

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Nimitz Education and Research Center  
Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

Arthur R. McQuiddy

Roswell, NM

December 10, 2002

U.S. Navy

VP23 Patrol Squadron

354<sup>th</sup> Pioneer Mustang Fighter Group

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is December 10, 2002. I am interviewing Mr. Arthur R. McQuiddy by telephone. His phone number is 505-623-6350. His address is 5061 Bright Sky Road, Roswell, New Mexico 88201. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War, Center for Pacific War Studies, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Mr. Misenhimer

I want to thank you for taking time today to do this interview today and I want to thank you for service to our country during World War II. The first thing I like to do is read the agreement with the museum. "Agreement Read." Is that ok with you?

Mr. McQuiddy

It certainly is.

Mr. Misenhimer

What is your birthday Art?

Mr. McQuiddy

I was born August 22, 1918.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you born?

Mr. McQuiddy

Sedalia, Missouri, Pettis county in central Missouri.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have brothers and sister?

Mr. McQuiddy

I had one brother who is deceased.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was he in World War II?

Mr. McQuiddy

No, he was not, he was too old.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were your parents' names?

Mr. McQuiddy

My father was Jesse Harris McQuiddy and my mother was Helen Elizabeth McQuiddy.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to school?

Mr. McQuiddy

It is rather involved. I am a graduate of Kansas City Art Institute. Started out to be a political cartoonist and I attended the University of Missouri and got a BA degree there.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about high school?

Mr. McQuiddy

Smith-Cotton High is Sedalia, Missouri.

Mr. Misenhimer

What year did you finish high school?

Mr. McQuiddy

1935.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you finished high school, what did you do then?

Mr. McQuiddy

I went to Kansas City to the Art Institute and subsequently I also worked at the Kansas City Star as a copy boy and cub reporter. That is why I decided to go back to the university and get a degree because I realized that to survive in this sort of business I had better get a college education.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you leave college before you went in the service?

Mr. McQuiddy

I was at the university at the time.

Mr. Misenhimer

What year did you go into the service?

Mr. McQuiddy

I joined the Navy on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of December 1941.

Mr. Misenhimer

The day after Pearl Harbor.

Mr. McQuiddy

I had taken civilian pilot training at the University in 1940 and had my pilot's license. There were a lot of college men that were planning on going into the Army Air Corp. I joined the Navy on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of December. I wanted to be a Navy pilot.

Mr. Misenhimer

The training you had taken was a big one. Was that military sponsored?

Mr. McQuiddy

No, it was not.

Mr. Misenhimer

Or government sponsored.

Mr. McQuiddy

It was sponsored by the United States Government. Obviously, by 1939 it was pretty obvious that we were going to get into the war sooner rather than later and they came up with the program of civilian pilot training which trained an awful lot of young men and I guess a few women although I don't know because there certainly weren't any women in our class.

Mr. Misenhimer

December 7<sup>th</sup> of course was the day that Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Do you recall where you were when that happened and when you heard about it?

Mr. McQuiddy

Well, I heard about it at approximately twelve o'clock noon on Sunday.

Mr. Misenhimer

What reaction did you have to the news?

Mr. McQuiddy

I was dumb-founded, and I was the associated press correspondent for central Missouri so I immediately went to the newspaper office where I had my office and worked the balance of the afternoon and evening.

Mr. Misenhimer

You grew up during the depression; did that have much effect on you and your family?

Mr. McQuiddy

I'm sorry. That is kind of a hard question to answer. My father was a minor officer of the Missouri Pacific Railroad and they had a gigantic shop in Sedalia with about five thousand employees and he was a foreman of that shop. They built the steam locomotives and the passenger cars there, so they were pretty--. We didn't really have a lot of talk about the depression. I don't know if it was because my father never brought it home from work.

Mr. Misenhimer

He was able to keep his job during the whole time then, right?

Mr. McQuiddy

Oh yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

You volunteered the day after Pearl Harbor. How did you choose the Navy?

Mr. McQuiddy

I had always wanted to be a Navy pilot. I would have gone in 1939 but my folks did not want me to.

Mr. Misenhimer

You joined on the 8<sup>th</sup>. What day did you actually report to duty?

Mr. McQuiddy

I was called on the 28<sup>th</sup> of December. There were two of us from the University of Missouri that had gone down and we drove down to Saint Louis to join on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December and I think that recruiting officer in Saint Louis if I had been blind and dumb he would have still signed me up. They were pretty excited in the recruiting office. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of December I got my orders to report to the New Orleans elimination base. What the Navy had done, in a way they were ill prepared because they just did not have enough opportunities I guess at Pensacola and they were

building and they set up around the country what they called elimination bases and I presumed because they were having so many, probably hundreds, of young men volunteering to become naval aviators, and of course you had to have two years of college and the requirements were strict, but they were not that strict and of course you had to pass the very comprehensive physical. The New Orleans elimination base was out near Lake Pontchartrain and they were just building it. When we were not in ground school or the ones flying we were helping literally carry railroad ties to make taxiways because the ground out there was sopping wet all the time and what they did at that elimination base is they literally took you through the eight hours of primary training and a lot of guys washed out right then and the ability to fly was just not given to everybody. Then after that, of course we went on to--I received orders to Pensacola. What happened to me, when we soloed in the e-base, it was winter time in New Orleans and I have often said it may be only thirty degrees above zero outside, but you can't get enough clothes on to stay warm when it is cold down there. It's ice cold. Once you live in Texas you get a little taste of that.

Mr. Misenhimer

I know exactly what you are talking about.

Mr. McQuiddy

I know when we went solo we couldn't throw the guys in Lake Pontchartrain, but we would pick them up and taken them in and give them a cold shower. I had a guy's feet and of course you always put up a big fight and tried to keep from going in the cold shower. I know that I was holding the guys feet and my stomach popped and it turned out that I had a hernia. They put me on a train and shipped me over to Pensacola. I had already soloed and was waiting for orders

anyway, but they sent me over to Pensacola and to the hospital and I was operated on there and that slowed me up for about a month and a half.

