: But—

EAV: That was your first victory, Captain?

FL: Very first. But still your—

EAV: On your second flight, and your first flight of combat.

FL: The same day, in one day.

EAV: Good. Amazing

FL: And in talking to my friend, the sergeant, I found out what he thought about it. And I felt pretty silly because that gun pushing down—and I should have got him in the first round. But he had put holes through our wings, but he didn’t hurt anything. We had a few holes through our wings, but he didn’t hit. He must have been a lousy shot. He must have been just as green as I was, evidently, and probably just couldn’t shoot. But Chapman said, “Well, good, stout show. The thing is, that even though the gun fell on you, you still

didn't freeze. And you may have been scared to death, but you worked automatically and instinctively." He said, "You weren't thinking things out." And he said, "You'll learn that a good pilot or a good flier doesn't think things out. He don't—if he does, he's no good. He's dead." He said, "You have to work automatically or instinctively by a reaction."

EAV: Don't you agree, though, Captain, this went back to the Colorado days when you were—

FL: Hmm?

EAV: This went back to the Colorado days where you were used to handling guns and—

FL: Guns and horses. And roping and riding. It went right straight back. In other words, he said, "You work instinctively." And he said, "That's the best thing in your favor and always will be."

FL: But I was very—I told him. I said, "I didn't know that I got the Heinie, but I didn't say anything out there." And I said, "I know that I should have been dead now. I know. Because I was way late in shooting. The guy had been poking at us." But he said, "You also had a good pilot who didn't give—he could have—your man, Hicks, could have gone into a bank, too." But he said the Heinie went into the bank and luckily, [unintelligible] in a bank. When I pulled that trigger, I forgot to shoot a few. I let it all go, which was smart, but it was accidental, of course. And the whole thing was an accident. My being alive was pure accident, that's for sure.

00:19:19

***[Photography, bombing, and machine gun training]***

EAV: But your second flight, then, Captain.

FL: Well, of course, we had so many—now, this was—I'm still on my probation and—

EAV: This probation period included what, sir?

FL: Thirty days you were supposed to be, and you either were turned down, sent back to your unit or were given a commission. One or the other. You were either no good or that's it. And that depended on the squadron you're with, your major recommending you, and your personnel that you were with, whether you got a recommendation for a second lieutenant. And if you did, which I did, you go back to England for six days to get your uniform. And that itself is a story, mister, believe me. You think I don't love the English. You don't know how good they were to me.

But anyway, the second Heinie we got—we had been flying every day. But right then I had a piece of luck. I was assigned as a regular pilot to Captain Price. Now, he's now

Captain Price, but [unintelligible]. He's a lieutenant. He's a wing commander. But at that time, he was a lieutenant. But I was assigned as his regular pilot, then he was always second leader. Well—

EAV: Second leader would mean the [unintelligible].

FL: First man was here, and the second man was here with the one streamer. In case the first man with two streamers got knocked out, Price took over with a one streamer.

EAV: Now, the leader had two streamers?

FL: Two streamers on his tail like this.

EAV: Yes, sir.

FL: And if he got—at that time, Price was leading the show; he had two streamers on. But the second leader always had one streamer, and he was on the right hand side. Yes. That is correct. So I was with Price, and we were over every day. That's one thing about the British. We never missed a day on reconnaissance. I began to learn then about the camera. We used to take all the photo—the observer did all the photographing. And also, that's one thing he says in there about the—he used to, once or twice—he didn't do it too often—shoot a Heinie down, then take a picture of him on his way down. That's what he says in that thing there, you'll notice. And that used to thrill Price. That would thrill him to death.

But anyway, I learned about bombs, actually, in experience. But we carried five 20-pound bombs under each wing of the F.E.2b when we'd go over to do some bombing. Well, now those bombs were for artillery on the other side or for road strafing, where you'd see a bunch of Heinies coming up the road or something and dive down and drop some bombs on the boys, and then open up with the machine gun and give them the works. And then probably take some photographs because we always had a camera down in the nacelle of that thing, stuck down through the bottom of that so we take some pictures.

