

National Museum of the Pacific War

Center for Pacific War Studies
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Interview with
Jack Jacobson

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Jack Jacobson, May 4, 1993

I was quite surprised when Helen corraled me and said that they wanted to do an oral interview. It appears that the participants in the war are suddenly sought after and praised and thought to be heroes, which somehow surprises me because we really did our job as we were supposed to do. We really weren't seeking notoriety and didn't receive much for many, many years -- 40 years or more. Very little was ever said about what we did. Then things began to snowball and today it seems to be in the minds of a lot of people about what happened 50 years ago. I'm enjoying it immensely—not only the notoriety but being able to learn that there will be records and information my three sons will some day be able to read.

I was always kind of an adventurer in my young days. I lived in an area that was just a block from a playground and my ambition was I wanted to play ball. I was just enthralled with baseball and I talked my father into buying me a fancy glove and I used to hang around the playground hoping that the older fellows that would get up a game on a Saturday afternoon might choose me to play. If they moved to another playground to play a team from that place I would sort of hang around and hope—that was my great ambition. This was in San Diego.

My family came from Russia, Latvia in the early 1900's through Ellis Island. Established in New York through a brother that was a prior entry to the United States. My mother's brother was a tailor. He used to sew the chevrons on the Naval uniforms and collars. When the Navy was moved from the Brooklyn Navy Yard to San Diego, he followed across country and opened a little tailor shop. He found San Diego to be a charming place and talked my parents into coming from New York. In 1919 we moved from New York to San Diego, arrived in San Diego with \$20 to our name. I was three years old. My father had been trained as a butcher through a cousin who owned a grocery store so when he came to San Diego, the next day he got a job as a butcher.

We lived in San Diego most of my life except for time during the service and a few years in Arizona and Colorado area. Went to school in San Diego area and like all young fellows I really didn't know what kind of a career I wanted. I graduated from high school, pretty good student, got mostly A's and B's. I was quite good at math and Latin, and things like that --I wanted to become an accountant, I thought.

I met a friend from San Diego who was also an adventurous type and he and I decided to run away from home. We were 17 and 18 year olds. We decided to write a letter to our parents that we were running away, that we were going to Texas that some woman wanted us to drive her car to Texas. Meantime we had no intention of doing that. We wanted to go to the Long Beach area and stow away on a ship and travel around the world which we did. We got to the Los Angeles port area, we looked in the newspaper and found that a certain British freighter called the "Silver Sandal" was on a round the world trip and that they would be leaving in a couple of days. We found out which pier and saw the activity of loading the ship and people running around. There was a gang plank and we said --should we or shouldn't we. About 4 o'clock in the afternoon we snuck up just walked up the gang plank and walked to the back of the ship and there was a kind of a house at the back of the ship. The house is all of the steering equipment and on top of that are some bins, racks and things. We went to the

back of the ship and hung around and saw nobody was paying attention to us, so we got up on top of the thing and got into one of the bins. It turned out that they were vegetable, potato bins with wire between. The bins were about 3 foot square and maybe about 4 foot high with a lid. There were several of them in a row so my friend got in one and I got in another.

Finally about 6 o'clock in the evening we could hear them saying, throw off the lines and we departed. We left the port and about as it turned dark toward dusk we sort of opened the lid and got out and watched the land disappearing in the background and we were heading for sea. We slept in those bins all night and the next morning a black fellow with very bushy hair, must have been a Fijian, opened the bin and was ready to put something in and he starts screaming in some foreign language. He ran to the captain. Of course, we got out and went down on deck and the captain just---he said "How dare you stowaway on my ship". We were already several miles out to sea and there was no way we were going to turn back. We spent 18 days on that ship chipping paint.

He said he was going to put us to work and we'll regret the day that we stowed away on his boat. We ended up in the Philippines. Turns out that when we got there he dumped us to the authorities there and we convinced them that we were American citizens because we had driver's licenses. It wasn't true that you had to be a citizen to get a driver's license. So they turned us loose, but we did have to spend the night in jail because it was a Sunday and we were turned over to the authorities the next day.

We didn't have much money. Between us I think we had \$28, because I had tuition money and was supposed to go back to college, I'd already graduated from high school. Anyway, we spent a week at the YMCA in the Philippines and then a President Johnson Dollar Line steamship came into port on its way around the world, we decided that we would apply for a job on the ship. As it turned out there was only one job available. Some mess boy broke his arm and had to be dropped off the ship. One of us was to get the job---we flipped a coin and I lost. My friend got the job.