Mr. Misenhimer

So, there at New Orleans at this elimination base you took your basic training or flight training.

Mr. McQuiddy

No, we only took, as I said, we had about eight hours of what would have been primary training and then we did those in biplanes. The Navy had two kinds of primary trainers, one was the famous old Stearman, which the Air Force used as well and the Navy also made their own training plane. It is almost an exact copy of the Stearman. I think that we had probably the Navy trainer most often.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now the fact that you already had pilots license, did that have any effect on your training there?

Mr. McQuiddy

No, none what so ever.

Mr. Misenhimer

They ignored that?

Mr. McQuiddy

I went straight through the whole training program.

Mr. Misenhimer

So how long were you there at New Orleans?

Mr. McQuiddy



Oh goodness, I don't have my logs in front of me anymore. I have got my log book, but it starts in June of 1942 when I started my flight training in Pensacola. So, I must have been at New Orleans probably two months I guess.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then you went to Pensacola because of the surgery.

Mr. McQuiddy

Yes, I went to Pensacola to the hospital the Navy and there you had a book of rules several inches thick. One of them was, back in those days, if you had a herniotomy you stayed in bed for two weeks. Of course, today they would have you up within the next probably five hours after they did it. Any way then you had six weeks to two months of ground school. And you were a third class, well actually when we went into flight school, when we went into e-base at Pensacola we were Seamen Second class and they did not know what to do with us. They did not know what kind of uniforms to give us. They could not give us Aviation cadet uniforms because we weren't aviation cadets yet. They couldn't give us Seaman Second Class uniforms because we weren't really Seaman second class and of course right after the start of the war they didn't exactly know what they were doing anyways. I think what we did, I think that they gave us cadet uniforms but instead of having a quarter inch gold braid on the tab we had black chief petty officer patten leather straps across the top of the tab.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your pay when you first went in?

Mr. McQuiddy

I don't have the remotest memory. I didn't complain but I think it was about thirty-five dollars a month. Don't hold me to that. You could buy a lot with thirty-five dollars in those days.

Mr. Misenhimer

That is right, I believe in the Army when they went in was like twenty-one dollars month.

So, kind of take me through Pensacola from the start to finish at Pensacola just kind of what happened to you there.

Mr. McQuiddy

Well after the six weeks to two months of flight school of course we took the abbreviated course of trigonometry and of course navigation was the primary for all the Naval aviators because there wasn't any telephone poles out there to find your way back to ship if you were a carrier pilot or back to a small island if you were flying a small engine. It was a lot of flight school navigation as well as basic navigation, but we had navigation from the time we started the ground school until practically the day we got out of the service. We also in those days you had to be able to send and receive twelve words a minute with Morse code, so we spent a lot of time with earphones on and keying and practicing learning to signal by five letter groups. Although, once I got my commission I never ever used it again. We had a course in trigonometry that was good and there was the obvious course in Navy regulation and those are the things that I kind of remember. We marched a little bit, but not very much. Of course, back in 1942 it was before the athletic people had discovered body building or anything like that. We had gym every day but it wasn't like Tom Hamilton later provided them. The poor guys that went in to flight school and pre-flight and had kind of got organized had to get a lot of people. But then after the end of the ground school we started almost fulltime flight training and I have my log book in front of me and I started in June of 1942. We would fly an hour and a half in basic training flights and those were in what we called the Yellow Peril which was the Stearman type biplane. I'm looking at my flight record and I didn't call it my primary training in the Navy by the machine.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was this flying with an instructor or solo?

Mr. McQuiddy

I had seven and a half hours of instruction and then I soloed. Then I had another hour and a half of instruction and more solos. It was all just basic training stuff. In primary of course we got into acrobatics. We did all the stuff that you have to do in combat. It was I believe by the 30<sup>th</sup> of June I had thirty-three hours by that time and I had finished primary training. Then in July basic training ended.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was most of this cross country flying or local flying or what?

Mr. McQuiddy

Well the primary training was local flying. They obviously had areas when they have two or three hundred training planes out in an area. You would find a place to train. They had auxiliary field where you would land and take off. From day one in the Navy training program of course we were taught and instructed in the carrier landings techniques, which was very important in the training because every one of us thought we were going to end up on a carrier. I didn't but it wasn't because – at the time when I got out of flight school they needed more multi-engine pilots at that time and so they put us all in mobile.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was your flying over land or over water there?

Mr. McQuiddy

No, we were mostly over, up there at Pensacola is up there in the boot handle of Florida, it was all almost all over land there.

Anyway, the training went on and after we finished primary we went into, I guess we went into instrument for our landing and then we did those in a North America plane called an SNJ.

Mr. Misenhimer

Same as the AT-6.

Mr. McQuiddy

Yes, the same as the AT-6, wonderful airplane and there was a hood over the back seat and we did all of our instrument work of course with an instructor and learned to fly the radio beam and again a lot of guys washed out in radio instrument because they just could not handle it being under the hood. That was probably about I would guess thirty to forty hours of instrument work and when you finished that then you went into a training program of formation flying. We flew those in planes called OS2U. There were wheels on them. Actually, it was the plane that they were using in those days off of battleships and cruisers for their pilots on those ships that were assigned to those ships to do aerial gunnery support for the plane. We had about I guess eighteen hours of so of instrument work that we flew three plane formations and nine plane formations. We really thought that we were hot stuff. The planes—we started to use the shotgun shells to kick the engine over. We all, of course, were pretty good pilots considering. But we would have a case pilot, an instructor and we even had radios and stuff and they would tell us what to do when to do it and it was a lot of fun. Then after that you finished formation and sometime cadets would go from primary to formation to instruments. It just depended on the workload was on it. In October of 1942 I was assigned to final squadron. That day they would always, when you got your assignment to final squadron, some of the guys got carrier training and fire school and they were transferred to Jacksonville, Missouri. I had asked for a Beattle Bomber because it had flown in France at the battle of Midway. What had happened out there and when posted all my

classmates were assigned to open engine which meant that we would be assigned to a patrol squadron and then our final squadron training was in the old retired Navy sea planes that were Sea planes that the Navy had since about 1935 I think. They were BB75V and for patrol and when we first started out on them they would take three pilots at a time. We would go out for three to four hours and each one of us would take our turn landing and taking off and obviously we did a lot of selection navigation. We had some night flying towards the end of that period.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was this landing on water or on land?

