

**Admiral Nimitz Historic Site  
National Museum of the Pacific War**

**Center for Pacific Studies  
Fredericksburg, Texas**

**Interview with  
Mr. Rufus Dye  
European Theater**

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Mr. Rufus Dye

Ed Metzler This is Ed Metzler and today is May the 6<sup>th</sup>, 2004. I am interviewing Mr. Rufus Dye, Jr. This interview is taking place at the Nimitz Museum in Fredericksburg, Texas. This interview is in support of the Center for Pacific War Studies Archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War Texas Parks and Wildlife, for the preservation of historical information related to this site.

Let me start out Mr. Dye by thanking you for spending the time to add to our archives and to share your experiences with us. Let me start by getting you to tell us when and where you were born and a little about your childhood and early years.

Rufus Dye I was born in Brookport, Illinois which is in the very southern tip of Illinois, right on the Ohio River, on 5 February 1923. This is where I grew up. I went to the grade school in Brookport and high school, graduated from the Brookport High School. About a year after I graduated, which was in 1940 I joined the service, the Army Air Corps, and I reported to a recruiter in Baduka, Kentucky.

Ed Metzler Why did you enter the Air Corps? Why did you go into the Army?

Rufus Dye Well, my brother went in ahead of me, about a year. I guess the real reason; well my objective was...I always wanted to be a pilot. And I figured that would be one way I could become a pilot. However, that came a little later on after I had joined the service. I did end up in the Air Corps and I spent...I can't recall the name of the camp where I was inducted. It was across the river from Cincinnati. From there I was sent to in October of 1941 to Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis. I finished my basic training there and then I was assigned to Scott Air Force Base and I worked just across from St. Louis at Bellville.

Ed Metzler What was basic training like?

Rufus Dye     Basic training was not too bad back then. I enjoyed it. Really. I got a little tougher later on. They were interested in getting us into a combat posture I think at that time.

Ed Metzler    So they knew the war was coming?

Rufus Dye     Oh, yes. There was no doubt about it. I'm sure they did. Anyway it was about a month, six weeks that I was there. Not too long. Muddy, it rained most of the time. That was so long ago, I really don't remember much. Nothing really significant happened while I was in basic training.

Ed Metzler    Basic training did not involve anything related to aircraft?

Rufus Dye     No. It was basic military training, how to behave as a military individual. How to salute, how to handle yourself, basically. My brother was already assigned to Scott Air Force Base, as a supply sergeant.

Ed Metzler    This was an older brother?

Rufus Dye     Yes an older brother, about 7 or 8 years older than I am. Anyway the basic training went well. I enjoyed it except for the mud and the rain. From there I went directly to Scott. I entered the, I forget even the class number, went into Radio Operator School. Learning how to take codes, and how to send codes and did very well there academically. Did so well that they kept me as an instructor. I instructed there for about six months and then they opened up a school in Chicago in the old coliseum up there. I transferred to Chicago and lived in the Stevens Hotel. That was where we were billeted and instructed code there for about maybe six months and I took the required...I didn't have a college degree or any college education at that time, but they did give a two year college equivalent test. So I took that test, passed it, and then took the physical and in a couple of months I was on my way to California for pilot training. I reported to Santa Ana Air Force Base in California for pre-flight training. That was about 6

or 7 weeks as I recall. That went pretty well except for one incident there that I will never forget. They had a little program called "Mess Management". When I was in the Army at Scott it was called KP, kitchen police, but as we were getting ready to become officers we had a little higher level and got to the Mess Management...

Ed Metzler     So you were in management right from the start! (laughter)

Rufus Dye     Right from the very beginning (laughter). Anyway I reported for my first Mess Management assignment, and boy, oh boy, I tell you what. I really got the business. I not more walked into that place, and the old mess sergeant jumped on to me and gave me hell from one end to the other. Every dirty duty he could find he gave it to me. And when the guys are going to break he kept me busy. I did all the dirtiest things he could think of, and at noon several of us of the guys I knew out of my group couldn't figure out what was going on either. No one would give us any response at the mess hall. So I go over and talked to the Squadron Commander and he looked into it and what had happened was that there was an R. Dye on duty the day before and he screwed up I guess the whole morning long so the old sergeant was going to get even. And he did but with the wrong guy!

Ed Metzler     So you were catching it for the other fellow?

Rufus Dye     Yes, for the other R Dye, but I had a really nice afternoon, beacuse I got a lot of real nice treatment for the rest of the day. That's my main memory out of Santa Ana, California. But we did get a lot of training there on what the Army make up was: platoons, and brigades, and all of that. A lot of ground training...

Ed Metzler     It was all ground training?

Rufus Dye     All ground training there. Finished that okay. One of the things that did happen there too, I was only 18, I believe, at the time. The sergeant...one morning we

fell in, to go to breakfast, and he always did an inspection and he came up to me real close and he said "Mister did you shave this morning?" And I said "Sir, I have never shaved!" (laughing) And he said "Before you can eat breakfast, by George you are going to shave and get that little fuzz off of there!" That was when I was indoctrinated to the manly art of the razor.

Then we finished our training there and I was transferred to Twenty-nine Palms, California. That is where we did our pre-flight in the old Steerman aircraft, a bi-wing.

Ed Metzler    Which aircraft?

Rufus Dye    Steerman, PT Steerman. It was the ground looping the son of a gun. But training went real well and I really enjoyed it. My first instructor was a nice calm easy going southern type individual. And I got about three quarters of the way through the primary program and he got moved up into administration and I got a new instructor who was a deputy sheriff who was a complete jerk in my estimation, but I guess he was a good instructor. We didn't get along too well. I recall one incident while we were taxiing in he said, I was getting ready to turn in "don't go there, we'll go here", "don't do it that way", "stop", "no, do it this way", "turn that way" Finally I got it parked and I asked him "Why, what in the world sir was going on?" and he said "I just wanted to see if you could follow instructions, and you did very well". And that is my memory of that guy. I'll never forget his name, his name was Livingston. So I graduated. My first solo flight, I was one of the first in my flight to solo the Steerman...

Ed Metzler    You had been up there but always with a flight instructor...

Rufus Dye    Yes.

Ed Metzler    And you had taken the controls...

Rufus Dye But on the first solo, the guy gets out and says: "Okay you got it" and you are really surprised when that happens. I was anyway, because I wasn't expecting to go quite that soon. Took off, flew around the pattern, made a few touch and go landings, and worked out great.

But I think one of the things that really impressed me at primary was that we were assigned to billets and there were about 12 guys to a room. As training started it was fast paced and you would come home, you come to your billet after flying, and you find one of the guys is gone. He is just not there. He has disappeared. And this kept happening. By the time we were approaching the end of our training session there were only about 4 of us left in that room.

Ed Metzler Out of 12?

Rufus Dye Out of 12. And we were all beginning to get pretty nervous about the whole thing. But it was amazing how the guys...you would never see them again, they were gone.

Ed Metzler I guess they washed out.

Rufus Dye Yes, washed out, they flunked out. I didn't flight with those guys. You really didn't know they were having all that much trouble. But something would happen. I got my indoctrination on how to handle the flag there. This is inconsequential I suppose, but I'll never forget it. Me and this kid went out to Edward Creek to bring the flag in, and neither one of us had ever been trained on how to fold the flag. We wondered how we were going to get it in back to the office. We kind of bundled it all up and took it back in the office. And the next day we got a long lesson on how to fold the flag.

Ed Metzler So how long did this training at Twenty-nine Palms last? I mean, was it several months?

