

Admiral Nimitz Historic Site –
National Museum of the Pacific War

Center for Pacific War Studies
Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with
Fred Bergeron

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Interviewer: Today is April 29, 2004. I am interviewed Mr. Fred Bergeron. The interview is taking place at the Nimitz Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Texas. This interview is in support of the Pacific War Studies Archives for the of the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Parks and Wildlife, for the preservation of historical information relating to this site.

Let me start out, Mr. Bergeron, by thanking you for sharing your experiences with us and perhaps I can start this by asking you to tell us when and where you were born, a little bit about your family, and then we will take it from there.

Mr. Bergeron: I was born the 5th of January 1923 is Abbeville, Louisiana. At the age of about six weeks we moved from my grandmother's house to parents' house in Freeport Texas and lived there with a four-year break back to Louisiana. Beyond that I lived in Freeport and graduated from high school there in 1940.

Interviewer: Tell me how you came to be in the armed service.

Mr. Bergeron: My brother, who was two years older than I, was going to join the Navy. He and two other friends. I found that getting out of high school at 17 it was very difficult to get a job and I though this was an experience I would like to have. I followed him into the service.

Interviewer: So he went into the Navy, the Marines, and the Air Force?

Mr. Bergeron: I went into the Navy. I would like to comment about the family. My parents had five children, I was number two in the birth order. There were four boys and one girl. One boy was two years older than I; he went into the service. We joined in Houston Texas on December 10, 1940. Went to boot camp in San Diego and then radio school. There was testing done to determine what you would best qualified to do, my brother and I both seemed best qualified to go into radio school. One of our friends went in at the same time was mechanically inclined – his family owned a fishing boat

and he had taken two years of typing, and he was going to be a yeoman, which he was. All four of us were assigned to the same ship. Following radio school, my brother and I went into Bombing Squadron three.

Interviewer: How long did radio school last roughly?

Mr. Bergeron: It lasted roughly three months or so, something like that. So we went to San Diego to join Bombing Squadron Three. That squadron was associated with the USS Saratoga. She was in the harbor there in San Diego. So we trained there in dive-bombing, and in the use of the 30 caliber machine guns in the rear cockpit, landings and takeoffs, that sort of thing.

Interviewer: Which aircraft?

Mr. Bergeron: The SBDs. The Douglass Dauntless. Wonderful plane. Wonderful plane. When we first moved into Bombing Squadron Three they had the old Curtiss two-wingers, but I never had to fly in it. That one was replaced as we moved into the squadron. I was thankful about that. During the period in 1941 following joining the Squadron we went from maneuvers west of Honolulu and than about a month prior to war being declared, we completed the maneuvers and went back to San Diego.

Interviewer: So you went to Pearl and did maneuvers out of there and then went back to San Diego?

Mr. Bergeron: Yeah. But on December 7 when war was declared we were in San Diego. On the 15th of December we were back in Honolulu flying over that mess that had been made there by the Japanese. I'll tell you it was quite a thing to see – the damage that had been done where the battleships had been in a row, you know, and they were.... it was devastating.

I remember particularly the Arizona. Which I had seen before the war sitting right where it is today. On the 15th with its stack and superstructure still partly in place, smoldering. Of course later on that was all removed. We flew ...we operated around Honolulu to protect against further attack and possible submarine attack.

Interviewer: You were still assigned to the Saratoga.

Mr. Bergeron: Yes. Just west of Pearl Harbor we got torpedoed. In the evening. My brother and I and our two friends were sitting on the deck of the carrier (you can see in the book) and it was just before dark. The ship was still able to travel and it dropped us off in Honolulu, and it went back to Bremerton Washington for repairs.

So here we are in January with our ship returning to the states and us continuing to protect the Hawaiian area. In April we learned we were going to join the Enterprise west of Pearl Harbor. When we arrived on the scene we see the USS Hornet in that same task force, which turns out to be Task Force Sixteen with the B25s with Mr. Doolittle. That was a sight to behold, it really was. We didn't know what was going on, but we did learn we were going fly air escort for that Task Force, going to Tokyo and delivering the bombs from the B-25s.

At that point everything went well until we got about 600 miles from Tokyo and lo and behold, we start seeing these Japanese fishing boats out there. They are known to have radio equipment and therefore the Nips decided that Jimmy Doolittle needed to launch the B-25s from these fishing boats.

We came back to Pearl Harbor and it was a real pleasure to hear stories about what was happening in Tokyo where these people were caught by surprise. They were caused to think that maybe we were coming back. That was April 18th when they took off.