Mr. McQuiddy

No, we were always on water.

Mr. Misenhimer

On water, ok.

Mr. McQuiddy

We flew all over the Gulf of Mexico. That training took, according to my logbook here, we had 20 hours of training and I was commissioned in late October of 1942. They did not have any formal graduation ceremony in those days like they do now of course. You got your commission and there were uniform companies that had offices and tailors right outside the front gate. I think that we got a \$225 kit uniform (allowance) plus the fact that Navy issued all kinds of gear to you including three traveling suitcases and foul weather gear and all kinds of stuff including the navigating wristwatch. I bought a set of blues and back in those days Navy pilots were allowed, not only allowed but we had green uniforms that were really good looking, and we got to wear brown shoes with our green uniform. We distinguished ourselves from our friends who had gone into the regular Navy—into the shipboard Navy because they had to wear black shoes. We

always called them the black shoe Navy. I think some of them were a little peeved at us because we had the good-looking green uniform.

Mr. Misenhimer

The green is not the khaki colored one?

Mr. McQuiddy

No, no this is green.

Mr. Misenhimer

Green. Okay.

Mr. McQuiddy

Green as green as it could be, dark green twill. It was a good uniform. Anyway, then I had a week leave and I had orders to report to San Diego, California for further training. When I got to San Diego, I checked in and took the train out, of course, to Los Angeles.

Okay, my wife just wrote me a note that says she wants to buy a copy of this tape because this is the first time she has ever heard me talk about any of my Navy days. Anyways, I had orders for further training in San Diego. When I got out there, I will never forget as long as I live, I took the train down to San Diego from Los Angeles. That night there were a couple of other classmates of mine who also were going down there, and we had all been in the squadron together. Incidentally, if I can digress a minute, when you got into an advanced squadron, we had little—of course we all wore khaki uniforms in the spring and summer and fall. We wore Dress Whites and we had shoulder boards with just a star on them. But on our Khaki uniforms when you were a second-class cadet we had little pins that we had to wear over our pockets. And Coca-Cola, incidentally, had provided iron-on nametags—iron-on names that we put on all of our Khaki uniforms. They were ironed on over the pocket of the shirt.

Mr. Misenhimer

The left pocket?

Mr. McQuiddy

When you get to be a first-class cadet, of course, you had a little that had two bars on it and first-class cadets were treated as officers. We had full officer privileges as first-class cadets. And occasionally we would go to the officers club to have dinner rather than eat in the mess hall, especially toward the end. When we were down there, three of us were down there one night having dinner and when we left there were a whole bunch of Navy caps there were everybody hung their caps. Three or four of them had a lot of gold braid on the bill. I picked one up and put it on and then looked inside and it was the cap of full three-star admiral and I about fainted. I wanted to get out of there real fast. I was afraid he might see me. It's the kind of thing where you want to tell somebody who is interested, like a grandson. Something historical.

Mr. Misenhimer

On your trip out to California, were you on a troop train or just on a regular passenger train?

Mr. McQuiddy

No, I just had a ticket on a regular southbound train. I was in Kansas City and it took about two days there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have a chair car, or did you have a pullman?

Mr. McQuiddy

Oh no, I had berth.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now, when you were commissioned, you were commissioned as a Lieutenant JG, is that right?

Mr. McQuiddy

No, I was commissioned as an Ensign.

Mr. Misenhimer

Right

Mr. McQuiddy

I think our pay was \$125.00 a month, plus 50% of that for flight pay. That rankled the hell out of my friends who were on battleships crews.

Mr. Misenhimer

And that was good money back in those days.

Mr. McQuiddy

We also got a bonus for going into the Navy – Ten thousand dollars. You didn't get that until you got out.

Mr. Misenhimer

And when you got to San Diego, what did you do there?

Mr. McQuiddy

That wasn't why I wanted to be in the Navy. I just wanted to be a Navy pilot. Anyway, so the next day when I checked in – there were three of us who spent the night in the US Grand Hotel in San Diego and went over to Nark Island and checked in with our orders the next day. And there was an old Chief Petty Officer in Personnel and he took a look at my orders and he said, "Honey, where do you want to go? North, or South?" And I said, "Oh, Chief, I am supposed to go to Operational Training Squadron to get more training." He said, "Well, they need you guys in the Fleet and do you want to go North or South?" And I said, "Well, if North means what I think it does, Chief, I want to go South." And North, of course, meant the Aleutian Islands and



the South meant someplace out in the Pacific – south of where it was cold. Bad weather for flying. So I was assigned that day to a patrol squadron, VP 23. VP 23 had been in existence for a long time and I think its squadron number is still in use today. At least it was a few years ago. The guy flying patrol out in front. Things have change in 60 years. Anyway, I missed the squadron by one day. Some of them came back to pick up new airplanes. And if I had been a day earlier I could have flown out to the Naval Air Station where all of the PBY were stationed then. Waimea Bay on the north side of Oahu. The squadron on the 7<sup>th</sup> of December had been based at Pearl Harbor. And most of the planes had been destroyed. The nomenclature in a PBY crew, we carried a crew of nine. The senior pilot was the patrol plane commander and the next guy, normally in seniority, was the first pilot, then the second pilot was primarily the navigator. But in all the crews, the first pilot and second pilot took turns flying and navigating. We had two radiomen. We had two mechanics and we had two gunners. And, of course, we were flying PBY – PBY 5, the plane had actually started production in about 1935. We were flying the five, which was the water version of the plane. Actually, we would land in the water and taxi up to the beach and they would literally put wheels on each side of the plane. And in some cases they would need a tractor to pull it out of the water on the wheels of another vehicle. And in a lot of cases we never--we tied up to buoys and we would go back to shore when we were down in the-- before we went up to the Solomon Islands. We were on Sea Pointe Tender.