Rufus Dye No, about 2 months. Of course out there you have auxiliary fields and its flat and training pretty much went well. You didn't have a weather problem.

Ed Metzler The weather is always the same.

Rufus Dye Pretty much the same. Another incident that occur that I almost forgot, one or 2 flights that my flight instructor took me up on. We talked not on the radio but you have what they called a gossfort(sp?) the instructor had a thing he talked into, and this comes back a rubber tube that sticks and hooks on to an attachment on your helmet. So I talked to you and it was as if you had a funnel. So it's not the greatest.

Ed Metzler It's for you to communicate while on the aircraft?

Rufus Dye That's right. He could communicate to me, but I couldn't say anything to him, because it didn't have a reverse line. But anyway he said: "Now I'm going to show you a half roll". We were flying on our backs for a little bit, he rolls over on his back and the damn seatbelt starts slipping, and I'm falling out of the airplane. Of course I did have a parachute on, but I really wasn't ready for my first jump. So here I am hanging about half way out of the airplane and finally he saw what was happening. I was kicking the stick and the rudders and everything, he rolls back over and I slap down on the seat.

Ed Metzler You were fore or aft? You were behind?

Rufus Dye I was behind. I flew in the back seat and he was in the front seat, so he only could see through mirrors looking back. Of course we progressed, and I went up on my first solo flight, to get out of the traffic pattern and come up to do the spin. I think I pulled it up, got in the right position, nose up and everything, slowed down and I was ready to go and then I had to think about it for a second or two, do I really want to do this. After about the second or third time you go into it, and recover and the airplane is really fine.

Ed Metzler     So the Steerman are pretty forgiving aircraft to fly?

Rufus Dye     It is except on landing. It ran loops, you can loose control of it really easy. But I didn't have any problems with that. The other thing about flying the old Steerman, on your final approach you learn how to listen to the wind on the wings struts and the wires out there and when it hits a certain noise wire you knew that you were gliding at the right speed and everything.

Ed Metzler     No air speed indicator?

Rufus Dye     Yes you had one, but you didn't use it. That's about it for my primary training. I graduated from there. I had a pretty good time in Twenty-Nine Palms too. There was a ranger field that we liked to go out to and explore when we had some time off. There wasn't much to do in the town at all. But we did run into some pretty nice ladies that entertained us when we got out.

Ed Metzler     Give me the time frame now, has the war started? Or is this all before Pearl Harbor?

Rufus Dye     Oh, yes. This is after the war had started. The war started when I was at Scott, December. January I guess it was that I moved to Chicago. So I was...

Ed Metzler     Tell me what happened, what was like when you and the group you were with first hear about Pearl Harbor? How did that feel?

Rufus Dye     We all had a suspicion that something was going on. But when it actually happened I was on my way...my home was about a 150 miles south of Scott. So I was hitchhiking home for the week-end I hear about it at a restaurant where we stopped for a cup of coffee. I wasn't very far from home. They were reporting that everybody retun to their home station. So as soon as I got home my folks put



me on the bus and sent me back to Scott. Later I ended up going to Chicago and being an instructor up there.

Ed Metzler The home where you were raised was it a farm or were you in town?

Rufus Dye Partly...it was a very small town where I was born, about 1,100 population and it hasn't grown much since then. But my dad had a farm about 7 miles out of town so I spent about half of my life in town and half out in the country. Out there is where I saw the aircraft come over and it was...I had a yen. I remember the old tri-motors that came in, passenger jobs that would come in and land over Baduka, Kentucky and they came across so low and slow that you could see the folks sitting in the passenger seats.

Ed Metzler So, you graduated from Twenty-nine Palms, and then what?

Rufus Dye Then I went to Lemoor, California for basic training in the old BT-13s and 15s there. It was a good stable aircraft.

Ed Metzler Was this also a bi-wing?

Rufus Dye No, it is a mono, single wing. My first incident there that created a little concern, I took off with my instructor from one of the auxiliary fields. On take off it is stressed all the time that you keep your head out of the cockpit. You learn where everything is in your cockpit so you don't have to look in the cockpit, you could go right to it by feel and so whatever you needed to do, like advance your mixture control, you throttle or a mixture, or whatever. In this particular incident we were taking off and I reached out to pull the proptich (sp?) back. When I did, I hit the wrong knob and pulled the mixture control off. And it quit immediately, and the instructor took immediately over the control of the aircraft. And we ended up landing on a sheep pasture out there. We got it landed and stopped and he said, "give me your arm, stick your hand up here, let me take your pulse. Your pulse is not bad at all, didn't this scare you a little bit?" And I said, "No, you were flying

the airplane". But then when I got home, when we got back one of the old tack (sp?) officers was really giving me hell, you know about it. And asked me if I had cutting washers and I said, "I don't know what you are talking about sir". Well you know what that meant was that the poker factor was really taking over. And he said "Why did you do such a stupid thing?" And I said "Well sir I did exactly what I was supposed to do, I reached up and pulled it back". I didn't release the mixture control it had a lock on, you had to unlock it to pull it back. And I said, "I didn't do that, I just pulled it back normal". And he said, "We'll find out about that". They sent the instructor to look, and sure enough the lever was broken. The lock was not working. Oh boy that saved my bacon. (laughter)

In Santa Ana we did a lot of marching. At Lemoor it got a little bit more personal, there were no quite as many people there. And some of the wives were able to join some of the married guys that were not supposed to be married at Lemoor. The only other significant thing that started occurring there was the cross countries we flew. Started flying round robin cross countries, both day and night. And the guys that get out and would call themselves supermen, and all those other guys...they came up with wild names cluttering up the radio trying to drive the instructors crazy, which they did.

Ed Metzler The cross country flights were in essence long flight, flight where you would switch off pilots?

Rufus Dye No, these were not that extended. You would fly a 100 mile leg out and maybe a 50 mile leg, and then another 100 mile leg back. More or less to help you start learning to do a little navigation, but they were not long. They would last about an hour and half at the most.

Ed Metzler So, this was training to fly fighter aircrafts as opposed to bombers?

Rufus Dye At this point is either way. Most of all your pilots in those days came all through until you got to advance training. And then in advance training you might go into

a twin engine, your bomber pilots, and then your single engine guys go to the AT-6. The ones that were headed for bombers were going to the twin engine Beechcraft.

But we had a few little incidents that occurred there. We had one boy at night that was lost and he called his instructor and kept asking his instructor what his location was. And the instructor said, "I don't know what your location is, is up to you to figure out". They guy finally made it back. We were all standing by waiting for him to land, and he came by the stage house about 25 feet in the air, he was moving. He finally touched down about the last third of the field, he went out through all these little saplings and you could hear him going through that thing. Did wipe the airplane out but he got out of it without a scratch. We didn't see him anymore either.

Lemoor, nothing really great happened there other than I got a little bit better and a little more proficient in flying, completed that, moved on to Luke. Went to Phoenix, Luke Air Force Base, and flew AT-6s out of there.

Ed Metzler    So the AT-6 is still a training craft?

Rufus Dye    That is a training craft. Flying was in 3 stages: primary, basic and advanced. And then after advanced training you went to what they called OTU or RTU, Replacement Training, or you went to a unit and stayed with that unit for operational training. But the AT-6 was a nice airplane to fly. We were introduced to some gunnery at advanced training, lot of formation flying, cross country flying, and both aerial gunnery and air ground gunnery in advance training. That went well, pretty uneventful. We had a lot of time to go into Phoenix, week-ends not too often but often enough. The biggest thrill in advance was once you graduated they had P-40<sup>1</sup>s there and they gave us 10 hours in the P-40, sort of a bonus I guess. You go out and make sure you know how to start it, fire settings and that is about it.