The next thing that happened to us was in June 1942. We flew out to the Yorktown. I am sure you heard the stories about the Yorktown being in the battle of the Coral Sea and the damage that was being done and the haste to patch her together. We were the relief squadron for the Yorktown. So we did this and on the morning of the 4th of June, we attacked Midway. We flew in and joined up with the Enterprise group.

Interviewer: So you are on the Yorktown now. Started with the Saratoga and then switched to the Yorktown?

Mr. Bergeron: Yes, switched to the Yorktown. From the Saratoga, to the Enterprise taking Doolittle in, and this time it was the Yorktown in the Battle of Midway.

On the first attack on this huge Jap fleet that was there my plane had the aircraft carrier as a target.

Interviewer: Do you remember which one that was your target?

Mr. Bergeron: Originally we were told it was the Akagi, and that was what I believed for a long time, but it turns out it was the Soryu. I have a little story about that first flight. It was a very scary thing to a bunch of ships down there, you know. And knowing we had to get them or they were going to do some damage at Midway. I was looking down at all the anti-aircraft fire that was going on – just black smoke everywhere. I could see the torpedo planes had made their first run ahead of us, and the fighter planes attacking them and shooting them down. We were going to be next. I was sixth in that group to dive on the Soryu.

Halfway through the dive – picture this you are sitting facing the tail of the plane, guns ready, looking up into the sky while planes are fishtailing to get a better shot at you to keep you from dropping bombs. Suddenly, I got hit in the back of the head hard. I thought ‘they got me, they got me’. I reached back and found I had the pilot’s goggles and helmet in my hand. I thought he had been hit. But he was okay – he had just lost his helmet. I breathed a big sigh of relief.

We dropped our bombs and scooted along the water and that is quite a sight – looking back while they are shooting at you.

Interviewer: Did your bomb hit?

Mr. Bergeron: I saw bomb hits. How long it takes a bomb dropped from 2500 feet and hit – I saw some hit and others miss. Can’t honestly say it was ours. I do know those bombs did a lot of damage. Three out of four carriers were sunk on that attack.

Finally, we got far enough away from the burning ships to form up to get back to the Yorktown. I was two planes from landing when the first torpedoes were released. We got waved off. But at that point, I no longer had a helmet because I had passed mine forward to the pilot, so I couldn’t tell what was going on as to instructions. We were waved off, and I saw the first torpedo hit the Yorktown.

We were low on fuel and were fortunate to get back to the Enterprise. Maybe 50-100 miles from us. We landed on it.

My brother was on the flight also. He made it safely.

Interviewer: Was he a pilot?

Mr. Bergeron: He was in the same squadron. He was a radioman same as me. We had a second flight that day.

You might have heard from somewhere that four of the planes that took off from the Yorktown dropped their bombs prematurely as they tried to arm the bombs. Something was wrong with the mechanism and they dropped their bombs. My brother was in a plane that dropped their bombs. They dove same as everyone else, with their guns blazing.

In the afternoon, since the Soryu, the fourth carrier had not been hit. Her planes had attacked the Yorktown.

Interviewer: Let me go back for just a second. I perhaps missed how you actually landed after you were waved off. Then what happened?

Mr. Bergeron: We went to the Enterprise and the Enterprise had lost a number of planes and they had room for us. So we landed on her.

Interviewer: So you ended up on the Enterprise.

Mr. Bergeron: It is at that point in the afternoon that a group of us take off from the Enterprise to attack the Soryu. I was in the plane that had initially been scheduled to drop a bomb on the Hiryu. However, it had been hit so much by the time we got there that my pilot and another pilot chose to hit a battle cruiser. There was one hit and one near miss that I knew about. Zeros attacked my brother's plane. They were hit; he was hit in the leg and foot. When I landed back on the Enterprise after that run, they were not aboard. It was believed that everyone that was coming back was there. But the ship had actually turned out of the wind and they appeared on the horizon and we knew it was a friendly plane and they landed. Lots of holes in the plane and my brother was taken to the dispensary.

On the third attack for the following morning, the 5th. I was sitting.

Interviewer: Let me ask you a question before we go to the third attack. This means you spend the night, after the first two attacks, on the Enterprise. What was going through your mind – did you sleep well, up all night? Tell me about that.