Mr. Misenhimer

Had you had training in the PBY before this?

Mr. McQuiddy

I think I had – I would have to look my log book again - I think we had ....final squadron at Pensacola. We all got a little training in it, but not very much. We took a great deal of pride in

our ability to navigate. I had my orders to get to Joint VP Squadron 23 at Kaneohe Island Bay, and so they sent me by train to San Francisco where I turned my orders in there and waited for transportation and I ended up going to Oahu on one of the old private liners that had been converted into a troop ship. It was carrying all kinds of people. It had a lot of Navy officers on the ship. It was a five-day trip across the Pacific and down to Honolulu and then we were taken over the mountains to Kaneohe Bay where I joined the squadron. It was November 1942.

Mr. Misenhimer

On the trip over were you escorted or were you alone?

Mr. McQuiddy

I don't remember that we were escorted. I know it was a single ship. That 60 years has gone by too fast.

Mr. Misenhimer

So then you joined the squadron there.

Mr. McQuiddy

I joined the squadron there and we started doing maneuvers and our squadron was flying patrol every third day. That was in November and December. The average flight in the PBY was—the normal patrol was 12 to 14 hours. And we would fly, what we called a wide pattern like a large capital Y. We would fly about 300 miles straight out and then branch off at about 30 degrees to the left and fly maybe another 200 miles that way, and then fly cross way over and fly back in on the other leg of the Y and back to the point where we took off. And depending on the load of the plane when we first took off, of course, the planes were slower than the dickens, but that was one of the blessings of the patrol work, especially when you look at the summary. We never flew very high because if you get much above 1,000 feet you can't see much of the water. You can

see ships, of course, and that type of thing, but you wouldn't necessarily see the plume of the periscope unless you were very, very lucky. We flew out February 1943. We went out In December of 1942 we flew on patrol with 11..... One was at night. That was the first night flying I had. In January 1943 I flew on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January, 7<sup>th</sup> of January, the 9<sup>th</sup> of January, the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of January, the 15<sup>th</sup>, the 17<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, and incidentally by that time we were out on Midway. So, we had gone out to Midway, and I remember it quite well. We had gone out there probably in early December and we flew on Christmas Day and I remember the radioman typing up a little note that said "go all the way on Christmas Day, Merry Christmas". PBY was a marvelous airplane for what it was designed to do. In the middle of the plane, the wing was up on a parasol, kind of, and in the middle of the plane we had a little two-burner electric coil where we made coffee and later when we were a Black Cat squadron and we flying at night, the crew would see that the pilot didn't fall asleep. I always said you could whistle and the coffee would march up and jump in your cup. It was strong. On those patrols we would take food along. We would have enough for lunch. It seems like we always had baked beans of one kind or another.

Mr. Misenhimer

When your patrol was out of Hawaii you were looking for submarines, is that right?

Mr. McQuiddy

Until the battle of the Midway, at least, they were still looking for Japanese shipping I guess. We were just looking for anything we could see. It was a pretty dull way to fight a war. You would sit there in the pilot seat and looking out looking for something. The Pacific Ocean is a mighty big body of water and you were lonely at times.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you all ever see any enemy vessels of any kind out of Hawaii?

Mr. McQuiddy

Not at that time, no. I never saw one when we were at Midway either. And later when we were back there at Oahu and with the squadron. All of January and into February. Then on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February of 1943, by that time I had over 500 hours. We flew back and six crews were called back to go down to Kaneohe to go down to camp on an island to look for Eddie Rickenbacker. For us and the PBY it was a two-day flight. On the 24<sup>th</sup> – fly from Hickam to Kansas City in one day. Rickenbacker and the crew he was in, I think they had flown from Johnson Island and they were supposed to land at Canton. Well Canton was literally a knoll with one palm tree on it that the Japs had shelled mercifully and it just kind of stood up like a sore thumb. We were sent down to look for Eddie Rickenbacker, but we never found him. They missed the island by probably 10 miles or so. Ultimately had to ditch between Canton and an island called Funafuti in a Sea plane. An OSCU office at Funafuti saw their life raft and picked them up. Another took them back to Funafuti and then they flew them over to Samoa to the hospital to check them out. We were looking for them, and then periodically we were probably maybe 400 miles from Gilbert. Canton was as close to being in the middle of the Pacific as is possible to be. I think it was probably 3 degrees south of longitude and latitude and 179 longitude, so we flew over the international date line every single day. Anyway, after we stopped looking for Eddie Rickenbacker we were told to stay there and we started flying routine patrols all over the Central Pacific. Again, I don't think we ever saw any Japanese at any time. But we did fly every day—one of our crews and I guess we flew two patrols a day. We flew over Howland Island which is the island that Amelia Earhart was supposed to land on when she disappeared. It was a tiny little

strip. A tiny little Island. The Japanese were supposed to have a weather station on it. I don't remember ever seeing it.

