

**The National Museum of the Pacific War
(Admiral Nimitz Museum)**

**Center for Pacific War Studies
Fredericksburg, Texas**

**An Interview With
J.M. Taylor
75th Fighter Sq. Air Force
India, China
Prisoner of Japanese
March 16, 2004**

Mr. Misenhimer

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is March 16, 2004. I am interviewing Mr. J.M. Taylor by telephone. His home address is PO Box 7 Grand Junction, Tennessee 38039. His phone number is (731) 764-2107. This interview is in support of the National Museum of Pacific Wars, Center for Pacific War Studies, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II. Mr. Taylor, I want to thank you for taking time to do this interview today.

Mr. Taylor

You're welcome.

Mr. Misenhimer

Agreement read. Is that okay with you?

Mr. Taylor

Sounds okay with me.

Mr. Misenhimer

There's another question here, yes or no. I give permission from excerpts from our oral history to be used in the Nimitz Foundation Publication, *Nimitz News*.

Mr. Taylor

Yes. I give permission, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Fine, lets get started here then. Let me first ask, what is your birth date?

Mr. Taylor

June 23, 1922.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you born?

Mr. Taylor

I was born right here in Grand Junction, Tennessee at home.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have brothers and sister?

Mr. Taylor

I had an older sister. She was virtually 2 years older, a little less than 2 years older. We were the only two children.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were your parents' names?

Mr. Taylor

My father was James M. Taylor and I am James M. Taylor, Jr. And my mother was Lavergne Edith Stroup.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your father's occupation?

Mr. Taylor

My father was an Artisan. He was a stone cutter, an Artisan and he worked in a monumental shop for his uncle.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now you grew up during the depression. What effect did the depression have on you and your family?

Mr. Taylor

Very little. We were always in the depression, before and after. (laughing) We didn't notice any difference. My dad worked, it was a family owned business and it seems that they made it through the depression pretty good. You know, people are gonna buy those monuments for their folks and so daddy was never really well paid, but I understand his pay went on right through the depression. That's sort of my understanding.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Taylor

I went to school in Grand Junction, Tennessee.

Mr. Misenhimer

What year did you finish there?

Mr. Taylor

I finished in 1940...on time, top third of the class.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do when you finished high school?

Mr. Taylor

I went to University of Tennessee Junior College in Martin, Tennessee.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long did you go there?

Mr. Taylor

One year.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you go into the Service?

Mr. Taylor

In September of 1942. I had just turned 20.

Mr. Misenhimer

Which branch did you go into?

Mr. Taylor

I went into the Army Air Force as an aviation cadet.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me back up just a moment. On December 7, '41, of course, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Do you recall hearing about that and where you were?

Mr. Taylor

Yeah, it was a Sunday. I was on the streets in Memphis.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your reaction when you heard about it?

Mr. Taylor

Well, I had been pretty well schooled by my dad about the war through '39 and '40. So I was pretty shocked by it but I was aware of what was going on in Europe because of my dad's interest in that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you think that this would result in your going into the Service then?

Mr. Taylor

Oh, yeah! Yeah, I guess we were all expecting that.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you went in, were you a volunteer or were you drafted?

Mr. Taylor

I volunteered.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you sworn in at?

Mr. Taylor

In Memphis, Tennessee at the Post Office. We had to take an entrance exam.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go from there?

Mr. Taylor

Well, they put me in a reserve status waiting on a class to open for the cadets, and I eventually was assigned to class 43K and we were all called in at the same time. I believe that we were on a schedule across the whole training command of the United States. Every class had the same beginning and ending date. So I was in 43K. We were called into active duty on March 10, 1943 between September '42, September 16, '42 and March 10, '43, I was virtually a civilian on the street but I had a card showing that I was a private in the US Army Reserve. I lived as a civilian waiting to be called into training school.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were not being paid by the Army at that point.