But flying with Price and so I began to get better, and believe me, I devoted all my time and studied that machine gun. That machine gun became my baby. I found out that was the way to live. And I devoted my time to that on the range and in the air. And I studied that thing to where I could put that business together, close my eyes, and stick it together anytime, tear it apart [unintelligible]. I specialized in that gun. And it was a—there was never a finer gun made than the little Lewis gun for individual work. It was a beauty [unintelligible]. Oh, it was a honey. And when they put the 97 rounds on it, boy, it was—in the hands of a man—and a buttstock on it—in the hands of a man that could shoot—

front or rear gun, either one—I could use that rear gun after I got that buttstock on there and the 97 rounds. We were pretty hard to defeat from either end, believe me, with Price.

00:23:02

***[Summary of Libby's observer career]***

EAV: How many planes did you get as an observer, sir?

FL: I got—I had officially ten and 11 probables they gave me before I came back to get my pilot's license, to have my Military Cross. And I [unintelligible] my Observers Wing.

EAV: I'd like to, if I might—which I think is amazing, and certainly it's a pleasure. It's concerning Captain Price when he introduced Private Fred Libby. He said that, "Fred Libby had come to us from the trenches, where he had been serving with the Canadians. He was an American from Texas, stocky, slightly bandy, had jet black hair, unblinking eyes, and reddish coloring. I'm sure that one would have traced a Red Indian pedigree if one had gone very far. He was very quiet, serious, and unassuming, yet he was a deadly and economical gunman [unintelligible]. And I was always glad that I sat behind his gun. Having hit his target, he would at once move to his camera, as to bring back evidence. His length of vision was fantastic. When I was posted to No. 11, Fred Libby went with me with commission rank, and he and I flew together until I returned to home establishment at the end of 1916. Libby came home shortly afterwards and qualified as a pilot. I saw little, if anything, of him after that but remember reading in one of the London newspapers after America had come into the war that they should be very proud of one of their citizens, Captain Fred Libby, who, out of all of the victories credited to the American Nationals serving with the RFC, Royal Flying Corps, he was responsible for over 50 percent." Captain, that is an amazing tribute.

FL: Well, I've got that report here with it, if—Price—the whole thing in my thing, if you want to read his report.

EAV: But you did get 11.

FL: Well, I had [unintelligible]. That's when we came back. I had officially been given that many as an observer.

00:25:15

***[Other flights and fellow servicemen]***

EAV: Did you—or can you recall any interesting episodes during the shoot-downs, or your aerial victories, that were possibly a little closer than the others?

FL: You mean in the actual contact of—

EAV: Yes, sir. Guns were—he was shooting at you, and you—

FL: No. I'll tell you, frankly, I don't—there were so many of them. We were always in it. I don't mean that just because I had those victories that I was all [unintelligible]. We lost many a fight. We didn't win all of our fights. We went home with our tail between our legs so many times. From back—way back of the line. You had to conserve your ammunition. That's one thing that guy remembers. I always try to conserve enough to be able to get home with, to fight my way across there, because if you're out of ammunition, you're a dead duck. And that is for sure. And that back gun, I was able to use that to a great advantage, which helped save our life many a time, too.

But I can recall that many of the times that we got back—and you wonder why I'm so fond of Albert Ball. I can remember many times when we would get—you see, all machines would carry petrol for four-and-a-half hours. The little baby Nieuport was only good for about two-and-a-half at the best. Two, usually. And he could only get just far enough over to come back and pick us up when we were maybe 20 miles back of the Hun lines.

EAV: Now, this is the escort aircraft?

FL: Yes. That would be the little Scout.

EAV: Yes, sir.

FL: Now, see, 11 Squadron had two Scouts with it, two Nieuports. Ball flew one, and a boy by the name of Foot [Ernest Foot] flew the other. Foot was one of the damndest stock pilots—er, stunt pilots I've ever seen. I've never seen any stunt pilots that could fly like he could. I mean, that was his specialty. But when it come to getting down with a machine gun, where the cards were there and to bringing the guy down and getting that in, he didn't excel. He couldn't do it. But this—

EAV: Captain, before we get to the Nieuports, do you recall—I'd like to get back to your amazing [unintelligible] of ten planes.