End of Tape 1 Side 1

Mr. McQuiddy

But they had bulldozed the landing strip on it. Of course, it was out of coral and it was green and bushes had grown up on it. It really looked like it went from the south end of the island to the north end of the island. I doubt that it was over 3,500 feet on the whole darn thing. It was due west of Canton. Come to think about it, the trip must have been further than 400 miles, although periodically a lonely Japanese bomber would fly over Canton and drop a bomb or two. They never did hit it or anything. But Canton, at that stage, was a major saving point of our planes that were being flown by commercial pilots through Australia and preparing for, of course, going on up into New Guinea as well as up in the Solomons.

Mr. Misenhimer

So Canton Island was east of the Gilberts then?

Mr. McQuiddy

It was fairly primitive; believe me, living down there.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you live in? Quonset huts?

Mr. McQuiddy

We lived in tents. Pan Am had built a nice hospital and a nice hotel there on another part of the island, on the other side of the lagoon. They had used that as a base as one of the stops on their flights to Australia. Because they didn't fly at night in those old clippers that they flew, so they would land there in Canton and the passengers would spend the night and then the next day they

would fly them on down—I don't know where they took them. Probably to Fuma and the Fijis. And then from there on down to New Caladonia. But, anyway, we were flying patrol and by that time I had enough hours that I qualified as a First Pilot. So, I got a skipper and squad assigned to me. He was a Lieutenant Commander. I thought that was a pretty high rank.

Mr. Misenhimer

What rank did you have by then?

Mr. McQuiddy

I was still an Ensign. The Navy was so -- in those days, of course, they were still living in the old peace time Navy and it took two to three years to get a promotion. In each graduating class in Pensacola, the Marines took 5% of each class – and of course there were an awful lot of fellows that wanted to be in the Marines. I didn't, but there were a lot. Their classmates made First Lieutenant long before I made JG. We stayed down on Canton. And looking at the logbook, all of March and April, our patrols weren't as long. It was 10 ½ hours, 9.7, 9.1, 11, 9.8, and according to this we were patrolling in the Gilbert. But the point is, among other things, each flight crew of nine, so there were probably 55 of us down there on camp. Typically a bunch of American boys, some of these guys who were burying planes. There was even a PanAm group who had left a dog and a cat, and we were friends with the dog and cat and had a lot of fun with them. We all knew we had to fill our own water from the filling plant and the cat disappeared. We didn't know what had happened. We thought maybe one of the crews that was flying to Australia had taken it. Well, it turned out the cat had drowned in our water still. Every damned one of us came down with dysentery. So, they flew a Sea Plane down to take the sick people back to Hawaii and back to Oahu, and we loaded ourselves up and they were taxiing around in the lagoon and hit a coral head and the plane started to fill with water. We ended up

flying our own flight back to Oahu. That was the 9<sup>th</sup> of May. We flew from Canton to Palmyra on the 8<sup>th</sup>, and then we had a 9-hour flight from Palmyra to Oahu to the hospital. We were flying in the South Pacific and we flew Oahu to Palmyra. The day we flew from Palmyra to Canton. The day after that we flew from Canton to Suva and the Fijis. And then the next day we flew from Suva to Espiritu Santo.

Mr. Misenhimer

What day did you leave Hawaii?

Mr. McQuiddy

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of June. I will never forget. Suva in the Fijis was a wonderful little town. We tied up to the buoys at one end of town and stayed in the Grand Pacific Hotel. It was kind of like the good ole days. It had an open bar and they were serving Australian gin, which is yellow and ugly and tasted worse than it was. They were having a dance that night. If you are following golfing, Vijay Singh, he is very typical of the Suvans. Their policemen there were all natives. They are all well over 6 feet tall and they wore white Bermuda shorts and white short sleeved shirts and could walk barefoot. After we had dinner in the Grand Pacific Hotel, the three of us who were officers walked down to the town hall where they were having the dance. When we went to the door the people at the door said, "Oh, we are sorry, this dance tonight is not for our allies. I'm sorry that you can't come to the dance." We turned around and went back to the hotel. That was our last really chance to see civilization for quite a while.

Mr. Misenhimer

Who was having the dance? The local people?

Mr. McQuiddy

I don't know, just the locals. I guess obviously they had the British Army stationed there. In June of 1943 we started flying patrol out of Espiritu Santos and we were working off of a sea plane tender. I don't remember the name of it, but think it was called a Kinka koo. The crew of the VP23 had a lot of experienced pilots. One guy named Al Martha had been in the Philippines and one of the fellows that had flown some of the garzas people out. Another one had been the last plane leave. And one of our crew that had monitored the Japs—a crew from PP44 found the Japs that June day, but another crew from VP23 had shadowed them and kept recording where they were and what they were doing.

Mr. Misenhimer

This was the battle of the Midway?

Mr. McQuiddy

The battle of the Midway. We were very proud of them. As a consequence of the senior pilot we flew with, it was the same crew. I flew with him. He was a wonderful guy named Tom Benton. Another one, the second pilot, named George Clark. I've kept in touch with Tom Benton during all of these years. He's still alive and 90 years old now. George Clark died a long time ago. We kept flying routine patrols out of Espiritu Santos all the way up through August. We had to go down and get an engine changed in New Caladonia, and we were doing some night patrols. One of the patrols went due north up to a Phosphate Island that the Japanese have and occasionally we would go up there and bomb that. If we didn't have enough fuel to get back when we did that we would land on a little island called Vanikoro and they had a little old destroyer parked there and was part of the Sea Pointe Tender and we would land there and refuel and spend the night and then fly on back down to Espiritu Santos, and the next day we would fly back the other way as part of the patrol. I didn't think I would ever forget any of those things. That particular island



was the prison island of the Solomons back in those days. I don't know what they do now. They didn't have jails for the Navy because if they did something real bad, they would just take them and put them on another island and take them away from home for a period of time. On that Island there was some woman there in the little compound – the only one we ever saw – who was from another island and she had done something bad. She wouldn't come out for any of us. Some of the coast watchers that lived there had a real nice cottage, a typical south pacific cottage, and we didn't take our meals there when we flew in. One day an old PBY came in and landed and tied up and out of that camp Admiral Halsey. Of course, they wanted him to see Mrs. Goldway and she wouldn't come out. But Halsey stood there in front of her shack, rolled his sleeves up, and he had a tattoo of a three mast sailing ship on his left deltoid. It was a beauty. When she saw that tattoo she came out of her grass shack and really had a look at it. We all got the biggest kick out of it. He had a Marine pilot flying that PBY and they went back to the airplane and took off. I don't know where they went. Some place.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get to meet Halsey?