Mr. Bergeron: Let me tell you this, all of our possessions were on the Yorktown, except the clothes we had on. After the second attack, I knew my brother and I were going to need soap, toothpaste, razors, and also one of the crew members, named Bassett, he had been wounded (I have pictures of him being carried on the ship). He was in the next bunk in the dispensary. So I brought equipment for him as well. It had been a very hair-raising day. Knowing this was not done even though we had hit the four carriers, they had a bunch of other stuff still there. I really wasn't looking forward to any more.

The next morning I was sitting in the plane as the pilot got aboard and cranked the plane up. When it came time for us to take up, they were giving him the sign to rev more. It wasn't doing it. He asked me to perform a function done in cases like that. You climb out on the wing and take some butterfly nuts off the box and stick your finger down on a relay – called flashing the field. I flashed the field and it still didn't rev up enough. So they waived us off and we did not have to go on that flight.

You can read the history on that third flight. There wasn't a great deal done on that flight. On the fourth flight, on the 6th, I had been on a scouting mission – pilot's name was Benson. My brother's pilot was named Merrill. We came back and landed about noon. Another pilot named Campbell had flown with us on previous missions. He was standing there waiting for us to land, and was waiving ham sandwiches. He knew I was going to get Spam, and he had ham sandwiches. He asked if I wanted them. He would give them to me if I would fly with him, as his man (named Craig) had developed an upset stomach or something. So, I flew that mission.

Interviewer: All for a ham sandwich?

Mr. Bergeron: Yes. I did have a lot of fun with him over that. I have called him and told him that I didn't think his wife knows what kind of man you are – to entice a 19-year-old kid to go on a dangerous mission with you with a ham sandwich!

We did fly against a battle cruiser, and I have seen pictures that look exactly like I saw it when we flew away.

Interviewer: Do you remember the name?

Mr. Bergeron: It is in the book. It looked to me like a torpedo just gutted her. That was the fourth mission. We went back to Pearl Harbor. The Saratoga had not yet returned from Bremerton Washington. She did return shortly thereafter and brought planes to be dropped off at Midway.

We rejoined the Saratoga group and on the 7th of August 1942 we were flying over Guadalcanal. The ships on that task force were shelling the beaches. The Marines were being readied to be taken ashore, and when the shooting stopped we then went down and bombed radio stations and everything we could hit to clear the way for the Marines to move ashore.

Interviewer: Was there anything between Midway and Guadalcanal other than you joining up with the Saratoga?

Mr. Bergeron: No.

Interviewer: So it was a straight shot then?

Mr. Bergeron: I think so. There were some little missions, but they really didn't amount to anything. Then, aside from a period of time back in Pearl, my brother and I and some members of the VB-3 were back in Honolulu, at which time we were decorated with the Distinguished Flying Cross. Then we went back to the Solomon area again, we were there several months, where we were torpedoed again. We limped towards port in Tonga for temporary repairs, and then back to Honolulu. In the meantime my squadron went to Fiji and then to Noumea in New Caledonia; keeping the path between Japan and Australia clear.

Then with the ship back, at one point some new planes were to be delivered to the Marines on Guadalcanal; the Cactus

Air Force was there. I was the only enlisted man to go as radioman, and one of the planes, (there were 6) was flown from Noumea to Guadalcanal and dropped them there.

Interviewer: What type of aircraft; do you remember?

Mr. Bergeron: It was a gull-winged job. Had a turret on it, but don't now the number on it. We dropped it off and then went back. Then the ship came in and got back on the ship and continued patrolling around the Solomon Islands.

At one point a group of us flew to Henderson Field and operated off of Henderson. I remember clearly bombing Munda. We also bombed back up in the hills when the Marines were having difficulties. There are stories there but they are not important.

Interviewer: Were you still flying with the same pilot?

Mr. Bergeron: Same pilot, same aircraft.

Interviewer: So you had the same aircraft the whole time?

Mr. Bergeron: No, not the same aircraft. The first one we lost when we pancaked on the deck when we missed the cable and ended up in the barriers.

Interviewer: That must have been exciting. Tell me about that experience.

Mr. Bergeron: Well, it is something you have to expect. It could happen any time. We just missed the right cable. It is not smooth out there, you are bouncing around. We ran right into that cable and just wrinkled the plane good. My guns were down in the slots they would fit in, but we hit with such force that they jerked out and banged us on the heads. The pilot, I was real proud of him, he got out of the plane and was very concerned about me. He rushed back to me to know if I was all right. I really had a lot of respect for him for doing that.

Interviewer: Did you have any contact with your pilot after the war was over?