Mr. Taylor

No, I was not, no. I was sent to Nashville to a classification center, and there a lot of the guys learned the sad truth that they were not gonna be selected even though they had been accepted, they didn't make it through the classification center. A lot of us did and a

lot of them didn't. A lot of them went to gunnery school or mechanics school or something like that. Some of them went to navigator school or bombardier school, but the bulk of the guys, I guess everybody wanted to be a pilot and that's where most of us went, to the pilot training.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was in Nashville.

Mr. Taylor

Nashville, Tennessee, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

And how long were you there?

Mr. Taylor

Oh, about 10 days I guess. I don't really remember, not long.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you get your uniforms?

Mr. Taylor

The first day we got off the train. They took us in on a Pullman.

Mr. Misenhimer

From Memphis to Nashville.

Mr. Taylor

It was a rainy night in Memphis, yes it was.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long did it take? Did it take about half a day, or a day to get there?

Mr. Taylor

Overnight from Memphis to Nashville. It was about 200 miles. I suppose it was about that by rail, you know. If that's by highway, it's about 200 miles.

Mr. Misenhimer

And so you had a Pullman to go up there in.

Mr. Taylor

Yeah, they put us on a Pullman, sure did. My first ride on a Pullman.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was the food on that train?

Mr. Taylor

We didn't eat.

Mr. Misenhimer

And then you got to Nashville and went through this classification school.

Mr. Taylor

And we got off the Pullman and loaded in the back of a six by truck.

Mr. Misenhimer

From one extreme to another.

Mr. Taylor

And as we rode into camp, all the guys there, they had gotten there the day before and they're saying, "You'll be sorry! You'll be sorry!" All the big cheers I guess.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the name of that camp?

Mr. Taylor

Nashville Classification Center is what they called it. US Army Classification Center
Nashville, Tennessee.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you were there about 10 days.

Mr. Taylor

About, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

And what all happened during that 10 days?

Mr. Taylor

Well, we went through the usual. We got issued uniforms and when we went through, at least there at Nashville, we didn't get the cadet uniforms, which were a cut above the GI you know. We got issued just regular GI uniforms. That's what we wore through training except for the, we had a blue band on our military caps and we had a cadet insignia which was the wing and the prop cross. It was a large one that fit on the front of your cap, and that signified that we were aviation cadets.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you had just khaki uniform. Is that right?

Mr. Taylor

Yeah, we were issued just khaki...and wool. Yeah, we were issued the wool stuff, too. That old overcoat weighed about 10 pounds. I never saw such a hunk of wool in my life.

Mr. Misenhimer

We called them horse blankets.

Mr. Taylor

Oh, they were whoppers, yeah. That old Army. Listen, I'm chewing. I hope it doesn't matter.

Mr. Misenhimer

No, no, that's fine.

Mr. Taylor

I'm eating a piece of toast and an egg.

Mr. Misenhimer

Go right ahead. And anything else in particular happen while you were there in that 10 days?

Mr. Taylor

No, Nashville was pretty a dull place. We got issued the uniforms, we started a little calisthenics, physical training. Of course, we went through all the medical stuff. You know, they list every opening you had. And then we were going through these little tests. It was psychiatrist dealing, and we were doing a lot of the co-ordination things that you did with your hands and then we had some academic tests as well. And all that compiled together to determine what you were best suited for. The smart ones got sent to the navigators school I think. (laughing)

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you live in there?

Mr. Taylor

Just a very plain, open, unheated barracks.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then when you finished there, where did you go?