The next day they were to sail and I went down to say goodbye to him. It turns out that the steward said "O.K, we'll hire you too", so we both got a job and we stayed on that ship all the way around Singapore, Ceylon, Bombay, Marseilles, New York City. We had quite an easy time really. You only had to work to set up the mess, feed the men---he fed the oilers and I fed the engineers. We worked for breakfast a couple of hours, then rest, then for lunch we'd have to work and then the evening meal. We had to clean up the bathrooms. We had a lot of free time.

We enjoyed that, and of course, we got into port. Neither the engineers or the sailors had duty because that was strictly when we were underway, so we had quite a bit of time --- for a a day or 2 days we could go ashore. When we got to New York, the system was that they would fire all the mess boys and hire new ones. The fathers would pay the steward to hire their sons, they'd slip them \$100 and hire them as mess boys and fire the old ones. We were fired and didn't have much money---\$30 or \$40 between us and we ended up going on a wildcat bus ride to Detroit to drive cars back to California for somebody that wanted cars transported. We paid the people in New York who were going to arrange that so when we got to Detroit that we go to a certain address and they'd get us the cars and we'd drive. Of course, we got to Detroit and they'd never heard of us.

Meantime they had our money in New York. A very nice woman at the place where we went that they never heard of us felt sorry for us and she arranged for a car. It turned out three other fellows were in the same boat from another bogus place in New York arrived in Detroit as well. So the five of us got in this one car and the woman loaned us \$20 for gasoline. Bless her.

We traveled most of the way on that \$20. We soon ran out of money and we started siphoning gas, you know, hiding behind billboards, anything to get that car back. If you're familiar with California when you come to the Imperial Valley you either can go one way to Los Angeles or the other way to San Diego. The car was to be delivered to Los Angeles. My friend and I who both lived in San Diego, we decided that we would leave the car at that point and let the three of them deliver the car to Los Angeles and we would hitch hike back home.

We got out on the highway and the very first car that went by was a pick-up truck--my father's partner. He took us right to our front door. My parents were not home and I fell asleep on the couch and it was exactly 90 days from the day I left that I was back home. Of course we had a write-up in the newspaper and all that.

I was 18 at that time and again was faced with what should I do, should I go back to school, should I get a job. My family on my mother's side was in the clothing business and I had worked from time to time as a 12 or 13 year old in the basement dusting hats, so I was around the men's clothing business. I didn't want to work for family, if I got any place at all I wanted to do it on my ability not because I was a relative.

I fooled around for a couple of years not doing much of anything. My father being a butcher and ultimately being in the cattle business going out to farmers and buying cattle and taking them to the slaughter house was trying to get by in the end of the depression. One Sunday I was visiting with him at a farmer's in the San Diego area. My father loved to sit for an hour and talk to farmers, he loved to talk and tell stories and I was kind of bored. We looked up and there was a training plane from the Ryan Airfield that was training Aviation cadets. They were flying around and this farmer asked me what I did or was planning to do, I said I really didn't know. He said "Why don't you try to join the Aviation Cadets? Learn how to fly?" I thought about it and he said "I'm pretty sure if you have two years of college you can get into the cadets. Why don't you look into it?"

I didn't do anything for about a month. One day I was thinking about that and decided I would check into it. It turned out I didn't have two years of college, I only had a half of year but you could take an exam for a two year equivalent. I was pretty good in school, pretty sharp. This was in 1940. There was some talk about us maybe getting into the war because it had been going on already for a year and a half in Europe. I proceeded to pursue this and I went to a prep school on my own every afternoon to reacquaint myself with algebra, geometry, English, things that I expected to get in this test. I went up to March Airfield near San Bernadino and took this two day test. Obviously I passed because I was called for Aviation Cadets. I reported in March of 1941 to the Pomona Area Training Camp where I spent 6 months going through flying school--primary and basic. For my final advanced course I went to Stockton and graduated flying school the same week war was declared. I had already finished my training and was waiting for my uniform to arrive and my wings when war was declared.