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<sup>1</sup> Curtiss Warhawk

Ed Metzler They don't let you take it up?

Rufus Dye Oh, yeah. You get a little cockpit orientation, some briefings on it and read the tech manual on the thing and then, take off. My first flight in the thing went real well until I got in the air, I couldn't get the gear up. I'd forgotten that there was also a little trigger that if you didn't pull back, the gear handle wouldn't engage to raise the gear. I flew through one the auxiliary training fields, traffic pattern, had AT-6s going every direction. But nobody got hurt. Then we came back in after the traffic pattern to land, come in about a thousand feet higher than the traffic pattern, I recall that the traffic pattern was about 1,200 feet so I should have come in a 2,200 feet and nobody bothered to explain why come in a 1000 feet higher. But I figured it out. When I came in at traffic pattern so when you dropped that gear unless you were really on it you lost about 1,000 feet. And it was Steerman the primary aircraft you couldn't ground loop it easily because it had a very narrow space between the landing gear. Fortunately I didn't have any trouble with that. We had guys that would come in and be in perfect position, perfect to land that airplane and take it around wouldn't touch down on the runway. And that is of course were we got our wings on that loop when we finished the advanced training. And that was a big day. All the GIs were standing around waiting for you to break formation so they could salute you, because you just got your bars and your wings. First guy that salutes you, gets a buck. But I gave several of them. I was so proud that I had graduated. It felt good.

That pretty much wraps our training there. Again we got some cross country and we operated our air ground gunnery out of Hillbin. You go out on the cross country, round robin sort of thing and ended up firing on cars or convoys that were set up in there. The idea being that you could get around this thing and navigate well enough that you could find your target. That was pretty interesting. But other than that it was pretty much plain vanilla.

Ed Metzler Then what happened?

Rufus Dye     Then, I graduated and got to home on vacation. Got on an airliner and got into Dallas. Me and a friend of mine that lived in Lincoln, Illinois. We got into Dallas and they kicked us off for some higher priority people on it. So we transferred over to the train going through Arkansas our portion of the train separated from the engine portion, and they left us and had to come back and get us. So we sat on the track for I don't know how long, we were all sleeping. We found out the next morning the we had been left behind and that they had to come back and get us and bring on into St. Louis. Of course from there I was actually reassigned to the 400<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron in Oroville, California. That was in the 369<sup>th</sup> Fighter group which was headquartered in Marysville, California. What they were flying there were P-39s, Airacobra. I ended up getting about a 100 hours in the P-39 at Oroville...

Ed Metzler    Was that the aircraft that had the engine behind the engine?

Rufus Dye     Yes and it had a 37mm cannon in the nose. Very small cockpit but very smooth flying little airplane. Really nice to fly. If you sneeze in that airplane you could snap the airplane really easy...the control. But there we got a little bit of gunnery and I got to fire the 37mm cannon and I could get about 3 rounds off and the thing would jam. But that airplane seemed to me that it stopped in mid air when that cannon is slowing you down. I just was not strong enough to reach down between my legs and hold of that handle and pull that wire and fly the airplane all at the sametime. And I get that gun charged again I just couldn't do it. Other people had the same problem too. I got about a 1,000 hours there in the P-39 and then that group broke up. It disbanded and I was sent to a replacement training unit, an RTU. But that was P-38<sup>2</sup>s and that was at Orange County airport very close to Santa Ana. Back I went to...By the way I should mention to you in Oroville was were I got married. The day, the evening that we got married one of my close friends killed himself on the final approach. That put a little bit of a damper on that.

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<sup>2</sup> Lockheed Lightning

We weren't there very long after we got married. My wife went back to Illinois, when the squadron broke up. I went RTU, I think a got a bout a 100 hours in the P-38 there and then transferred over to the Naval Air Station on North Island...

Ed Metzler Tell me how the P-38 flew? What kind of an aircraft was that?

Rufus Dye That is a twin engine aircraft, a very nice, really nice flying airplane. But we finished up, we got our aerial gunnery at North Island out over the ocean, over the gulf. I think I got about 4 flights of aerial gunnery. When we completed that we were sent to over to San Francisco to debarkation...anyway, an area where we all gathered to be put in a train to go to the east coast for Germany, for Europe. The training went pretty much standard without too many incidents as I recall. Very interesting and very enjoyable. I loved to fly the thing. We ended up on a train headed for New York and went across on the Queen Mary. I don't remember how many days, but it wasn't too long. We stayed with a convoy for a while and about half way across we broke away from the convoy and took off on our own. Because that ship could travel fast enough that it could avoid submarines apparently. It was a very uneventful thing.

Ed Metzler So, what time frame what this now?

Rufus Dye I would have been about April or May 1944, because I graduated from pilot training the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November of 1943. So that would have been around April.

Ed Metzler So, you had been training from October 1941 when you went in, trough May of 1944, is that right?

Rufus Dye April.

Ed Metzler Two and a half years of training.

Rufus Dye But it wasn't all flight training of course. But yes I had been in some sort of training all that time. And then I landed in England and was stationed at Stoney Cross. I take that back it was at Bournemouth. Another little station were I got another couple flights in the P-38 and then I went to my assignment with the 367<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group and the 392<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Squadron and at Stoney Cross where I flew my first combat mission. It was out of there. We were not well received when we first got there because the unit that had moved in thought they were going to be flying P-39s, but when they got there the P-38s were sitting on the ramps. And some of them had never seen a P-38, let alone fly it. So when we, as replacement pilots, came in we had more time in the P-38s than those guys did except for a few of the senior guys that had flown the plane before. Of course they all wanted to get up to their 50 missions so they could go home. And when we came in as replacements they had to let us fly, so...

Ed Metzler They didn't get their 50?

Rufus Dye They were slowed down in getting their 50. I mean they weren't really down and dirty at us but they preferred...it bothered them a little bit because we were getting some of their sorties.

Ed Metzler So, about how many aircrafts in your fighter group?

Rufus Dye There were about...I think at that time our squadron had about 24 aircrafts. We were pretty well and we did...our missions were a combination of sorties type mission, I mean, we flew the escort, we flew interdiction, we flew armed reconnaissance, and close air support. Of course with the 9th Air Force, the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force was primarily all escort type work, but we were Jack of All Trades and hopefully masters of all of them.

Ed Metzler So most of your sorties were of which type? Or was it evenly divided?

Rufus Dye Most of ours were interdiction, and armed....

Ed Metzler    When you say interdiction you mean basically...

Rufus Dye    We had a railroad, a bridge, a fuel dump, or something like that. We had a specific target assigned to us when we went out.

Ed Metzler    This tended to be in France? Belgium?

Rufus Dye    It could be anywhere over there, France, Belgium, Germany. France primarily. We did a lot of them in France and a lot in Germany. I think we did more in Germany after D-Day.

Ed Metzler    This is still before D-Day?

Rufus Dye    Yes this is still before, this all up until D-Day, these types of missions that we flew.

Ed Metzler    You kind of softened things up for them?

Rufus Dye    Yes. We did all along the coast. A lot of the targets along the French coast, gun emplacements and that kind of thing.

Ed Metzler    Did they send you out in a group? Or individually?

Rufus Dye    Generally as a squadron, a squadron would go out, 12 to 16 airplanes. And then sometimes we would go out as a group, all 3 squadrons going out together depending on what the target might be.

Ed Metzler    No involvement then with the activities with the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force that were bombers primarily...

Rufus Dye    Only when we escorted them.



Ed Metzler     When you escorted them, how far did you go with them?