Mr. Taylor

I went to Maxwell Field at Montgomery, Alabama, and that was what they called pre-flight. And it was a very large school with thousands of cadets there and each training phase had 2 classes. It had what they called the upper class and the lower class. In other words, we were freshman and sophomores usually or juniors and seniors, however you want to say it. But there were 2 classes at each base, and at classification there were just many, many, many cadets there. I guess maybe 5 or 6,000 total. I'm not sure about that. That's just a guess. But every month, they'd send one class out and a new class would come in, and what had been the underclassmen became the upperclassmen and then they lorded it over the lower classmen. I guess they outranked them. But we went to Montgomery and that was what they called pre-flight and there we had intense physical training and just ground school, we called ground school, which was academics. We had just a world of academics. I had a lot more stuff there than I ever even saw in college. Of course, I wasn't in college very long. That was an Ag school. We all took Ag and back then, we were all Ag boys, farm boys. A few engineers, mostly Ag kids, though. Home-ec, the girls were Home-ec and the boys were Ag. That's the kind of school we had.

Mr. Misenhimer

Sounds like the college I went to.

Mr. Taylor

Does it?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yeah. And how long were you there at Maxwell Field?

Mr. Taylor

After classification, every 2 months, we changed, almost exactly every 2 months. We were 2 months at pre-flight. The next school was primary then basic and then advanced and we were just roughly 2 months at every school.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were there in ground school, you didn't do any flying there.

Mr. Taylor

No, no, that was all pre-flight. We were all doing the exact same training there. It was physical and academic is all it was.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you take your primary training, then?

Mr. Taylor

I went to what was known as the Country Club of the Southeast, The Country Club of the Southeast Training Command at Ocala, Florida. It was a very, very nice school. Those schools were all operated privately with civilians under contract of the Army. I think all the primaries were. I was in the Southeast Training Command, which was Florida, Georgia, and Alabama. I guess Mississippi and some in Tennessee, and Florida of course.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all did you do there?

Mr. Taylor

In primary, we flew the Stearman at my school, and most of the cadets did fly the old Stearman, the PT17, Primary Trainer 17. It was a Boeing bi-wing plane. There's a gazillion of those around and they were used as crop dusters after the war.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's the one they called the Yellow Peril?

Mr. Taylor

Maybe, ours were not yellow but it was a little Stearman, and I think they called it the Cadet, I believe was the name, the Cadet. I'm not sure about that.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you get your actual first flying time?

Mr. Taylor

It was there at Ocala of course, and lets see, we went there in I guess it was April. No, it was later.

Mr. Misenhimer

Probably May, been about 2 months.

Mr. Taylor

Yeah, okay, May and June there and July and August at basic and September and October. It was a little bit further down than that because I graduated December 5th. So anyway, it's about 2 months at each school.

Mr. Misenhimer

In your primary, how many days were you there before you actually got into an airplane and flew?

Mr. Taylor

Oh, not more than a couple of days I'm sure.

Mr. Misenhimer

You went up with an instructor of course.

Mr. Taylor

Right, each instructor I think had 5 cadets in the morning and 5 in the afternoon. And we alternated. Half of the class would go to a ground school and the other half would fly.

That's the way they broke that up.

Mr. Misenhimer

Had you ever flown before or was this your first flight?

Mr. Taylor

It was my, well I had been up in a cub. But this was actually my first flying. I did not go to that... what did they call it? They had a plane class, you know, they had some training in college but I was not in it. CAT or something like that.

Mr. Misenhimer

I know what you're talking about.

Mr. Taylor

I can't think of the designation now but some of the guys went through that in college. And I flew with one of them with my girlfriend. They had to get their time in and you know, if I'd have known then what I know now, I wouldn't have dared got in that cockpit with that guy with my girlfriend. He probably had 5 hours, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer

What are some things that happened while you were in primary there?

Mr. Taylor

Well the saddest thing was about half the class couldn't make it. And they cut them pretty heavy. If they didn't solo fast enough, quick enough, they would call them, call them out, send them out, ship them out.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many hours did you have when you soloed?

Mr. Taylor

I think I had about 11 or 12.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did it feel like when you soloed?