I joined an outfit in San Francisco, was assigned to an outfit that ultimately went to Fiji Islands where we trained for nine months, then when the Marines went into Guadalcanal we followed shortly thereafter. We were transferred from the Fijis to New Caledonia and that became the staging area into Guadalcanal. We'd go in for 3 or 4 or 5 or 6 weeks and back, and another group would go in for 5 or 6 weeks, and then we'd go back in again---I went three tours into the combat area. Flew 101 missions, originally in P-39's first mission, the subsequent missions in P-38's and the last session in combat zone was shorter than the first two because of the Yamamoto Mission.

My first mission was flying from Noumea. We brought planes to Henderson Field from New Caledonia. We followed a B-17 and landed for refueling in New Hebrides Island and then flew on to Henderson Field. We landed at Henderson Field in early October of 1942. We were sent down on one edge of the field on the far end. We had no facilities, we had no support. There was a previous outfit that got in ahead of us from New Caledonia and they had the mechanics. We did not have a mess hall, we had tents but as I recall the only way we could anything to eat was we had one tent that was full of cartons of can goods. I remember opening up one of these cartons and taking out some weiners--I opened the can with a hunting knife.

Our tents were in a coconut grove. We were shelled for 4 1/2 hours one night by Japanese battleships just cruising up and down the coast throwing in these great big 16" shells into the grove. There were about 8 of us in a foxhole with a steel cover, L-shaped and we were all in there all crunched up just scared to death and this shrapnel was just whistling through those palms, it was endless. We thought if we ever stuck our head out we were a gonner. It was a terrible night. The next day we only had two airplanes that could fly. The Marines lost a lot of planes--it was a terrible, terrible thing. The very famous shelling that happened. So that was the beginning of our tour at Guadalcanal.

The first tour was very rough. We had no facilities. We were flying early in the morning, during the day. We'd usually go out sometimes at 4 in the afternoon--we were flying planes that were mostly dive bombers, we couldn't fight with the Japanese fighters--they were very maneuverable. If you tried to turn with them, they'd just get in behind you, so we were relegated to strafing and dive bombing. We'd go out looking for targets and if during the night Japanese destroyers came down and were shelling up and down the coast, they would as soon as it got near daylight, they would scaddaddle back to where they came from and we'd go out looking for them. On several occasions we did and we'd try dive bombing them but it's very difficult to dive bomb a ship that's moving, and turning, and twisting. Once you commit to a dive you don't have the ability to twist and turn like they can so we didn't have much success.

I was credited with dropping a 500 lb bomb on the tail of the heavy cruiser that then became dead in the water and the Navy came in with torpedo planes and finished it off. In a way, I got kind of an assist, I guess. That was really all that I accomplished on my first tour.

I had one troop transport that came in and beached and started unloading and we were strafing troops but they also had Japanese fighter planes coming down to protect the troops while they were unloading. So there were periods when we could strafe and periods when we had to worry about the Zeros, so it wasn't something we'd could just do all day long. Mostly we dove into areas of jungle that we were told there were Japanese there, we couldn't see. They would say,

so many miles from this point here and then we'd locate an area we thought they were in and we'd dive bomb into there. You could see a bomb explode but whether it got anybody or not, mostly we would strafe in jungle areas. It was kind of a frustrating tour because we couldn't accomplish an awful lot. We had this one battle with a heavy cruiser. I tell you when you're diving on a big ship and every gun on it is blinking on you as you're going down, I tell you your rear end is pretty tight. Fortunately we were not hit in this activity because the P-39 was a very slick aerodynamic airplane and when it's in a dive it's going fast and you can't actually dive straight down because the lift is on the top of the wings and it pulls you this way, even though you're pulling directly down-- it pulls you at a 30 degree angle maybe to the attack. Most of the fire was hitting behind us.

The Japanese apparently didn't understand the speed that we were climbing and how much we were going forward. If they would have shot in front of us by the time the ammunition would reach us, we would run into it. I think that's probably why because we were not hit at all. There weren't too many opportunities that first tour of 25 missions or something like that and we then went on leave to Australia for a week or ten days and then came back--at that time we then had P-38's--a different mission now. Now we could get way up high. They were very easy to fly. Mostly we were escorting bombers. Bombers that were trying to bomb surface vessels, they just couldn't hit anything because by the time they'd sight on it the ship would be somewhere else and then they'd have to anticipate. I saw many cases where there were as many as 20 destroyers, ten in a row going down the slot and you could see them. We were about 25,000 ft., heading towards them and if it happened to be a specially clear day, and it had to be at least 200 miles away that we saw these little things that looked about 2 inches long with a little white thing behind it about a quarter of inch was the wake behind it.