Mr. Bergeron: No, I can't find him. He is one of those missing in action. I would love to do that. He had the courtesy to look me up when I got transferred back to the states. I got transferred

before he did. He looked me up in the enlisted men's quarters. Shook my hand. I would love to see him. I have talked to my brother's pilot. I did locate him but he is no longer there.

Interviewer: So, after Guadalcanal what happened? You are still with the Saratoga?

Mr. Bergeron: Yes. My brother had been transferred back to the States. We had replacements at that time; they were beginning to move people back to the States. Several were moved. Then the radio school comes, in Washington. I qualified for that, so I was back in the states.

Task Force Three was broken up shortly after that. I was transferred back to the states.

Interviewer: Task Force Three was the one the Saratoga was in during the Guadalcanal campaign?

Mr. Bergeron: Yes.

Interviewer: So you went back to an advance radio school in Washington, D.C.?

Mr. Bergeron: Yes. It was dealing with transmitters. I didn't finish that course. I enlisted 17-21. In the states things were different. To see what was going on like with rationed gasoline and people having fun, but the war was still going on. I tried to get back overseas. They wouldn't let me go. So, there was a choice to make. People were enlisting hand over fist because we had them on the run. They didn't need a draft. So I was given a choice – I couldn't go back, I had enough – to stand for limited overseas again or to take my retirement.

So on the 5th of January 1944 ended my enlistment. I had applied for an honorable discharge, which I got on the 31st of January 1944. The condition I was in at that time, I was a mixed-up kid. I had been through a lot. There were lots of people asking questions – 'you're a hero'. I am no hero. They are all dead – the heroes are all dead. That's not me. I did what I needed to do and that was it. It was very tempting to sit and talk your head off about what you had gone through – and drinking. I soon realized that that was not the kind of life for me. I was alive for a reason and that reason doesn't mean living that kind of life. I have to get a

hold of my self, get an education and that is what I did. I went to college and got an engineering degree at University of Texas.

We were a bunch of kids doing a job that needed to be done and we did it. We knew that and are proud of that. But, as I said a while ago, I don't feel that there were any heroes out there except for those who died. I know that I owe my life to these guys. I knew there was a reason I was still alive. I had trouble understanding how that could be. Why me, Lord, why am I still alive? I have tried to benefit from that. If I can make a contribution to helping people understand that what happened out there was to real people. These folks are out doing what they can for their families, and war is hell.

Interviewer: Everyone glorifies it, but it is clearly not that way. Let me ask you a few questions about your experiences. First, tell me about your commanders, your leaders. How did you feel about them, did you have any interaction with them? What are your thoughts about the leadership on board and directly influencing you?

Mr. Bergeron: I the utmost confidence in the people that were leading us. I didn't have enough experience at that type of thing to be able to make a good judgment – how do they stack up – I didn't have that kind of experience. I have absolutely no complaint about the way I was treated. I had some feelings regarding some individuals – graduates- perhaps feeling that they were superior. Maybe they were taught that way – that you couldn't maintain respect unless you are distant from other folks. That is not the way that would have been with me. I respect people for what they do and say and how they behave, not for the position they have. I do respect their ability to have the position, but there are some whose egos were too big. But from battle, strategies, etc. we were provided with the best that was available. Can I regress a little?

Interviewer: You sure can.

Mr. Bergeron: I want to mention an interesting thing that happened to me at Guadalcanal, at Henderson Field. We spent the night in tents very near the place where the radio station was that we blew up. I learned early on just how miserable that could be – for Marines trying to sleep and have snipers in the trees shooting randomly to keep them awake. I didn't have a

steady dose of that, just a few days. Then another point to know there was Washing Machine Charlie. He was a Japanese aircraft, from one of the islands, which came over the field at night. He buzzed the field and dropped bombs at random. As soon as I heard him I would run over and jump into the pit and wait for him to go over. On one occasion I thought that heck, I would just tough it out, he hadn't done any damage yet. Well, he came so close that I gave up and ran and jumped into the pit.

But that has to be a terrible, terrible experience for the Marines, night after night after night, having that stuff happen. On my first landing at Henderson Field was two Jap planes came over and dropped bombs on the runway, but our guys were so efficient – they patched it up real quick.

A Marine taught me what 'hit the deck' meant. It meant really to get down, but don't put your head on the ground because of the concussion can damage you, put your head on your arms.

Interviewer: One thing you forgot was your conversation with Spruance.