Mr. McQuiddy

Just shaking hands. That meant a lot.

Mr. Misenhimer

Vanikoro is part of the Solomons, right?

Mr. McQuiddy

Yes, they were part of the Solomons. It would be way over on the eastern side.

Mr. Misenhimer

On Espiritu Santos, what part of the Island were you on there?

Mr. McQuiddy

There was a fairly nice bay, the best I can describe it, on the southern tip of the island. We were on Sea Pointe Tender. The Navy in those days, we had 18 flight crews of three officers to a crew. We had an air combat intelligence officer. The skipper of the squadron; the executive officer of the squadron; a gunnery officer. We had a war room where we sat by our file number. All of the ensigns sat at one table and the other officers sat at another table. The senior ensign, the guy with the long file number, of course you got your file number when you joined, sat at the head of the table. I don't recall that they made us wear neckties, but the guys on the battleship and on the cruisers on those days stood watch in full uniform. I am just reminiscing these things because if somebody ever wants to know what it was like living in those days. Even in the Solomons where it was hot, the guys had to wear full dress uniform. We had to wear dress uniforms to meet like that.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many planes in your squadron?

Mr. McQuiddy

There were 15 planes and 18 flight crews in a normal patrol squadron. I can't remember exactly how many squadrons there were in the Pacific. Not very many by number. VP23 in the Aleutians, we had 23 and 24 and 44. The Headquarters of the South Pacific was in Perth Australia. Those guys were the ones that were on the south side of the Solomons. They were in New Guinea, Borneo and places like that. And VP22 was famous as the squadron that really sank an awful lot of Japanese shipping. It was the Black Cat operations of painting the planes black and flying at night. The squadron was then sent up to the Solomons in September and toward the end of August and into September and we were stationed then at Tulagi and we

operated off of buoys there. I didn't get to stay there very long because they took six of us who were First Pilots because we had served so much time in Canton. They took six of us to go back to the United States to start new squadrons. So I missed a lot of the action in the Solomons that the squadron later encountered. We did operate off of, what we called, our battle ....because there were an awful lot of shipping that sunk there early on in the Solomons.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long were you at Tulagi?

Mr. McQuiddy

I think that's probably one of the TDY that became so well known as—The plane was so big and ugly that when we started doing air/sea rescue and picking up fighter pilots and pilots that had been shot down in their life jackets, they would call the airplanes Jumbo because it looks like a little flying elephant. In September I was sent back with five other fellows to Espiritu Santos and were given our orders. The orders were, "Go find yourself transportation home." So the five of us ended up on a freighter headed back to San Diego without any escort or anything else. We stood watches just like everybody else. We had one gunnery crew and each other took turns with the gunnery crew. They took the long way around and I think it took us 18 days to get back from Espiritu Santos to San Diego. We were assigned to an Operational Training Squadron there. We had quite a bit of experience and they made instructor pilots out of us. One of my trainees, one of the guys I had quite a bit of time with, John Love who later was the Governor of Colorado. He went into politics. So that was in October of 1943 when we finally got back to the United States and started training. The Operational Training Squadron was flying PBY 5A. That was the PBY that was an amphibian with retractable landing gear and a nose wheel. We did a lot of night flying or night work. Those were very happy days for me. When we got back to the north

island with our orders, by that time the Navy had gone full blast on training and we didn't have any bachelor officer quarters available so a few of my friends and I were assigned a room at the del Coronado Hotel. We liked that because we were doing a lot of night flying so we had a lot of time off sometimes during the day. We enjoyed Coronado and Oahu and we would just hang out and we had it made a lot of friends there. By that time I had a little over 1,200 hours. In 1944 the VP23 had been relieved and the squadron had come back and some of them had gone on leave and then squadron was reorganized and I joined what was later called VPD, Patrol Bombing Squadron with 23 at the end. I was the Material Officer of the squadron. I went over to the consolidated factory one day and signed the bill for 15 airplanes. Back in those days I think a PBY cost \$300,000. Times have changed a little bit. The squadron trained. I became the patrol plane commander in February of 1944. In April we went back to Oahu. That's the longest flight I had in my logbook at 22.6 hours it took. We landed at Hilo Hawaii because we didn't have enough fuel to get to Oahu. We fought little head winds all night and had something like a ground speed of less than 100 miles per hour for 22 hours. There were three of us that had taken dogs with us. My dog was a purebred liver and white pointer. My father was raised in Missouri and he sent me the dog through the post office which was the only address my mother had. They called and said, "We have a dog in a cage up here for you." So I flew up to San Francisco through Alameda and went over to the post office to pick up this beautiful little liver and white pointer puppy. He was sitting in back of the squadron where we have a hanger. Everybody just went nuts over this dog. So our executive officer ended up with a Pekingese puppy and a Cocker Spaniel. When we flew out we put the dogs in the airplane along with us and away we went. When we were in the Marshall Islands, a truck hit him and killed it, but the other two dogs lived all the way through to when the guys brought them home. Americans, farm boys from Iowa and

places like, we all got hunting dogs. Love that hunting dog of mine. He gets a lot of attention. So we went back out and started training by April of 1944. We went back to Hawaii and was stationed there for a little while and then in May of 1944 we went back out to Midway. Then we were primarily just flying solo. In May and June we were running 10 hour patrols. By that time the plane were painted black.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you paint the planes black?