They were all steaming but by the time we got near them, they detected that we were escorting bombers and then they started--all these 20's going all kinds of ways, the bombers are dropping bombs and they're splashing here and splashing there, everywhere but on the ships. You had to be extremely lucky, it was a lot of frustration.

Other times we went out and escorted Navy. By that time we had moved to Fighter One which was an airfield adjacent to Henderson Field. Henderson was the Navy and the bombers and the fighters were at One. Subsequent on the third tour we went to Fighter Two which was a third fighter strip. We had the Navy and Marines on one, the Air Force on two and the bombers on Henderson. We had three fields operating.

But, on the second tour with the P-38's we started out to have tables where you sit down to eat with canvas, we were still in tents but we had wooden floors. The food wasn't great but it was bread and potatoes and meat and that kind of thing so it wasn't too bad. We had no liquor, no soft drinks. The bare family essentials of food.

There were medical people there. On Henderson Field they had set up a field hospital. I don't know that any of us needed that, we were fed Adeburn. The minute the sun went down you had to get under the mosquito net--they were very large. When they landed on you, they would just stand up drop their thing in there and you could just see them fill up their bellies with blood. Occasionally you'd just watch one and be fascinated with it. Of course, we all got

malaria. I didn't get mine until after I got home.

After the second tour I went back to New Caledonia staging area and from there to New Zealand for a week. Came back from New Zealand and immediately back into Guadalcanal again for my third tour. One day, late afternoon, we got word from John Mitchell who was my flight commander in Fiji Islands. We had three flights of planes and pilots and Mitchell happened to be B Flight and I was part of B Flight. When they asked for volunteers to go to New Caledonia to go into Guadalcanal, Mitchell being very aggressive and he thought B Flight was the best of three flights, so they took B Flight. That's how I happened to get in. Oh yes, late afternoon — Mitchell came back from somewhere and said we're going on a mission tomorrow, we're going to have maximum effort, we think we have 18 P-38s. It would be every plane we owned on the 38's. Hopefully they'll be in commission ready to fly this mission. We'd never had that many before. Usually we'd go out with 9, 10, 11, I think once 12, never 18. There were always some that needed work. This was a maximum effort in the number of planes, and the crews, armament, engineers, radio people and mechanics had to work without rest through the whole night to be sure everyone's plane would be flyable. We were going up on this circuitous route to meet what we hope will be Admiral Yamamoto in his plane.

He explained that we had broken the code and that Admiral Yamamoto had notified several different locations of his command that he was coming on an inspection tour and he would arrive at this one spot, the first place by whatever time—let's say 9 a.m., and he would spend 25 minutes there and he would then go by boat to another island and spend 28 minutes. They were quoting not just 25 minutes but 28 minutes and he would spend 30 minutes there and then go by boat back to this other place, and spend an hour there—each stop time wise and then when thru have lunch and fly back to Rabaul which was 200 miles away.

We decided that if he's going to come from Rabaul to this particular point on Bougainville which is kind of a long island—like a sausage but a little wider—then go down to the far end of it, that he probably, since he is coming at an angle to it he would probably go about half to the mid point which was Empress Augusta Bay. This is easily identified as it's a beautiful bay on this island and then he would follow the coast down and land at this air field at the tip. Well if he's going to land here at 9 o'clock, he had to leave Rabaul 200 miles away at a certain time, because if he's going to come in this Betty bomber that they described, we knew of those bombers but had never flown one but estimated that it would fly so many knots, that they weren't going to fly all out but would just cruise normal speed. Then he would have to take off at this time, fly right at this point at such and such a time in order to make it down here by this schedule.

We are sitting almost 300 miles away from that point on Guadalcanal. We want to fly and arrive at Empress Augusta Bay at the same time we estimated he would arrive. We also had to fly out of sight of land the entire distance of some 300 miles so the Japanese on this whole series of islands called the slot—on every island there are many Japanese who report back when there is any activity with American planes.