Rufus Dye     Well, unless they were going to Berlin we went all the way with them and come out with them. Or get them as far as France and sometimes we would drop off and do some strafing or some thing of that sort. But when they started going too far for our fuel capabilities then we had to drop off.

Ed Metzler     What was the approximate range of the P-38?

Rufus Dye     About 400 miles. Pretty good distance as I recall. Let me back up here just a little bit. We got to Stoney Cross and apparently I did get to fly my first sortie out of there which was pretty much uneventful. The night before we got our briefing and as we left the briefing we noticed they were putting these stripes on the aircraft. While being at Stoney Cross we were always being strafed by the Germans. They come over and strife us.

Ed Metzler     Where is Stoney Cross located in the U.K.?

Rufus Dye     It is very close to Bournemouth, England just off the White Cliffs of Dover, not too far. This Axis Sally would say "Ok you guys, you over there in the 367<sup>th</sup> fighter squadron at Stoney Cross we'll be over and see you in a couple of hours." And sure enough here they come. Anyway it was out of there that one of the missions that we went on that I had an engine shot out just north of...I don't remember. We were flying on top of overcast. The Germans were pretty good. They had this 88mm antiaircraft gun which could work as an artillery piece as well as antiaircraft gun. It was a superb weapon that the United State had an opportunity to buy and didn't. At any rate we were flying right at the top of this overcast and I called and asked to go up a little way because this sort of wind right on my tail, at that altitude, they had a little radar themselves, so knocked out the left engine on my P-38.

Ed Metzler Was this flack hit?

Rufus Dye Yes antiaircraft flack hit. But on the left engine is where your generator is on the P-38. If your battery is up good you have a little bit of time. But apparently my battery was not too good because almost the moment that my engine quit the RPMs started dropping off because the battery wasn't strong enough to hold it. So I locked it into position at 1,900 RPM. Couldn't hold my altitude so next thing I knew I'm a single engine with 2,500 pound bombs, descending. Made it down through the clouds okey, but I had no communication at all. I broke out underneath the overcast about 500 feet or so, very fortunate because there were heels (word?) and things around up in the clouds. Where I broke out happened to be pretty flat.

Ed Metzler Where was this?

Rufus Dye This is in France. Anyway I headed back in the general direction that I thought I should be going. But I wasn't sure so I opened my escape kit. We carried a little escape kit. I opened that thing up and there is a little magnet, a little compass and they are about the size of your thumbnail. I needed to get back to the channel. This was after D-Day, just a few days, maybe a week after D-Day, so the doggone Frenchmen they were out there were doing this (hand gesture sounds) and you know you are going in the right direction, they were actually giving me directions, pointing me to the right direction. They saw my engine go out (laughter). I got back to this field, it was British or Canadian...

Ed Metzler This is not home field...

Rufus Dye This is in France. I was right on my debt (word?). I found the field, I got to the coast and flew south down the coast. I flew over the field I circled and they gave me a green light to land which I lowered the gear and everything, I'm coming around to land and I was going to land on the grass because they were working on the runway. You could tell that it was a grass runway, it had been used there. All

of the sudden all the workers...both runways were blocked, and I had to go around. I couldn't land or would have killed somebody. Out on the channel they had barrage of balloons so I couldn't turn right I had to turn left and you just didn't turn left into a dead engine with a P-38. So with low RPMs and everything I did. The only thing I can think it was by the grace of God, I made it and landed they had the runaway cleared. So how fortunate can you be. I landed, taxied in, debriefed and spent the night there.

Ed Metzler Was this fairly close to the front lines?

Rufus Dye Not very far. That night they had a heck of a battle. And you could see it. It was like a thunderstorm coming with lighting and all in it, and you could hear that rumbling like thunder. And oh boy, I would hate to be over there with those guys. The next morning a mail plane or some sort of service plane, a British type, came in and landed there. They said they would take me back to my airfield. But in the meantime we had moved to another field called Ibsley and I had never been there before. We made it back okay. And Later on, actually that was before D-Day...

Ed Metzler So, you switched fields before D-Day?

Rufus Dye No, we didn't. I guess it was after D-Day, because I flew another sortie out of Ibsley. A couple of them out of there, and then we moved to the peninsula, to the Cherbourg peninsula, transferred and started moving up through France.

Ed Metzler So you were transferred to an airfield in France?

Rufus Dye The whole unit moved to a field over there. We flew out of the first field, I guess 10 or 15 sorties then as the engineers would build new airfields we moved. So we operated out of the field in Cherbourg for a short while, and as the Army would move up through France we would follow. Our sorties then were primarily close air support and some interdiction.

Ed Metzler Close air support to the ground troops...

Rufus Dye Yes as they were moving.

Ed Metzler What kind of targets then were you typically...

Rufus Dye Troops, tanks, aircraft. Mostly enemy personnel to keep our troops moving and then we moved again. Next major field that I recall was at Reims, France. Out of there I flew sorties. Again it was late afternoon moving. This was one that I volunteered for, that I wasn't scheduled to go on. This was in the Cologne area. The antiaircraft fire was pretty heavy and I got hit there...

Ed Metzler So, would you go in low or would you go in high?

Rufus Dye We went in very high. Most of our sorties rarely went in over 10,000 feet. I think on this one we went even a little higher maybe 10 or 12,000 feet, maybe 15, for a dive bombing mission. Most of our close air support sorties rarely get over 10,000.

Ed Metzler The P-38 didn't have a super charged engine, I don't believe...?

Rufus Dye Yes it did.

Ed Metzler Oh, so you could operate in very high altitude.

Rufus Dye Anyway, I could see that on the way back home it was going to get darker and the weather was going to begin to get worse and the aircraft caught on fire...

Ed Metzler Where did you get hit?

Rufus Dye      Again, apparently on the left engine. I got a little bit of flack, I think from a piece of flack that entered the aircraft. I'm not really sure. The doctor seemed to think so. The aircraft caught on fire and that's when I had to bail out.

Ed Metzler     I am a little confused, where you hit? Where?

Rufus Dye      I don't know exactly...in the left engine. I was hit in one of my legs, I have a little bit of a scar. When I bailed out I had trouble getting out of the airplane. The P-38 had two side windows that you could roll down and you had a little canopy that you could jettison. I might have made a mistake of jettisoning the canopy first. I thought it wouldn't make any difference, but apparently it did, because that went off and I had to roll the window down in order to get out. I got about half way out of the airplane, I couldn't get the rest of the way out. I couldn't get out, I couldn't get back in. Of course, I was going down and the airplane was increasing in speed. Finally, I went out of it like the cork out a champagne bottle and when I did I hit both of my ankles on the canopy reinforcement, front portion of the cockpit and got out of the airplane. I reached for my D-ring and it wasn't there. It had fallen out between my legs. I finally found it; I yanked it, and when the chute opened the airplane exploded. So I was not very high when I got out of that airplane, I'll tell you.

Ed Metzler     Did the fire hit the fuel tank?

Rufus Dye      No, it hit the ground!

Ed Metzler     Oh.

Rufus Dye      I wasn't very much above the ground, it was almost simultaneous with my chute opening. Because I spent a few seconds in there looking for the D-ring. Just in time. I floated for little bit, I was high enough. I floated across a small river and I thought I was going to land in the middle of that river and I would have drowned because of all the weight and I was not a good swimmer and didn't have a Mae

West on or anything. But I floated across the river and landed in a soft potato patch. Backwards! I thought well I better get the heck out of here because I could hear vehicles moving...

Ed Metzler This was located in Germany?