Mr. Taylor

It felt great! Scared and you were scared you weren't gonna make it. Everyone had that fear of what we call washing out, that was a great fear that we didn't know about until we got down there. I thought that when I passed the test back in Memphis Post Office back in September I thought I was already a pilot, you know. But I realized later that my chances were maybe 50/50 or even less. A lot of people washed out about then because they had so many applicants and they just kept picking the top, they kept picking off the top and let the rest of them go. And it didn't mean that those boys would not have made good pilots. It just means they weren't doing it fast enough, quick enough. That's my version of it.

Mr. Misenhimer

At any time along the way, had you had any type of weapons training, rifle or anything like that?

Mr. Taylor

No, no we didn't. Not at that point.

Mr. Misenhimer

You did not go through the basic like the infantry did or anything like that?

Mr. Taylor

No, now some of the classes were on a different program. Some of them took longer to get through training than it did my class. I think my class was kind of one of the last ones that just went directly in, directly started training, and finished in a matter of 10 months.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else while you were in primary you recall?

Mr. Taylor

Well, I have a little story here that most people don't believe it. I mean, I got so much rejection, I quit telling it. But there was a guy there named Geoffrey Walter and he came in and said that he had, we always flew from the back cockpit, the cadet always flew from the back cockpit of that Stearman. And even after Soloing, we flew the instructor was always in the front cockpit and even when we soloed, the front cockpit would just sit there vacant. So Geoffrey came in one night said that he had climbed out of the back cockpit and got out on the wing and climbed up into the front cockpit. Well, I thought that was certainly quite a feat and I didn't believe him. And I thought there's no way that he could have done it. And I looked at him. He was about 5'10" you know or maybe 5'9" and there was no way he could do that. See, I was standing there at 6 feet, long and lanky and skinny and you know, just great shape, physical shape. And I was always well built. But anyway, I decided I would try that and I must've been about halfway through primary flying school when I tried it and it was a very stupid thing to do. And I had

made up this story that if I fell off, I was not afraid to use a parachute. As a matter of fact, I would have welcomed that. There were even boys we had heard of that would go up and when the instructor would turn the plane upside down, they would fall out and they would claim that they had forgotten to fasten the seatbelt. Of course, that didn't go over very good but we knew that the ones that did that were doing it just for the thrill. I didn't know anyone that did that but I had heard those stories. So I went up there and I tried that. I thought, well I'm gonna get up here and I'm gonna see if I can do that. So I set my little plane on trim as well as I could and I had it just flying straight and level, you know, at just a very moderate speed as slow as it would fly. And then I tried to get up. Well, the top glass, there's no way you could get up like that so I climbed up again about 5,000 feet I guess and I decided well, I'm gonna cut the engine back to idle and set up a little glide. Well, I did that and I tried to get out and I couldn't get out. I was just having trouble. After about the 3rd or 4th, maybe 4th attempt, I went up there and I managed to get out. And the problem was the parachute was that we would sit on the parachute, and when you would stand up, it was just hanging down halfway to your knees. And it was very much in the way and I could not get that thing out over the side of that cockpit, but finally I did. And I got out there on the wing and I was facing the cockpits. I was on the left side of the cockpits and I was facing the cockpits and all the time, I always had to hold on to that stick because you couldn't keep the wings level. And I could set up the glide okay but I couldn't keep the wings level so I never could release the stick. And you could not trim that plane that well. So I was out there and I was standing on that side there and of course, they had that non-skid stuff there on the wing where you walked and I was bent over and I had my left hand on the front and the stick on the front cockpit and

my right hand on one in the back. And I was just standing there pretty much just on balance and not really holding to anything and then I turned loose of the back cockpit and slid up that wing just, you know, like 2 inches at a time until I could grab those hand holds, which was over the front cockpit built into that wing they had a couple of hand holds there. You know, you could grab a bar. Once I got a hold of that bar, it was all over. I could have held that plane up if I had to but anyway, when I got up there, I jumped up and got in that front cockpit. And I came back and landed and it was fun, you know. I landed and taxied it up to the line and I thought, I wonder if anyone's gonna say anything. Well, I thought everybody in the camp was looking at me. You know that's kind of the way I felt. Of course, nobody was looking and the dispatchers were women. We had women dispatchers down there, civilian, and I just taxied it up to that line and they put chocks under the wheels and I got out. Nobody said a word. Nobody said a word. And when I went into my room that night, boy, I just went in like I had shot down 5 enemy planes. I felt really superior. But you know, I quit telling that because people just didn't believe it. And I thought, well I'll just keep that story to myself.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was quite an experience, though.