It meant flying out of sight of land, but very low to the water because radar is strictly line of sight and the curve of the earth and if you're low enough you can't see maybe 50 miles at the most. If you're beyond the 50 mile limit, unless you're up high, you can be seen. Because the island chain was kind of at

an angle (Jacobson is now making a diagram for the interviewer of the islands) he's going to fly and get to the middle of that island and then follow it down and get to the tip, and we're down here. So we had to fly like this. The plan was to fly so many degrees for 40 minutes, a different direction for 30 minutes, and another direction for 25 minutes, and it had to be plotted out so we would end up at Empress Augusta Bay at let's say 9 o'clock. I don't know the exact time, but it was in the morning. We were to stay 50 feet off the water the whole time and once we headed perpendicular to Empress Augusta Bay, we were to fly until we sighted land and as soon as we sighted land hopefully it would be Empress Augusta Bay. It's a pretty big bay, maybe 40 miles across so it would be pretty hard to miss. We did a lot of estimating, we didn't know what the winds were, we were low to the water, we can't see land but we see some sharks, or whales or whatever, waves.

Soon as we were to sight land we were to start climbing to our rendezvous point which was to be 10,000 ft. above Empress Augusta Bay, sit up there and wait for Yamamoto to come to us and to be there at the same time.

As soon as we sighted land and started to climb one of the pilots said "Bogeys 11 o'clock high" and sure enough there they were. We were told there was going to be one bomber and six escorting Zeroes--it turned out there were two bombers I was number 2 man, Mitchell's wing man, he was the leader. The one who sighted the planes was number 3 man on Mitchell's first forward.

We were to be, 12 of us, to climb all the way up to 20,000' and provide protection for the battle area. Four of the 16 planes that got off the ground in Guadalcanal were to be the attack force. They were to immediately engage the enemy while the other 12 are climbing desperately as fast as they could to the top cause we expected the Zeroes --there were 75 to 100 Zeroes stationed on the tip where he was going to land. We assumed that they might go out and escort him like we did with Admiral Knox, Secretary Knox when he came and visited. We wanted to protect those four attack people from being disturbed by other Zeroes, as it turned out nobody showed up up there.

The four planes went in, they go in pairs--the leader and his wing man. The second pair of the attack four could not drop his external tanks for some reason so he called and said I'm having trouble and he pulled away -- he was kind of out of the action momentarily. The other two proceeded in and because the bombers were going like this and they were coming like this, they turned like this so they wouldn't fall behind--about that time the Japanese saw the P-38's. We were not at 10,000 feet, we were just climbing to 4,500 cause they were beginning to let down for their descent. I don't know if you want to go through the whole bit of one turning away, etc. I don't know that that's significant to my bit.

Mitchell and I and the other ten were climbing and I don't think we ever got to 20,000', I think by the time we got to 18,000' we heard somebody down at the attack force saying "We need some help." Mitchell and I, the lead two of the twelve, dove back down and sure enough we saw a Zero attacking the P-38. He apparently saw us coming and he left--we did get a quick shot at him, just a short burst by Mitchell and a short burst by me to kind of scare him off. Then I heard somebody say "Let's get the hell out of here" and we all headed for home so the entire action of the attack force, the two bombers and the six Zeroes and Mitchell and I coming down chasing off this one Zero couldn't have lasted more than 10 minutes. Because of the number of fighter planes on the tip of the

island where all this was happening within 4 or 6 miles of the airfield, we wanted to get out of there because when you ~~go~~ got low to the ground by others, you haven't got much chance. If you're up above them, you have a chance so we had to get out of there as fast as we could and we did and headed for home.

As it turned out Mitchell and I and the other two really saw nothing of what was happening. We were up there doing our thing. The only thing Mitchell and I saw was this one Zero that was apparently shooting at one of our P-38's.

It turned out later that Lanphier who was leader of the attack force didn't see what his wingman did because as he started his attack toward the bombers he was being attacked by three Zeroes so he turned into the three Zeroes as he felt the Zeroes were going to shoot him down before he could get to the bombers. Barber who was on his right wing continued on to the bombers and attacked them so Lanphier having turned away didn't see what Barber did. Barber other than seeing Lanphier turn away didn't know what he did after that.