Mr. McQuiddy

We had them painted black when we picked them up in San Diego to reorganize the squadron. That's where the name "Black Cats" came from. The plane was called a Cataline Bomber.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were there other squadrons besides yours that had black planes?

Mr. McQuiddy

I know VP24 was painted black. I don't know whether the others flying down to New Guinea—I don't know whether they were black. I have a hunch they were, but we never saw each other. We were friends in flight school, but when I went TDY I never saw them. Then in August went from Canaria to Eniwetok in the Marshalls. That was in August of 1944. I can remember so well flying into Eniwetok. The 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet was anchored there and there must have been at least seven or eight aircraft carriers, battleships, cruisers, destroyers. It was the most beautiful sight I've ever seen. We flew around them and had a good look and I said, "Take a look guys. You've got to stay alive now because we've got this war won and it's going to be a matter of time before all of these wonderful ships will pull out of here." We got to Eniwetok and one of us flew up to take pictures every day. Kwajalein, of course, was the big base. We were stationed

on Eniwetok and it had been badly shelled. It was just a shell of an island but it had a good solid coral runway on it. One gunner on the island, we called him the Bishop, if you got a little too close he would shoot at you. I don't think he ever came close to hitting any of but we would try to get in close enough that he would want to shoot at us and then we would go out so that he would miss. One time we were flying down to ....and almost....couldn't get all the way to the truck but we were looking for Jap shipping.....9 ½ hours of utter boredom for 15 minutes of utter fright. ....25<sup>th</sup> of October we out to another island and come down and put our airplane in the lagoon. The Japs had a weather station on it. Three natives came out in a canoe and one of them was a woman with a gold tooth. She was in a truck. They didn't speak English but .....parachute. ....pick their crew up....

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you sink the plane?

Mr. McQuiddy

Machine gun. We had a machine gun on the plane.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you got out in your life raft and sank it then?

Mr. McQuiddy

**(A LOT MISSING HERE)** No, we didn't sink it until after Phillips had landed. ....assembled flight...a couple of time. That time they had....we had crews spread all over the area. I don't think we had anybody on Guam but we had a couple of crews on Phinius..... Then again on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January I picked up another Marine pilot. He had been shot down and he had landed in open sea. The crew went out in the plane and helped rescue them and bring them back in. ....too shallow. Couldn't get in there to pick him up. ....life raft...squadron 122.... That's all we were

doing down there was just ....22 of February we picked up another pilot who had been shot down. We had one in the open seas....help rescue. We carried, among other things, boxes of morphine in case ....

Mr. Misenhimer

You were flying out of Peleliu now?

Mr. McQuiddy

Yes, in the Palau Islands. The battle of Peleliu was one of the bloodiest of the war. It was a mess. We started flying B29 coverage at night....February 1945. ...on Easter Sunday, they sent a squadron of water planes up there....two of our squadrons up there. He came up along side and the guy said on the radio...don't go down there. They are still fighting down there.

Mr. Misenhimer

You landed on the land at that point, right?

Mr. McQuiddy

That was in 1945....flight to Japan. ...on submarine off shore of Japan...destroyers and we had ...later on they finally got a second air strip .....bringing in P51s and P24s..... Then on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March we were part of the search group that was looking for a torpedo.... Then on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March I found a crew that went down. All of them were in life rafts. It shows how easy it is to miss something in the ocean. We normally patrol when we are looking for people at about 500 feet above water. This crew was in three big life rafts and the First Pilot and I didn't see them. One of our gunners back in the rear of the plane saw them as we went by. We spotted them so we turned around and circled them but the weather was so bad and the wind was blowing so hard that we couldn't land to pick them up. This was about two in the afternoon. I circled them myself, and we were running low on fuel. In the mean time I had flown over and we radioed

back that we found the crew and Lieutenant Philips came out. He circled them most of the night and in the meantime a destroyer that was about 100 miles away had come across and picked them up the next day.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE 2

Mr. McQuiddy

I believe it was in May of 1945 I went back to Saipan. We were preparing to go to Okinawa. We stayed in Saipan for quite a while and back and forth to Guam off and on. It was to improve the night coverage of B29s. It was an amazing sight to see 100s of those big airplanes taking off at night. There weren't any B29s on Guam. They were just sitting at Saipan. It was a very pretty island. Then in August of 1945 new crews were brought in, and as new crews came in other crews went home. Our executive officer was the last to go. He wanted to build up my crew. They had a lot of training. After the war was over, they didn't know what to do with us, of course. I was stationed in Pensacola and then I had probably got 2,000 hours and 1,500 of night flying. So they sent me to Atlanta as an Instrument Flight Instructor at Flight School. I did that pretty well. November of 1945 I went back to Pensacola....promotion....3,500 flying hours in the log book. Four years of service, I wouldn't trade it.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were discharged, did you stay in the Reserves?

Mr. McQuiddy

I stayed in the Reserves for a while. We didn't have any Reserve flying. I went back to the University of Missouri and finished my degree work. One of my real close friends and a roommate of mine at the University of Missouri had been a grasshopper pilot in Europe and he would come to New Mexico. He called me one day and asked how I was getting along. I said,



“Oh, I don’t know what I am doing. I’m kind of mixed up.” He called me and said, “We are looking for an editor of a paper down here.” I said, “Tell them I’ll be there in two days.” I was in graduate school about that time. That’s how I got to New Mexico. I’ve been out here since the Spring of 1947. I was the editor of the paper the day the flying saucer crashed out here. That was a pretty exciting day, I tell you. I was editor of the Baldham Country Daily Newspaper and I spent most of the afternoon on the telephone talking to people from London, Tokyo, and Singapore, Shanghai...people were really concerned about flying saucers. Of course, it died down as fast as it started because the U.S. Government put clamps on it. Whatever it was. To this day there is still a lot of speculation about it. We have a UFO Museum here in Roswell that attracts thousands of people every year.