Mr. Taylor

Oh, yes, it was but I still doubt if Geoffrey Walters did that. I don't know where he got the idea to tell that story, but maybe he did.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you landed, your instructor wasn't there then when you landed.

Mr. Taylor

No, no. He was instructing with another pilot, you know, another cadet I mean. They were pretty well busy all the time. And like I said, they would have 5 in the morning and 5 in the afternoon.

Mr. Misenhimer

What are some other things that happened?

Mr. Taylor

You know, that 5 in the morning, 5 in the afternoon, maybe that's wrong. I think they had 5 cadets all together and they would take 2 in the morning and 3 in the afternoon. I believe that's the way it was divided. My memory is, you know, it's been a pretty good while ago so maybe that's the way it was. I do know that they would pick cadets that were about the same size because we all had to use the same parachute. So they would pick cadets that were about the same size so that each one of us could use the same parachute.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was there any problem with accidents while you were there?

Mr. Taylor

No, not for me.

Mr. Misenhimer

I mean anybody else, were there any losses from accidents of other cadets?

Mr. Taylor

I don't recall any in primary, no. One little side story here is we were pretty well confined to base most of the time. There were a few of the cadets that were married and the women can come down and rent a room and they could come down to the base every

evening and sit with their husbands for about an hour after dinner. And they couldn't have dinner with them and they couldn't stay and go to bed with them. They could just come visit them for about an hour or two in the evening. Of course, we had homework to do and we were supposed to be studying so you know, they were pretty strict on us. And we couldn't get off the base very often. But one night they came through and wanting to know if we had enough guys that wanted to play softball. And I had never been on a softball team, but I had played softball my whole life just on school grounds and just in the neighborhood and that kind of thing. There was no kind of organized little league or anything like that, nothing. So I said yeah and we got up enough guys and they put us on a bus and trucked us about 30 miles to another Army Air Force base where they had a lot of enlisted men and they had organized teams. They had a great field, they had fences, they had grand stands, they had all the equipment you could imagine. And there we were just there in our little old khaki pants, you know. So the first time that I walked up there and I saw that chain link fence out there I guess about 4 or 5 feet high, and I said, "You mean over that's a home run?" And they said, "Yeah, you think you can get one out of here?" And I said, "If I couldn't, I'd quit." My first at bat, I made an out but my second at bat, I made a home run right dead center field and there was a clipping in the paper about it and I got it. And it mentioned that Cadet Taylor had hit a home run only the fifth of the season and they wanted to know who I was. They said, "Who are you?" I said, "Well, I'm just Cadet Taylor." They said, "Well where'd you..." I said, "I've never played anywhere." And they were astonished that, "Well, we've got some good sluggers over here." And said, "They've been hitting that fence all year, but that's only the 5th one to go out." And I thought, "Well, no big deal to me." So I was a pretty good batter. I

didn't realize it until they told me, you know. So that was adventurous. I still have that clipping in my scrapbook.

Mr. Misenhimer

That would be interesting, right.

Mr. Taylor

I'm very proud of that, yeah, one of my major achievements. And that was the only time we ever played. I never played another game while I was in the Service. That was just the only time I played.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now your instructors, they were civilian, not military then you're saying.

Mr. Taylor

In primary.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yeah, in primary, right.