The one that was having trouble with releasing his tank and his wingman finally got rid of the tanks, and they ended up sighting the second bomber--there were two--one like this and one over here. When they realized they were under attack, this one dove down like this and headed for the beach, this one kept going that way. The one that was having trouble with the tanks saw this one heading for the beach and attacked it. It was already down almost right on the tree tops.

Barber continued on shooting at the one bomber that presumably was the lead bomber. During his attack it suddenly reared up like this to make a turn and Barber said that it seemed like it stopped in mid air because he shot on by. He had two Zeroes chasing him so he was busy trying to keep from getting shot down and he headed off in that direction and saw the other bomber and the fighters attacking it near the water. Both of those P-38's attacked this one bomber that exploded as it hit the water. It was a miracle that three of the passengers from that bomber survived that crash.

The other bomber ended up in the jungle with Yamamoto. He was thrown out of the plane and they say that he was still in his seat and that he was dead. The forward part of the plane caught fire and burned and the occupants were beyond recognition.

When the pilots all got back to the base, Lanphier who had pulled up into the Zeroes, then turned around and started looking for the bomber again and he saw one on the tree tops he said turning, kind off flying close to the trees and he went down there and started to shoot at it and did shoot at it and it went into the jungle and he saw it crash. As it turned out he reported he shot down a bomber because he saw it crash in the jungle. Barber who shot and turned like this and he shot on by, it was smoking and one of the engines had some fire coming out and stopping and coming on, and was so low to the jungle that there was no way it could continue so he assumed that that went in and he claimed it was a bomber. Then two P-38's shot down one over the water so they claimed three bombers. Lanphier claimed one, Barber claimed one, etc.

As it turned out later, Lanphier believed that he shot down Yamamoto's plane as he was found in the jungle. The other one was over the water and he knew he shot down one over the jungle. When they found out there were only two planes--now it was--did they both shoot at the same plane? or was there maybe--anyway

that's what started the controversy.

Interviewer: Has it ever been proved to your satisfaction? Who cares anyway?

Jacobson: Well that's the point. In the early days, it wasn't until 1945 I think when Lanphier had published a North American press association or some newspaper like that, wrote an article about the mission because by that time the secrecy of it had been lifted. He pretty much wrote he thought he did, he claimed he shot down Yamamoto, cause that's what he thought.

Then Barber said "Hey, how does he know that that was you know, what about what I did? I shot this bomber." There's no way that bomber could survive, it went into the jungle too. Barber was willing in a way to share, he didn't try to say that he shot it down only, that Lanphier didn't because he really didn't know at the time. He talked it over with Lanphier--there were letters back and forth and they pretty much agreed it would be as the Air Force Victory Board decided that it should shared.

Lanphier didn't like that, he thought he should--he actually saw it go into the jungle. Barber never claimed it headed for the jungle, he saw it smoking and i flame and close to the jungle. He was busy evading the Zeroes and he didn't know about the other bomber right away. As he proceeded with his evasive action, that's when he noticed the other.

The Victory Board met and decided it should be shared. Lanphier was not happy with that and he was able to talk them into having a review of the Victory Board decision. That again was denied, Lanphier getting full credit. Then Barber in the meantime and Mitchell and a friend of the two of them who was also a P-38 pilot, George Chandler, but he came after us in Guadalcanal--those three got involved deeper and deeper and deeper, more aggressively trying to dispute Lanphier to get his name off the record and give Barber full credit.

Lanphier should not have consistently promoted the fact that he shot him down during that period from 1945 till like in 1980. He stuck his neck out so far, he wasn't a big enough of a man to say well I guess maybe I made a mistake and we should share--he didn't want to give that up.

Now Chandler, Mitchell and Barber --well Chandler formed a 2nd Yamamoto Mission Association and asked for donations from various people who also believed that Lanphier didn't deserve half credit, that Barber deserved full credit. They were going to go out to the jungle and look at the airplane and examine it and see if the bullets -- and all that bologna. Anyway, in 1988 they had a 45 year retrospective in Fredericksburg. I had planned to be there and knew that Mitchell was already saying derogatory remarks about Lanphier and claiming that he didn't even fire his guns and that he's a liar--and all that, and I thought to myself---. Lanphier was a classmate of mine--we were not tent mates but we had a barracks where we had a bathroom between and then two pilots on either side of the bathroom and then there was another group of four, and another group of four, and another group of four. We were in the same shared bathroom so I got to know him quite well.