Mr. Misenhimer

What is your opinion? What happened there? Was it a flying saucer?

Mr. McQuiddy

I just plain don’t know. The way they handled it...the day after the old cowboy brought the wrecking....stopped then, whatever it was. The Commanding Officer at the Army Air Base here at the time put out a press release and the Public Information Officer ....from the newspaper. He brought the press release in....Butch Blanchard said that ....the UFO brought in to the Air Base by a cowboy or rancher and that it was being flown to Wright Patterson Air Field in Dayton, Ohio for examination. About an hour later after they sent it to me, they rubbed it in the news cycle. We didn’t have much in the way of television in those days, it was just radio. So about an hour or so after that we had a call from the base and they said, “Hey, please kill that release. It’s not right. The wreckage that he found was a weather balloon.” In the Navy, if you spent 25 hours on a weather balloon it was a lot. Two days after that a they sealed off the highway and

they sealed off the road and took 100 men out there and linked their arms together and marched all the way through that damned field looking for more wreckage and stuff, I don't know what. The Commanding Officer of the base was a good friend of mine, and one night when it was just the two of us in the Officer's Club by ourselves and I just badgered him all the time because he put out this Press Release. He never would say anything. But one night we had a lot to drink and he said, "Well, I will tell you this. I'm not going to talk about it, but what I saw I've never seen before and I will probably never see it again." I sobered up in a hurry and decided to pump him more but couldn't get anything out of him. Too many things like that have occurred that our Senior Senator, Dennis Chavez, called the owner of the radio station and said he was a friend of the cowboy and actually had the cowboy at his house. Senator Chavez called and said you have a license coming up for renewal and if you do anything....that radio license. When things like that happen, it leads you to believe it was more than just a weather balloon crash. There are people here who have nothing to gain whatsoever by making up stories about it. ....at the base and she called and they wanted three children's caskets and they had them at the funeral home....and when delivered them to the base and the nurse came out with a mask on her face and said, "Get away from here as fast as you can. You don't want to be any part of any of this." So she disappears. The claim that she was a very devout Catholic and she wanted go back in to the order of nuns and that she was going to do it. Never heard from her again. All kinds of stories like that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let's go back to your time there in the Pacific. How many of the rescue missions did you fly for downed aviators?

Mr. McQuiddy

I'd have to go back through my logbook. I suppose 25.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you fly any bombing missions?

Mr. McQuiddy

Only one. That island down in the Solomons we bombed, Nauru. Only one crew went up there to try and bomb it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever bomb any ships or submarines?

Mr. McQuiddy

No, I didn't. I never saw a submarine. I sank one small fishing boat...Japanese forces.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did your plane ever come back with any holes in it?

Mr. McQuiddy

Oh yeah!

Mr. Misenhimer

Quite a bit, huh?

Mr. McQuiddy

Occasionally. I had my hydraulics shot out once. We had a pump between the pilots...

Mr. Misenhimer

Would the plane fly with one engine?

Mr. McQuiddy

Oh, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Could it gain altitude with one engine?

Mr. McQuiddy

A little. We got the engine shot out over Ponepie that day. We were practically down on the water and we threw everything overboard that we could to lighten the plane up and gradually climbed up to about 1,500 feet. We didn't have enough fuel but we could try to get back on one engine, about 500 miles I think back to Eniwetok. That's why we decided to go ahead to this other little....if we had enough fuel I would have tried to get back.....only had ground speed of about 85 miles an hour or 85 knots it would have been a long slow ride. If the plane was light enough and we had enough fuel ...my first pilot--I let him fly the plane back with one engine so he could get the experience. It was a hard to fly well because the wings are so big and the tail is so far back. We could go into the open sea under moderate conditions. We couldn't go in when the wind was blowing probably more than 50. But we can go into any kind of an ocean but we couldn't take off. We waited patiently for ...to come out but we never got him in our squadron in time to use him.

Mr. Misenhimer

With the PBY that found the crew of the Indianapolis, was that any of your squadron?

Mr. McQuiddy

It was one of our crew from the VP 23. He landed and I don't know how many people he had on that airplane. He had them on the wings and in between, in the plane and anywhere possible to get pick somebody up.

Mr. Misenhimer

So that was one of your squadron planes that found them.

Mr. McQuiddy

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

It wasn't really a search, was it?

Mr. McQuiddy

No, I was on Eniwetok When all of that took place.

Mr. Misenhimer

In April of 1945, President Roosevelt died. Did you all hear about that?

Mr. McQuiddy

I'm sure we did. Although I don't remember.

Mr. Misenhimer

No particular reaction. In May of 1945 Germany surrendered. Any reaction to that?

Mr. McQuiddy

I got shot down that night. We were at Eniwetok and we were coming back from a gun boat mission. It was after dark and that whole island erupting with guns going off up in the air and there was a lot of celebration on the ground that night.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's when Japan surrendered right?

Mr. McQuiddy

I wasn't there then. It was Germany.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you when Japan surrendered. Where were you then?

Mr. McQuiddy

I was back home on leave.

Mr. Misenhimer

Any other humorous incidents you recall along the way?

Mr. McQuiddy

We all had a good sense of humor. Periodically the Japanese would fly over and drop a bomb or two and it never did any damage. It scared everybody. It had been raining hard that day and that night the Japs came over and started dropping a few bombs. All of us came out of our tents and the sirens went off and it was a big air raid type of thing. I didn't sleep in pajamas or anything and I didn't have anything on. I fell down in the mud and Philips who is from Mississippi and he has a drawl, said he looked up and saw this plane above me and looked down below and I saw two moons sticking out of the mud and that was your rear end. I said you wouldn't have seen that if there was enough mud for me to get further in there.

END OF TAPE TWO SIDE ONE

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