Mr. Taylor

In the primary, it was contracted out. They would have some Smith Aviation Company or I think in my case it was Greenville Aviation Company and they owned the facilities there. They sent us, and Army did training for everything, we had a commandant of cadets, which was like a major, and then they had maybe some clerical personnel. And I do remember when they sent me to the dentist, they sent me over to Camp Blanding at Jacksonville, Florida, somewhere a pretty good drive from Ocala. We went up and back in one day. About 4 or 5 of us went.

Mr. Misenhimer

How were your instructors? Were they good instructors?

Mr. Taylor

You know, good and bad like in every phase of training you have good and bad.

Mr. Misenhimer

I was talking about in primary.

Mr. Taylor

Yeah, I just had, I think I had 2 instructors in primary. I had Tracey, who was the better of the two, and the other instructor was named Hook and he was more lenient and probably not as firm and good instructor as Tracey was. Probably, I don't know. But anyway they got me through. We did have, we had what they call check rides. Your instructors, they would school you to what you were supposed to be doing and every so often, you would get a check ride. And we had those Army pilots that were doing the check riding and they were pretty strong. It was pretty harsh. And they demanded and they didn't give you much leeway.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now there in primary, did you do acrobatics and that sort of thing?

Mr. Taylor

Yeah, we did some. Yeah, we were allowed to do loops. Mostly we practiced turns, turns, you know a few stalls not many, but just a few stalls. The stalls teach you how to land. That teaches you 3 point landing, you know, with the tail wheel. And that's what the stalls were for and you would cut the engine and pull the nose up until it would stall and then you would dump the nose down and you'd gain a little air speed and get your RPMs back up on your engine and then fly on. Another thing, they'd always call 4th

landing. They would cut the engine. The first thing you do is you drop your nose and you start looking for a place to put it down, and we did that over and over and over. You had to pick out a field somewhere right quick depending on your height, your altitude and stuff like that. We did that in primary an awful lot, not much after that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you actually land or then just turn it back?

Mr. Taylor

No, no, you would just make a little fake approach and then the instructor would gun it and yall would take on off again, or climb back and gain altitude.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then when you finished primary, where did you go?

Mr. Taylor

We went to basic, what was called basic flying school, which the school I went to was at Cochran Field in Macon, Georgia. And it was real near Warner Robbins, which had tactical planes. It had the big planes, you know, the real planes, different kinds, they had bombers and cargo planes, transports, and just any kind of plane the Army had would be in and out of there often. It was not a so-called training base. Cochran was for basic trainers, we had the old vultee, we called the vultee vibrator. What was the right name for that thing? The Vultee Falcon or something, I don't know. It was a BT13, Basic Trainer 13. And it was an all aluminum plane and in primary, it had been just a fabric, the plane was mostly fabric. But when we got to basic, they had the aluminum plane, that vultee. It had about a 450 horsepower engine in it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was this a biplane also?

Mr. Taylor

No, it was a low wing mono plane.

Mr. Misenhimer

It was a fixed gear, though, right?

Mr. Taylor

Yeah, fixed year but we did have flaps, and we had a 2-speed prop. We had high pitch and low pitch. You could change it from high to low. You took off in high pitch and you landed in high pitch and any time you got real low, you put it in high pitch which gave you more engine RPMs. And then once you got up to cruising, you would change over to low pitch which meant it took a bigger bite of air but your engine ran slower.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about your training there at basic. What all happened there?