Mr. Bergeron: When we were on the Enterprise, Spruance was the commander then. He had let us use Bull Halsey's ready room between flights. We didn't have a formal place because we didn't belong on that ship. He let us use the ready room, and on several occasions he would pass through while we were waiting for the next flight. He would pass through with words of encouragement. I really thought that was terrific. A morale booster – what is next? He would pass through saying that it was great job. Know it is tough but we are gaining on this and it will pay dividends in the long run. Thank you, I had forgotten that.

Interviewer: Tell me more about the life on the carrier, between flights.

Mr. Bergeron: Morale was very high. Food – I came from a very, very poor family, and I didn't – wasn't accustomed to anything really fancy. It was plenty adequate. Never let us go hungry, always had something to eat. Quarters weren't all what you could wish for – sometimes I slept in hammocks, sometimes in bunks. Being on three ships you are not home very much, you are in somebody else's territory. But they did the best they could for us. I was proud of all of them.

Morale could not have been any better under the circumstances. These guys I am looking for I would just love to see them. They become real buddies to you. You would die for each other, you know? Certainly, everybody was scared. You have a right to be scared but you do your job. We all had absolute confidence that we would have the help when we needed it. I hope we have not culturally changed so much that that doesn't exist any more.

Interviewer: I would hope not. What about communications back to the States – mail? Came in from time to time? Did you ever get care packages?

Mr. Bergeron: We got that. You wouldn't want to send anything that would spoil because it took a long time to get it and it was checked over carefully as you could imagine. The mail was read prior to be sent; couldn't give away any secrets. When my brother was wounded I sent a wire out of Honolulu but was careful in what I said because I knew I couldn't say where he was or where he got shot (Midway) or how. I sent the wire that said Dallas had been injured but would get well. Don't worry. Tell all hello. The next time I came to town I stayed at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. A guy handed me two wires that had come from my mother, saying, 'Dallas injured how? Where?' (laughs). I wrote back that 'I told you not to worry'. We didn't have the communications we have today. People can just wire into their house. Sometimes it was a couple of months before a letter would go back because we were being moved around.

Interviewer: In any of your flights was it necessary for you to fire at the enemy?

Mr. Bergeron: We had just returned from a mission. I was stationed in the tail. We had rejoined each other on wings. Looking up at the sun, here comes a Jap Zero, with guns blazing towards us. So we swarmed to fire at it. We saw an American fighter on its tail. He came right on down where I could see his face. He was more 'human' than those others. My pilot was over his tail, and he couldn't get away. He splashed down into the water, and our planes took off from there. I didn't have a lot of firing. I fired my guns a lot – I strafed the deck, or land-based strafe. We periodically dropped flares. I had twin 30-caliber guns.

Other: Tell them about your experience emptying the cockpit of shells.

Mr. Bergeron: On SBDs whenever you fire your guns, you need to take the spent shells off the floor. There are cracks where your shells could foul the lines that move the ailerons. On this occasion I had fired my guns, the belt disconnected, out of my parachute down on the floor reaching for a spent shell to throw them over the side. The pilot said something that I did not understand. The plane turned over, which is not unusual. I wasn't connected; I wasn't belted in. I didn't have my parachute on. At that time, there were steel plates on a pivot that you could put over a leg – made it difficult to get out with your parachute because it was on the inside of the ring. I reached under there and held myself in the plane. Never did tell the pilot.

There was a plate down there and if you move just a little bit, those shells could foul the lines on the plane.

Interviewer: Have you been back in a Dauntless since the war just to see what it was like? When you got in the Dauntless down in Galveston did it feel like the old days?

Mr. Bergeron: That was really something. The steel plate wasn't there. When I first went into the squadron we had a direction finder on the dash. Later they moved it out to put a monitor for radar in. That plane didn't have either of those.

Interviewer: So you didn't have any radar equipment?

Mr. Bergeron: We had radar that was added later, but nobody taught us how to use it. I could turn it on, and see little blips but nobody asked me for anything and I didn't say anything.

Interviewer: That is like me and a VCR. It is there but not sure how to use it.

Mr. Bergeron: We did have the IFF, which we used on scouting missions. We flew vectors away from the ship and you would be a letter and move to another letter, so you could find your way back to the ship. It was a frequency that the ship could use to tell you were friendly. I can't say that the radar did me any good. I didn't need it. Apparently the pilot didn't need it.

I had an interesting experience once. We had been torpedoed for the second time. There was a tugboat being sent out of Tonga to meet us because the Saratoga was limping very slowly in those sub infected waters. We were to keep our eyes open for the tug and help it with the Saratoga.