We were in the same outfit in the Fijis. He was just a delightful fellow. He was the greatest name dropper in the world. It used to make me angry a bit. He would say well I talked with, or I know this guy and that guy and it turned out later that he didn't know them. I used to tell him "Tom, you're so full of bull

shit", and he'd laugh. He was a very "A" type guy. Boastful, cheerful, optimistic, very aggressive fighter pilot, excellent war record, everybody liked him. Barber was his wing man on most flights, they fought together but he did have a tendency to exaggerate, embellish like we all did. Even I found myself guilty of telling a little happening during the war and would make it a little bit more interesting. It's typical. Lanphier did more than most. When the time came that he was claiming he did all these things, these three would say "Well, you know he hopes that some day he will run for president of the United States, that's so ridiculous, and he claimed that he killed a Japanese walking in the jungle one day, and all that". I said "What has that got to do with the mission, and what he did on the flight?"

But, they like some people do, the three of them decided that Lanphier did not deserve the credit and that he did not shoot at the airplane. Then they kept finding support for that position and they would not listen or even consider any other possibility cause they'd already made up their mind. That's typical, you decide on something and then you find support for it. It got to this point that when they had the 45 year, I realized that no one was going to speak up for Lanphier. He in the meantime had died. I went to Barber and I said "Look. You say you're willing to accept half and half", because Barber is a very cool, nicest, salt of the earth type of guy and not one that you would think would irritate and stir up trouble. He said the thing of it that worried him was that Lanphier had written a book, he had a transcript, and he had sent it to several of the pilots to check it out and that if he's going to publish that book, I'm going to continue to fight him on it. I said "Look, Rex, I live in San Diego, Lanphier's family lives in San Diego, what if I got to the family and say to them if they should publish the book would they let me, Jacobson, edit the one chapter on the mission to make sure that your version of what happened is also included so let whoever buys the book, let them decide for themselves." He said "Fine. He would agree that he would not pursue any further."

So I went to the family, Lanphier has five daughters living. The widow is living in San Diego, the oldest daughter is married to an attorney in San Diego, I talked to the widow and she said talk to my son-in-law. Which I did, I had a meeting with the attorney, Ron Mix, National Football League Hall of Fame football player. He's well known around the country, very nice fellow. He said the family just doesn't have any intentions of publishing the book. We just don't want to get involved in any controversy but he said I want to write a letter to the mission pilots, would you read it at this 45 year retrospective. I told him I'd be glad to. He did, he handed me the letter. It was basically an appeal for understanding about his daughter's grandchildren, it's been 45 years and memories fade, he was one of your buddies, play it cool in other words.

When I got to Fredericksburg, I talked it over with Dr. Hall who was going to moderate and I told him this whole story. I went back to Barber and told him that they had no intention of publishing. Sure enough, and I told Cargill Hall that Mitchell was going to try to make a big speech about Lanphier not deserving and everything and he said "Let me read the letter to the audience and the pilots at the same time as part of the program." He thought it would have more impact that my reading it. As it turned out we ran out of, as with all symposiums, time was running tight and we had the question and answer period and somebody asked a leading question and Mitchell said I guess now's the opportunity and he went on, and on and Cargill Hall is just having a fit, and he's writing little notes and handing them to Mitchell--Lay off, lay off and he tried to interrupt him a couple of times. Anyway he went on and on and on and

on, and I was just furious, it just wasn't right.

That was the beginning, after that they started the 2nd Yamamoto Mission and asked for donations, and they're going to go out and send a team of engineers out to the jungle to look at the plane but they couldn't do it because there was a revolution or something. That's pretty much the story.

As it turned out my comments here at the symposium on the first day, I hadn't planned anything it just turned out that Roger Ames said somebody asked a question or something and he said something and then said "Jake, do you have anything to say?" and it just came out, I guess out of my heart. I can't remember the exact words but apparently it had quite an impact because I had 10 or 12 people come up to me and say, even Captain Pineau, as it broke up said "That's the best presentation that I've ever heard." So, I was naturally quite pleased about that.

The fellow I was telling you about that I met on the street, he also volunteered that information and said that basically it closed that session on a positive note.

After the war I went into merchandising (my family background being merchandising) and was in that for many years in San Diego, got married and had three sons-----

tape ran out.