Mr. Taylor

Well, I had a playful instructor, and he had a buddy there and all they wanted to do was just play. And they really didn't give us adequate instruction. I mean, when we were supposed to be learning, they were up there flying and playing and we were sitting back there riding, you know, the cadets would just sit back there and ride. My instructor was Lieutenant Welch and he didn't give me a good grade either. And his buddy was named Sanamasino, an Italian I guess. They would, at night flying, we would go out and night fly and they would have what they call stack. You would make a cross across the field where we were or the town we were flying over, you would make a cross there and it would be, you know, north south east west. And each quarter or that we called a

quadrant and every 1,000 feet they'd put a plane and you flew just in that quadrant, just circled in that quadrant. And we'd stack them maybe 3 high about a thousand feet apart and you had to maintain your altitude to keep from hitting the guy above you or below you. So old Welch and Sanamasino, you know what they did. Gosh, I was flying up there one night and all of a sudden I looked out there and I saw the lights on another plane and I saw his exhaust was just not more than 20 feet away. They were up there flying formation at night. And cadets were supposed to be flying, learning something, and there they were up there messing around. Anyway, these 2 characters, they were okay. We learned a lot of landings there. It was a pretty big field and then we had auxiliary fields. When we got there, we had auxiliary fields that we would leave our main base there at Cochran Field and go out and practice on these little auxiliary fields, practice. We'd shoot landings, what they called shoot hurdles. They had a rope across there with streamers on it and you had to go over that and then land. They called that shooting hurdles and I don't know why we did that but we did. And you'd set it down and then you'd gun it and take right on off. There was no landing. You wouldn't wait until it got down to taxi speed and go back and start over. If you were halfway down the runway, you would have made your landing and you'd just gun it and take off again. And we'd shoot 10, 15 landings each time.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do they call those touch and go?

Mr. Taylor

Yeah, touch and go, yeah, a lot of that. We did a lot of that. One day, I was with Lieutenant Welch and we left the area, we left our flying area. And he flew over to

Montgomery, Alabama and we landed at an auxiliary field out there way away from the main base. He just wanted to do it so we just flew over there and landed and I don't know if he had Sanamasino with him or not. You know, if we'd been caught, they'd have been busted for sure. They would have been busted, and they did not want to be instructors anyway. They wanted to be flying fighter planes and they were stuck flying these little old basic trainers. They had been enlisted men and worked on the line before they worked on their pilot training. And they used to laugh, they had P39s, which had a nose wheel. It was our only fighter at that time that had a nose wheel. Now the P38 did, but the P39 was the only single engine, and he said, "Man, we taxi those things faster than this plane will even fly." They'd just fly up and down those taxi strips in those 39s with that nose wheel. See, you can put on the brakes and not nose over it, you know, stuff like that. So it's a different thing and when you're taxing a plane with a tail wheel, you cannot see over the engine, not those inline engines, the P40s and the P51s. You cannot see over. You have to zigzag and look out the side and then you turn back the other way and look out the other side. And you just what they call S. You just S your way down the taxi strips all the way. That came on later. That came on in advanced training.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now when you were there in basic, did you do cross country flying?

Mr. Taylor

We did our first cross-country in basic, yeah. We would do like a 3-leg basic. Just a simple...I used to know that the core deal something else and return. We had 3 legs, you know. We would learn to compute wind direction and stuff like that and then we got into

flying the iron beam, you know, we'd fly the radio beam. I don't think we did that in basic. I think that came on in advanced. We may have did that in basic. It kind of seems like we did but I'm not certain.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did your BT13 have radio?

Mr. Taylor

No, we did not. We did not radio the tower. We had on board radio with the instructor.

Mr. Misenhimer

Oh, okay, talk back and forth to him, right.

Mr. Taylor

I believe that's right. I really don't remember. I'm pretty sure we did. I know back in primary, we had what they called a gosport, g-o-s-p-o-r-t, and it was a tube and it had a little connection that went to each side of your helmet to your ear. And the instructor would speak into a funnel and it would go through this rubber hose and get to your ear. And it was fairly successful.

Mr. Misenhimer

Could you talk back to him?

Mr. Taylor

No, you'd just sit back there and nod your head. (laughing)

Mr. Misenhimer

You didn't have a way to speak to him then?

Mr. Taylor

No, he would tell us what to do and we'd indicate if we understood or did not understand. You'd nod yes or no. We could indicate by signs to him. They were not set signals, they were just things that everybody understood, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else in basic?