Rufus Dye This is still in France, but the Germans were evacuating. They were already moving out. I was pretty close to a major highway, and I could hear the vehicles moving. So I hit the ground and thought I had to get out of here, but I couldn't move...

Ed Metzler You knew you were behind enemy lines?

Rufus Dye Either behind them, or right in them. Finally I got on my feet, I got moving because I really heard them. I got across the fence and I heard a bicycle, or something coming off the road. I stopped at the side of the road and I recognize a French kid. I thought it was a French kid anyway. I stepped out of the bushes scared him, he fell off the bike and told him I was American. And he said, "I thought you were Boche", German. "No, I need some help". He bundled me up, with my parachute and everything. He put the parachute in the little basket and I got in the handle bars. We started down the road and he drove me through this little village that had a British outpost. The old Brits took me in, gave me half a glass of Scotch, put me to bed, then got me up the next morning and drove, I don't know how long, to a hospital. I stayed in the hospital there for about a week.

Ed Metzler So you got a little shrapnel in the knee? How about your ankles?

Rufus Dye Ankles were all banged up...

Ed Metzler Nothing broken?

Rufus Dye One was sprained and the other was messed up. I couldn't fly for a little while, for about a month, until I was strong enough to able to put the brake on the thing. The commander after about a week said, "We are going to have to move, and I recommend that you go into Paris, and maybe someone can come by and take you back to your unit". Which I did. The next morning I'm sitting at a restaurant there in the Champs, and here come a couple of guys down the sidewalk. And it turned out to be a couple of fellows from my unit. They had come in a couple of P-38s, one of them was what's called a group snoop, it had a glass nose, the ones used for the bombardiers. So they stuck me in there without a parachute. It was very uncomfortable ride back to the organization but got back safely to the group. So we kept moving. They were going to send me home...

Ed Metzler When was this? Towards the end?

Rufus Dye September 1944. I could have come back home or stayed, I elected to stay. I didn't want to go home. You don't do that. I was over there to do a job, there was no reason to go home. We moved to our next location that was right on the French-Belgian border. Stayed there for a little while and then we ended up moving to Frankfort. By that time I had gotten to my 50 missions and they sent me back for 30 days of R&R. I had a choice of go back on R&R or go back permanently and go to the Pacific. So I elected to come back to my unit, so I came back on a 30 day R&R. So while I was sitting in the barber chair in my little home town I saw about the Battle of the Bulge. I had been scheduled to go and be a forward air controller right up in that area, thank God I didn't have to.

Ed Metzler I remember the aircraft effort wasn't very high because there was bad weather for most of it. That's why they got as far as they did on the Bulge.

Rufus Dye That's right and that's why he got so many decorations because he was right in the middle of the fight, the guy that took my place.

Ed Metzler Who took your place?

Rufus Dye     Jack B. Quick.

Ed Metzler    You're kidding?

Rufus Dye    He was quick. No, I'm not.

Ed Metzler    You're pulling my leg (laughter)

Rufus Dye    No, Jack B. Quick was his name. He was a West Pointer a good man. While I was there we started transitioned over into the P-47s, Thunderbolt. So when I got back I flew half of a tour and of course the war ended.

Ed Metzler    The Thunderbolt is a big aircraft...

Rufus Dye    It was one of the largest until the Corsair came, until the Navy brought the Corsair on line. I was a little big bigger than the Thunderbolt.

Ed Metzler    Was it like flying a boxcar...

Rufus Dye    It was like flying a bathtub! I don't think I could have pushed the throttle all the way forward and hold on to the stick with both hands. I only weighed about a 120 pounds, I was just a little guy.

Ed Metzler    So the P-38 was a little more like a sports car and the P-47 like an SUV...

Rufus Dye    There you go! The amazing thing...I had been assigned...I was a squadron's operations officer by that time, and while I was gone they assigned me a brand new airplane. One of the guys from Panama that had been flying P-39s flew my airplane and he...

Ed Metzler    Panama?



Rufus Dye Panama. They transferred out of Panama to Europe, we had P-39s in Panama...

Ed Metzler I guess guarding the Canal or something?

Rufus Dye Yes, down at the Canal. He was used to the little P-39, the P-47 didn't work that way. You pulled the stick back and the nose would come up but it would keep going, mushing down. This guy, he pulled out too late and he bounced back that airplane through a pile of horse manure. Drove the supercharger, whirled up and the fuselage, filled up all the 50 caliber full of horse manure, turned one of the prop blades completely around, and bounced back in the air and landed that thing in home base. By the time I got home, or got back over there, it was ready for me to test op, and I flew the rest of my tour in that airplane and it was one of the fastest in the unit. I tell you...

Ed Metzler I must have been the manure...(laughter)

Rufus Dye (laughter) fertilized it! Anyway, I finished up my tour up there...

Ed Metzler Did you see any combat in the P-47s?

Rufus Dye Yes, I got...I shot down one and a half ME-109 aircrafts. Another guy fired at him, so if another guy fired you got half credit. Then the P-38...we were very low on aircraft there for a while, that was I believe when we were flying out of Reims. Our group mission was clove airplanes, a flight of four out of my squadron, a flight of four out one of the other squadrons, a flight of four out of the third squadron. On that particular mission it was my first engagement with the anti-aircraft and fortunately I shot down 2 confirmed and a couple of probables. My flight leader got shot down and was a POW, and one guy, I heard, orbited in the clouds until the fight was over. I can't prove that. (laughter)

Ed Metzler So these were all ME-109s?

Rufus Dye No, these were FW-190s. When you look back and you see one of those things coming at you, that nose cone looks like a washtub, but there again I was real fortunate.

Ed Metzler These were worthy opponents?

Rufus Dye Yes sir, they were pretty good. They were getting a little...they got a lot of trainees in there and you had a lot of some that they were not quite as good as they were in the beginning of the war. They lost a lot of experienced pilots. Surprisingly enough that was my first engagement with enemy aircraft. I had one other engagement. I was escorting, leading the squadron on an escort mission and we were attacked by 109s. They hit and ran, the suckers got one B-26, I really felt bad about that.

Ed Metzler So you were escorting some B-26s?

Rufus Dye Yes. When they caught us they came out of the sun, I didn't see them soon enough and they got in on us. They didn't stop they just made a pass and kept going. The only other time was when we got a pretty good engagement, luckily enough I got shot the one...the squadron commander was flying my wing and he fired and he claimed part of the victory which was okay. Those were the only times that I had an opportunity to engage enemy aircraft. They were kind of few and far between, not nearly as often as when we first got over there. I guess I was not lucky enough to be in those sorties when they ran into them. Except for those 3 times. And then we ended up transferring up to Frankfort, Germany.

Ed Metzler That was before the war ended?

Rufus Dye That was before the war ended. The war ended while we were at Frankfort. I elected rather than stay with the unit to come home.

Ed Metzler     So when you were stationed in Frankfort, were you on the outskirts of the city?

Rufus Dye     Yes, not very far out from the city, maybe a mile or so.

Ed Metzler     So, how did things look like?

Rufus Dye     Oh, I'll tell you what. That was unbelievable. It was gutted, those homes and buildings, the autobahn was really torn up. The buildings looked real good until you looked inside and there was nothing inside, just a brick shell. The same way in Wiesbaden, when I went over there later for a company tour after the war. A lot of those buildings were still that way.

Ed Metzler     When was that?

Rufus Dye     That was in the 1960s?

Ed Metzler     Even as late as in the 1960s...

Rufus Dye     As late as the 1960s. Some of the buildings were still gutted.

Ed Metzler     Did you have any contact with civilians while you were there?