The pilot had notes written down and little beanie bags. He told me if we saw the tug, we would drop these bags on the tug. Lo and behold, I had the good fortune to be in the plane that spotted the tug. It looked like a little matchbox in the water. I was to drop the bag on the tug. I tried it twice and missed both times. All that was left was for me to get in contact with the tug, using the blinker light, because of radio silence. That was no fun at all when you are flying in a circle around that tug, keep the wing out of the way and send Morse code at the same time.

The tug sent me back a message saying 'please hold light still'. After I sent the message and ask for understanding of each word. They said 'repeat the message back to me'. By then the ship was in sight. Don't try to drop message on a tug.

Interviewer: Sounds like an impossible task.

Mr. Bergeron: It would be easier to drop it on a carrier.

Interviewer: When you look back over this, what was the saddest point of your experience? The most sad, the most scared?

Other: How about when you had to identify the pilot?

Mr. Bergeron: That's sad all right. There was a pilot who had a gunner wounded at Midway. After that we were in Hawaii; and he was taking off from the airfield and he crashed at the end of the airfield. He was in the morgue. I was asked to identify him. It was easier for me to identify him. It would be easier for me to identify him than the pilots who were so close to him. I went and did that. That is sad.

The most relieved I was – that was to see my brother land each time. It is always sad to see people killing each other and you want to kill them yourself. I don't like that in me, but then that is no problem. But later you think these guys were really just like you. I've indicated I feel sorry for me in hand-to-hand combat. They know this is the enemy and they are

going to kill them or be killed, but you are looking them in the eye. You can't help but know this guy has a family. One of you is not going to return. I never had that problem, except that one time that the pilot was shooting at us, and I saw his face. I shot lots of people on the runways, decks, pits, coming out of buildings, they were different. Like ants, they fell and I did my job. I hated that people had to kill each other. The blame is not theirs, it rests in the hands of a few people who have too much power and should be able to find some way out of it.

Interviewer: Well put. Where were you when you heard the war was over?

Mr. Bergeron: I was in college. It was great news. Great news. To have it end with an atomic bomb. That was something. That saved a lot of lives. It took some lives in Japan, but it saved lots of lives that would have been lost. Maybe it stopped that kind of business for a long time. It is always good to end a war.

Interviewer: What else comes to mind that you would like to share with us?

Other: What about your experience flying with the young pilot pulling the chute?

Mr. Bergeron: Oh yes. Over in New Caledonia I flew with a pilot that was having some real bad luck in his landings, crashed a plane in Fiji. He didn't have an assigned rear seat man. I was Aviation Radioman First Class, I had a regular pilot. But I was asked to volunteer to fly with him on a mission to pull the sleeve for gunner practice; his confidence level was low.

I went up with him and the gunnery practice was fine. But when it came time to release the sleeve, he pulled the handle and the sleeve didn't come off. He kept circling and trying to get the sleeve off, and it didn't. So he called in to notify the airport that he was having trouble with the sleeve and could they clear the field for landing under those conditions. It took extra clearing because you could damage other planes. We got no response. If you get no response a couple of times, he called me and asked if I could do anything about it. I didn't know anything else but to pick up the Morse code and signal down and let them know . . . that is not what I did.

I picked up the mike and talked into it and said, 'if you are receiving us and understand that we are not in an emergency but we can't drop the sleeve and you should clear the field. If you understand this and we are clear to land, signal us with a red or green light'. They were receiving us, but we weren't receiving them. As soon as we landed safely, the receiver began working again. A technician was put to work to determine why – never figured it out.

Interviewer: Landed with the sleeve?

Mr. Bergeron: Yes. When we hit the ground it jerked loose. I felt sorry for him. He was a good guy, just had tough breaks. I don't even remember his name. I wouldn't say it any way, because I wouldn't want it on record.

Interviewer: Maybe he used up all of his bad luck. Anything else.

Mr. Bergeron: That is all I have. Hopefully you can get other people who were at Okinawa and beyond. I hope there are lots of Marines that can fill in the gaps, cause I have lots of respect for those guys. They did a tremendous job over there. I had the good fortune to fly over some of them and, hopefully, help them.

Interviewer: I am sure that they are equally pleased that you were there to help them. Thank you for taking the time to share your experiences with us. It is not often that we get a chance to talk to someone who was really there at Midway. I do appreciate your time.

Mr. Bergeron: It was my pleasure.

Transcribed by
Darlene Smyth
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