FL: Okay.

EAV: Can you recall any of those tight squeezes where you—it was a matter of touch and go?

FL: Well, I was going to say that they were—we've had them, and the thing that brought us back was this guy, Ball, getting there when we were pretty badly shot up with our—but I recall one thing for you, that the tightest squeeze, the nearest, and knew I—my book is

known as “Luck Was My Angel.” And I’ll give you one for instance to where it shows you.

Price had to leave, which he—every three months, the British gave us 14 days leave to go anywhere we wish. And they didn’t horse around. They always give you a ticket to go there with. It was a ticket they hand you there and back, and you could go anywhere. It didn’t matter whether it was Ireland, Scotland, anyplace, as long as you could get back in the British Domain. When Price had his leave—and being his observer, naturally, I was assigned to a Captain Quested [John Quested], who took his place in our outfit during that time. Now, Quested was a stout pilot and—

EAV: Now, did he fly Price’s plane?

FL: Yes. He flew Price’s.

EAV: And you flew in the same plane?

FL: Yes, I was supposed to. [unintelligible] same plane. But there happened to be one day that Quested was out of circulation, and they put a man by the name of Russell, Lieutenant Russell, in this plane as the leader. And I flew as his observer. Well, we got well over and back from Bapaume—and it’s one of those dogfights. And we were doing pretty good. We looked like we were doing all right. We had run into something. I was trying to polish one off in front of me.

EAV: Were you still in formation at this time?

FL: No. We had got split up. We had all split up to the—

EAV: Individual?

FL: Individual on the other side. It was one of the dogfights, and they had got us all split up. And it looked like we were going to take care of ourselves pretty good. I had a Hun in front of me that I was giving the medicine to, and all of a sudden, this fellow fell off sideways down to about 1,500 feet from the ground. He’s down there towards another dogfight, and that air was just full of Huns everywhere.

EAV: What type of German planes did you encounter, sir?

FL: Oh, we had—it was all kinds. It was the—the Fokker was one of the principal planes. Then the Albatros was always prominent, as was the Roland. They were the principal ships that we had to contend with at that time. And the air was full of all kinds of these ships. And there were probably 50 of them up there in this—where we fell down to about 1,500 feet. But in falling down, I don’t get a chance—I don’t know whether I finish my Hun off upstairs or anything because he’s just—without any warning, he side-slipped off

and down and flops it over. And they all pick on us, and we get shot from every angle. I get just one chance to take a whack at a ship with my front gun. And we're down then to about 500 feet. They—

EAV: You're at 500 feet, and you have a number of Germans—

FL: Oh, we've got them all over us and under us and everything. We're down to 1,500, but they finally—

EAV: How many would you say were there, sir?

FL: They must have been—oh, I mean after us, we were down—there was at least—not only us, but other fellows in the ship. There must have been 50 ships milling around, ours and the Heinie at the time. There was probably 100 altogether upstairs and down. But we left the show I was interested in upstairs and fell down into this thing. Why he did it, well, it was a new man, and it was one of those things.

Well, anyway, when we finally come to, out of this whole deal I only got a shot after we fell down at one Heinie in front, which was a probable. We go across. When we finally come to, we land. We cross the lines about 500 feet. Now, this F.E.2b has got the struts that hold—it's a biplane, as you know. The plane had been shot. Every instrument—now, this all I find out after we land. We land at right about 100 yards from an artillery emplacement.

EAV: Better stop here.

[recording stops and starts again]

FL: ...told me previously was a good pilot. He said, "You've got a good one in Hicks." But he said the two top ones—he said Hicks and Price are really tops. But Hicks, first thing he said, "I'm glad to have you with me, Libby. Good show this morning." And then I told him the sad news, that I—

00:32:07

[END OF INTERVIEW]