Rufus Dye     The only civilians I really got in contact was when we were there at Frankfort. We took over a hotel for billet and the ones that were involved running the hotel for us. I didn't not too many at all. They all seemed friendly enough, as far as making any friends or anything like that...

Ed Metzler     But I mean, they certainly seemed cooperative?

Rufus Dye     Yes, I didn't run into, we didn't run into any opposition or any problems with them at all. Specially in Bad Soden, I didn't get into Frankfort very much anyway. Kind of steered clear, you didn't push the issue. Apparently a lot of the

guys married the German girls pretty soon after the war was over. But I tell you the bombing missions, not fighter bombers primarily, but the heavy bombers all their sorties did pretty good in wiping out. I'm trying to remember which city was where they had the firestorm over there...

Ed Metzler    Hamburg?

Rufus Dye    Hamburg?

Ed Metzler    And later on Dresden.

Rufus Dye    That must have been something, I wasn't involved in that. A lot of the interdiction sorties that we went on while we were operating out of France and even after when we were operating out of Frankfurt. Like a flat tire on an airfield, you know you attack them. Some of the airplanes had no fuel in them, you shot them up and nothing would happen. For a while when I first I got over there, or just before, if you shot one on the ground you got half a credit. So a lot of the guys that had many aerial victories also got a lot on the ground. I had about 12 that I shot at and did burn, but just quit doing it, I guess it was after D-Day. But every once in a while you would catch one on the ground that still had fuel in it and would explode. Those were block swastikas and the one on the air combat ones were red swastikas.

Ed Metzler    This is the decoration on the side of the airplane?

Rufus Dye    On the side. But I hate to say, but I enjoyed my combat tour. Young enough, did not have any more sense than that. I started getting a little education when I got into Korea. I had a dam good education by the time I got to Vietnam.

Ed Metzler    When you think back on your experiences in the European theatre, what was the most down time, when you felt the most either scared, or depressed, or worried, or frustrated or angry in that period? Anything comes to mind?

Rufus Dye I tell you. I'll be real honest with you, I never had any down time. I was never depressed over there. I hate to say it but I pretty well enjoyed my time over there. I guess some of the times were when we were short on aircraft and you were sitting on the ground and you couldn't fly. It was one of the most depressing, if I was even depressed. Frustrated, but I didn't know what depression was back then. I didn't...Most of the younger guys...the old guys were 27 years old back in WWII, and us 18 and 19 year old kids, but I didn't see very much of that. I didn't see...we had one guy that I can recall, and he was in my squadron, that had a problem with the channel. He was afraid to fly over the channel and he would abort almost every time.

Ed Metzler Fear of flying over water?

Rufus Dye Flying over water, specially the English channel. They were talking about doing something about him. And I said, "look that man is one of the best navigators we've got. Just hold on until we get to the continent which is not going to be very long". And man after we got over to France he was a go-getter. And it would have been a shame to wipe him out because of that hang up. But like I said I...when I was expecting my first child I thought about that but wasn't depressed about it. I was anxiously waiting to hear what it was going to be...

Ed Metzler Which brings me to another subject: the communications back stateside. How was that? How did that work? Did you hear a lot of what was going on with your wife, how was she doing?

Rufus Dye I got lot of letters from home. I can't complain about that. But you really didn't know what was going on in the rest of the world. Not like you do today. I didn't really read. *Stars and Stripes* was our main source of communication which was half way current. Really there was a lot going on in Europe that we didn't know about. We were concentrating on what we were doing not what somebody else was doing.

Ed Metzler     Probably didn't need to know all of that.

Rufus Dye     Excess baggage, bothers you. We did, I was on duty the night when the band leader Glen Miller went down, on fly over duty watch the pixes. We were wondering what was taking place and what was happening.

Ed Metzler     What was the most humorous event that you can think of, anything come to mind?

Rufus Dye     Yeah but I can't tell you. (laughing) Is not very clean. There were a lot of things that were humorous I suppose. Like the guys...one of the nurses made us all bathing suits and we wanted to go swimming but she made them out of white material and we jumped in the water and when we came out, we didn't have a wet t-shirt show, but a wet-bathing suit show. (laughing)

Ed Metzler     Did anybody get this on film?

Rufus Dye     I don't think so, what a shame (laughing). I think this was one of the funnier things. And then there is some annoying things like when we were there in a hotel at Bad Soden, Germany, which is in Frankfort, we had one of those player pianos and they had enough rolls that you couldn't get them all in this room. And of course the guys had a tendency to drink a little bit. We would wake up at three o'clock in the morning and that organ would be going full blast down there, the umpas and all that. And we hunted rabbits in the German cars that we had confiscated...

Ed Metzler     What kind of German cars?

Rufus Dye     Oh, Mercedes Benz convertibles like Goebbels and all those guys rode. I had a Nash with electric gear shift, pretty nice little convertible. We had all kinds. We would paint them green and put license plates on them but they finally put a stop

to it. Those guys would do some of the craziest things, not me but everybody else did (chuckles).

Ed Metzler      What is your opinion of your leaders, your next in command, the people who you reported to? How did that work, how did you feel about it?

Rufus Dye      Of course when I first got over there I was just a pilot and I was assigned to an element leader, A fine guy and expert, good pilot. And then you had your flight leaders, you belong to a flight commander. Your flight commander answers to all the airplanes. They were all excellent guys, they were pilots, they knew what they were doing. A tremendous help getting me qualified to the point I felt comfortable, as comfortable as you can feel. Our squadron commanders were excellent guys, even in the other squadrons, they were all concerned about their people, and they were concerned about the mission. I had no complaints there at all. The group commander of one of the groups, called the vice group commander, gave my wife away at my wedding so I knew him before I got to Germany, to Europe. But they were all good, even when you get to the 19<sup>th</sup> command, 19<sup>th</sup> TAC and 9<sup>th</sup> Air Force. I thought they were all very good. They came down and mixed with the troops and gave the awards, and stand at the bar, and have a drink with you and talk with you just like if they were one of them, or as if they were one of us.

We had some 90 days wonders, but they were not in command positions. We had one that was our supply officer and another one that was our bombardier. Believe it not we had a bombardier in our squadron as long as we had the P-38s because he flew in the lead ship, lead P-38 in the group snoop, when we went on a carpet. We did about 3 carpet bombing missions where we'd get the whole group out and fly pretty close together. And he had another bomb sight in his aircraft and he could drop the bombs, we had to set up in there that we could set all our bomb switches appropriately and he can drop everybody's bombs at one time

Ed Metzler      From his?

Rufus Dye From his lead aircraft that's what I rode back when I came back from Paris. You had to go in through the bottom, I had no parachute, and if that damned door opens I'm going to be out of here. But he could do that and they were pretty successful. We had one that was terrible but most were pretty good.

Ed Metzler How many crew on a P-38?

Rufus Dye Just one, except in the group snoop. He sat on the nose, it was plastic nose with some metal holding it but the top part of it was plastic, glass, whatever. Had the trap door that was metal and some armor plate in it and he set in the bomb sight over there and he would take over and turn the switches and everybody would settle down and try to fly as smooth as we could and get them pretty close together and would drop them all. I guess we flew about 3 or 4 of them.

Ed Metzler How was the life at the base, was the food good? Camaraderie? Like all the TV shows I've seen?

Rufus Dye Well I don't know how many you have seen. What we generally did was to wonder around the base, we could go off base while we were in England and a lot of gambling took place on base in the Club. Lot of Poker. While we were in the first base, Stoney Cross, we had an old record player with one record. I'll never forget that song. I loved it! "Dardanella" was the name of the piece of music, went from sun up to sun down. Some times you get up at 3 o'clock in the morning to be briefed and the weather is bad so you have to hang around the club to wait and see if the weather was going to clear up or not, and that thing would be going and the guys would be playing poker. The food was good, I have no complaints. I don't think anybody did. All that British black bread was good. I didn't like the beds particularly. The mattresses came in 3 pieces, 3 squares, and they would slip and slide around, most uncomfortable bed I have ever slept on in my life. When we got over on the continent we had a little French guy that was always out scrounging and so we ended up with eggs ham and stuff. The food



was good. This little guy would go out, and the pilots would get one day a week a couple of eggs and Spam, that was always a treat.

Ed Metzler Spam was a treat?

Rufus Dye Spam was a treat to me. I enjoyed it, I still love Spam! Food... sure every once in a while you would have C-rations or K-rations. After a sortie...after you fly a missions you come back in and you are in debriefing and they give you a shot of bourbon or scotch or whatever. I could never handle it, it would me sick. So what I would do was just save it. When I got a bottle saved up I'd take it and give it to my crew. The guys didn't get a chance, they weren't quite as fortunate as the pilots. Let me put it this way, I preferred to do that than to take that as a relaxer because it didn't relax me. I couldn't handle it.

Ed Metzler You're talking about maintenance crew?

Rufus Dye My crew, the crew of my aircraft.

Ed Metzler How many were assigned to each aircraft?

Rufus Dye I had about 4. Generally about 3, that's what we had on the P-38s and P-47s.

Ed Metzler So they focused on your aircraft only?

Rufus Dye I guess I was a nice guy or something, because lot of the boys would come over and had a bad attitude or something like that. They seemed to think that I can handle them or something I get the guys and we'd talk and next thing you know they are doing a good job.

Ed Metzler I would think you would want a good job on maintenance in your aircraft?

Rufus Dye Yes, you want them to do a good job. But you have to include them in, you know. Lot of the pilots didn't, so they would develop a bad attitude, but that only happened a few times. I was amenable to them. I didn't mind doing it.

Ed Metzler So were you pretty close to the other guys in your squadron?

Rufus Dye Pretty close. You get pretty close. You hate to see one of them leave you. It's tough when you are flying alone and everything is going well and you look out just in time to see a man be shot, literally, shot out of the air. One of my best friends was flying my right wing and he was maybe a little bit younger than I was, and I was one of the younger ones in the squadron, and we hit flack and I turned just as he got a hit in the airplane. Nothing left. That disturbs you, you really hate to see that happen.

Ed Metzler Are you still in contact with some of the people?

Rufus Dye Yes. As a matter of fact we were getting together in New Orleans this September, and we generally have about 40-50 guys that still get together. Everybody doesn't come every year. Over the years you get a chance to meet a lot of them, then of course we are having them dying. I get an e-mail at least once a month or twice a month that one of the guys has died.

Ed Metzler Is this for the 9<sup>th</sup> Air force...

Rufus Dye No, no, this is just for our group. There is a 9<sup>th</sup> Air Force Association and they meet, I haven't gone to one of those, but they have one coming up quickly too. I got so many that I could go to considering: WWII, Korea, Vietnam, you kind of have to make up your mind. So I kind of zeroed in one on my WWII units where I spent most of my time. Vietnam groups, the guys that were with me in the 388<sup>th</sup> they are all still young enough to try to prove something. And I don't particularly enjoy that. I just as soon be with my old comrades, take it a little easier, have a

good time, without being snookered to the eyeballs. And the young guys seem to still be pretty much of a wild open wild party mood, party animals.

Ed Metzler Tell me about the Purple Heart, when you received it?

Rufus Dye That was in one of the missions that I came back and got hit over Cologne. We were on our way back. It seems I had some internal damage to an engine, the left engine...

Ed Metzler You kept losing that left engine.

Rufus Dye Well, I'm left handed and it seems to go with it. Apparently I got hit on the...I didn't even feel the pellet or the shrapnel that I got into my leg. On our way back I lost communication with the squadron and I started smelling smoke and I saw that I was on fire. Thank God the kid that was flying my wing saw what was happening and he moved out a little away from me. I couldn't see. The next thing I knew was I was on the way down and I had rolled over. It was time to get out of the airplane. Like I said earlier, I released the top canopy first and I couldn't get the windows down and I was struggling to get out of the aircraft. I got my arms up on the side and I got out and leaning back over the back of the cockpit. I couldn't get out and couldn't get back in. And I thought this is it, I'm going to ride this sucker down. I've had heard them say before that all your life kind of runs fast forward and it did. I was thinking, "My god I'll never going to see my child". And about that time out of there I went. And on the way out of it, I ripped a big tear in my chute but missed the boom. Thank God. If I had been a little slower, I probably would...you either have to go out real slow or pretty fast to miss that boom. Apparently I went, not over but down between, went under it apparently. As I said all that time struggling to get out I knocked the D-ring out of my pocket, its up on your left side over your heart. And I lost my heart, how did I get rid of that without the chute opening. And I looked round and reached and found it gave it yank and the chute opened. Just about the time the chute

blossomed and opened, the aircraft hit the ground. It was a little bit cloudy and there was a nice moon out...

Ed Metzler This was at night?

Rufus Dye This was at night. By the time we got back, it was getting dark and rainy. But it opened up and the moon was shining down on this river and as I was floating I was worried about the river....

Ed Metzler Do you know what river it is?

Rufus Dye To this day I don't know what river that was.

Ed Metzler Never been back?

Rufus Dye Never been back. I don't want ever to go back. It may have been a creek, but to me it looked like a river. (laughing) It could have been the Seine, I don't know. I don't think so. I did miss it and glided over and landed in this fresh plowed field. Kind of hit on my heels, then my butt, my back, and my head. In the little time I was up there I could hear the vehicles moving out. I'm surprised nobody...I guess they were not interested in finding anybody at that time, they were interested in getting the hell out of there. I tried to get up and I couldn't. I had to lay there for a few minutes. Then I was finally able to get up and hobbled up, got over...I just missed a fence for a bout 20 feet I suppose. Sometimes I thought man if would have stratted that fence, and I would have been hurting bad.

Ed Metzler And this is when you ran into the French kid?

Rufus Dye Yes, that is when I ran into this little guy. I didn't know for sure who he was, I was pretty sure it was a French kid, the moon had sort of come out again. I stepped out, he falls off his bike, and we exchange. He thought I was a Boche and

I was trying to tell him I was American. He went back and took my parachute even to take it with me 'cause it makes a fine scarf. Still have it (laughter).

Ed Metzler     So when did they award the Purple Heart to you? When did that occur? Did you just get in the mail?

Rufus Dye     You know that's very interesting how that happened. I was there in the hospital, and the hospital commander...I didn't even know that I was going to get a purple heart. The hospital commander came up to me after I had been there for about a week. They were getting ready to move. They didn't stand still very long, maybe a week, a week and a half, I guess I had been there for about a week, I could hobble around, I could walk. And he says: "Son, lieutenant, you know it'd be not very comfortable riding with us, since we are ready to move out. I would suggest that if you are amenable to it, let me discharge you and we'll take you into Paris, maybe you can get your way back a lot quicker than going with us". And I said that's alright with me, and he said "By the way here's your information for your Purple Heart." I thanked him and I turned it in when I got back to my unit, and then it came through distribution sometime later. And it was never officially presented to me. But that happened a lot.

Ed Metzler     There were so many people wounded in action and what have you that they just couldn't...

Rufus Dye     Well I never questioned it, never really thought about it and stuck it away like the rest of them. Come to think of it, I don't think I was ever presented any of my other medals either except in Austin when I retired I got several awards and medals presented. But I don't recall ever getting a DFC, which I received in all three of the wars. The Air Medal, I had 28 or 29 of those, I don't recall ever having one of those actually presented by anybody.

Ed Metzler     That's quite a collection.

Rufus Dye Yes but you know it comes with the territory, I guess, but I did sort of formally...I take that back I did had a medal presented in Korea, I had forgotten all about that. We had a Colonel from the guard or reserve, one or the other, and reserved for a month active duty and that's all he did. Go around a presented medals to the guys.

Ed Metzler So where were you when you heard that the Germans had surrendered?

Rufus Dye I was in Frankfort, Germany. Actually Bad Soden the last assignment. I had a big fly by right after the Germans surrendered, and I think every wing or group and country, and I can't remember if the British troops were involved or not. But we started out and we flew over all the major cities, it was a route set up to hit all the major cities in Germany and in France, like Paris. We made a big round robin, made the loop. It was a sort of celebration.

Ed Metzler Was there any interaction with the Soviets coming in from the other direction?

Rufus Dye No, the only interaction with them was in a bar the Lido Club in Paris. They were very friendly and the only other time was when we bombed von Runstedt's Headquarters. I don't know if you recall but that was a pretty famous mission...

Ed Metzler Tell me about that.

Rufus Dye Again I think we were station in Reims. It was a group effort a young fellow in our squadron, he was a flight officer, he again was one of the best navigators I had ever seen. This kid could look at the ground and tell you where he was. He was flying with the group commander, this was a hush hush briefing, we didn't know where we were going. I was leading an element that day, the 92<sup>nd</sup> squadron. We took off and three quarters of the way up, Dieffendorf I was told, "ok Dief you got it." And we did a real bang up job on a sting of barracks and...

Ed Metzler And where were these located?

Rufus Dye I can't remember exactly where they were, it was a forest. I got a book there that gives the exact location. It went real well all the squadrons got good hits on it. The interaction came after that some of the Russian generals came down and wanted to see a reenactment done. I think it was just north of Frankfort. I know that it was really close because I was supposed to be up there and I had to go back to my quarters. And when I went back to my quarters a kid and a German woman ran out in front of me and I hit her with the car and knocked her over. Took her to the hospital and got her hospitalized and everything, so I didn't get up there. But that is the only other interaction that took place between our group and the Russians. Other than on an individual basis.

Ed Metzler You mentioned a couple of times you were in Paris one time during the war before you linked back with your group, any other time?

Rufus Dye Yes I went back one other time on a R&R, I think for about 2 or 3 days a weekend type of thing. I was...Paris was okay. It was pretty much left alone. When I was there getting out of the hospital there was still some shooting going on. You could hear it at night primarily. And that happened even later, individual shooting but nothing big or anything like that. As far as being bombed it was very sporadic. They sent me back after Paris had been liberated, they gave me a week off to ferry fighters out to different units on the front and even then there were a few craters around the airfield, those were the only ones that I saw around Paris. And I managed to taxi and slide into one of them. Taxiing a P-38, a little rain, sloppy, and the thing started sliding. I cut the engines off and it went right on the crater that was filled with mud or dirt and it went right up at the wing. I gently settled down. It didn't hurt the airplane, there wasn't anything I could do (laughing). So I got a P-51<sup>3</sup> and got it out of there.

Ed Metzler How does the P-51 fly?

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<sup>3</sup> North American Mustang

Rufus Dye     It's a hot airplane, I flew one in Korea. I ferried this one out to Belgium. This guy from the outfit, he was from the outfit we were taking two P-51s, the weather was bad, raining, visibility was down, ceiling was low. He was leading, I was following right behind him. And he said, "Now look, when we get up here we are going to cross a river and just a little bit we have to fly up the river and then you have to make a right turn, a left turn, a right turn and a left turn and when you make that left turn straighten out, the runway will be right in front of you". And by golly he was exactly right. "You roll out, and you run out the end of the runway, you get your gear down, you flaps down get ready to land". I did a beautiful job until he hit the sog, the sog starts pushing up in front of the wheels. So they had to tow me in, I couldn't taxi in, that was embarrassing.

Ed Metzler     That was a quick stop!

Rufus Dye     It didn't hurt anything but my feelings.

Ed Metzler     So the war is over and now is back to the States, a chance to see family, get caught up, see our child...

Rufus Dye     Came back to New York and crossed country I guess, a train into St. Louis and back down. Then I went out on leave, then to Santa Ana again and there I was discharged. Full circle. And that was an amazing thing. You see equipment: B-4 bags, flight suits, jackets I mean in a hangar there, piles and piles and piles of that stuff. So I get my discharge and I get a train back to New Orleans and then come up home.

Ed Metzler     How did that feel?

Rufus Dye     Good.



Then I went to school for a couple of years and then I was recalled for Korea in 1948. I managed a couple of years in college before I was recalled. And I ultimately ended up going to Korea and went back in.

Ed Metzler Is there anything we missed of your World War II experience?

Rufus Dye I'm sure there is, but can't think of anything.

Ed Metzler If you think of something, you know my name and phone number, and we can always get together again.

Rufus Dye It was kind of tricky the way they did things. When I came back on R&R back in 1944 I went back through New Jersey and had to have a physical before I could come back into the combat theatre. I spent probably a week there. The guy gave me my physical apparently my blood pressure was up, and the guy says, I think I was a Captain then, "Well, lay down on the cot and relax for a while". While I was asleep he took my blood pressure and said "You're okay!" (laughter)

Ed Metzler They wanted you back there soon, I'm sure!

Rufus Dye Talking about losing people. One of the squadron commanders that went down, when he first came over he was in our squadron, his name was Slingerling (sp?) he was prince of man. I really liked him, we really liked each other real well and he was shot down, KIA. I was fortunate enough...that that happened just before I went back on R&R and I wanted to make sure I went through Chicago, he lived in Chicago. I went by to see his parents because I had gotten to know them through some letters. I visited with them stayed overnight, and I'll never forget the comment she made to me. She put me into bed that night, and I guess I didn't move all night long, she told me at breakfast "Are you sure you slept in your bed last night?" And I said, "Well yes ma'am I did. Why?" "I don't have to make it up. You must have not moved a muscle all night long." I don't know why but I'll never forget that. Just like home, she was just like a mother. It is good that I was

able to tell them some of the things I saw and observed, you don't get to do that very often. I was a pleasure to me, and a pleasure to them.

I had one story that bother me for years and years. I guess it will for the rest of my life. I was on an armed reconnaissance type mission, search and destroy in today's terms. You shoot anything that moved, that order came out just before the end of the war. Shoot anything that moved. On this particular sortie, I was carrying Napalm. I was on the autobahn and I saw what looked like a military bus. It pulled under an underpass so I went after it and just as I released the Napalm I realized it was a bus loaded with women and children, and I couldn't stop it. The most horrible feeling I ever had in my life.

That's the down time. That was the down time in my WWII experience. And a little later on the other side, a little before that, there was a German soldier that was caught in a road and I was making passes at him and I felt sorry for him and I didn't shoot him. I could have wiped him at any time, but I didn't.

Ed Metzler     Probably it would have not changed the course of the war.

Rufus Dye     I guess in every war you have one or two things that will bug you for the rest of your life, I'm sure most do.

Ed Metzler     I want to thank you for spending the time to share with us your experiences. They are fascinating experiences. Thanks for your time.

Rufus Dye     You are very welcome.

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Sarasota, Florida  
June 25, 2006