Mr. Taylor

No, basic was pretty bland and just about everybody that went in finished.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go from there?

Mr. Taylor

I went to advanced single engine. In basic, you make your choice, you select your choice. I think every school we went to, you always had to pick your choice, single engine fighter, twin-engine fighter, medium bomber, heavy bomber. And everybody I knew always wanted single engine fighter. So I got sent to single engine advanced training school and that was at Spence Field in Moultrie, Georgia. It was not a real long way from Macon. I had been at Macon in basic and then I just went to another place in Georgia, Moultrie at Spence Field and that's where I graduated. And we went into that little old AT6, Advanced Trainer 6. It was North American Texan. And the Navy used the same plane, the SNJ, and a lot of foreign countries use that same plane for trainers. It was a fine little plane. 650 horsepower. And we had constant control on our prop. We could variable pitch on the prop, and we had flaps and we had retractable landing gear.

Mr. Misenhimer

It's an all-metal low wing I believe right?

Mr. Taylor

Yes, it was. It's a very famous plane.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about your training there then in that.

Mr. Taylor

Well by then we were pretty good pilots by the time we got there. Of course, basic was all Army. It was all Army. We had civilians in primary and after that, everything else was Army all the way through. So primary had civilians but it was the only one that did. Everything else after that was all Army. I forgot to mention that a while ago. But we were assigned instructors and of course, by then, we were getting demerits for one thing or another. We'd have to walk tours and they'd put your parachute on you and you'd have to get out there and walk the flight line for an hour for each tour. So many demerits, you'd have to walk a tour. It was just sort of a useless thing to do but I guess it was called discipline.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of things would you get demerits for?

Mr. Taylor

Not making formation on time or leaving you bed...

Mr. Misenhimer

Okay so they would just harass you different things to give you demerits then.

Mr. Taylor

Yeah, the upper class would, especially in pre-flight when you first got in. We walked what they called the rat line. All the underclassmen had to walk what they called the rat

line. It was an imaginary line that ran down the walk there and you had to walk at attention and make square corners and do all that stuff. Just a lot of that stuff. I think they copied that from the Academies, hazing and all that.

Mr. Misenhimer

In advanced, did you have any gunnery training?

Mr. Taylor

That's when we had our first gunnery and bombs. We dropped bombs, you know, little powder bombs, flour with one pound of charge or something in there. And we had gunnery there. They would have pits with some kind of white powder, lime or flour or something, and when your bullets would hit in there, you'd fly up dust, you'd see that. And we shot a lot of skeet, you know, shotguns. We shot a lot of that in advanced. I think that's where we shot skeet. I really enjoyed that pretty good. You'd just go down there any time and sign out and get you two or 3 boxes of shells and a 12-gauge browning automatic and go out there and start busting them, you know. I remember the first time we tried that, most of us wound up with a whole upper arm just black and blue from the elbow to your shoulder. But we did have gunnery and when we went to aerial gunnery, we had to leave that school. And my school went to Eglin Field, Eglin Field in Florida and Eglin is a tremendous, tremendous reservation. They had several auxiliary fields and of course, they had the big main headquarters there with a big field and all kinds of experimental aircraft and all that. But the field I went to, they just had a barracks and a landing strip and we flew our own planes down there. And our ground crew had gone down in trucks and they carried the ammunition and all that stuff. We had planes that were fitted with one 30-caliber machine gun. And the field I was on had the marks on it

and it was the very field that Jimmy DoLittle had trained his B25 pilots on for that Tokyo raid. And they had the marks on there. They started here and they had to take off by the time they got to the other mark. That was exciting to know that that was the very field that those guys trained on.

Mr. Misenhimer

That would be. Now what kind of plane did you have there? Still the AT6?

Mr. Taylor

Yeah, that's what we were flying, AT6. Also in advanced is the first time we got to fly a tactical plane, which meant a combat version. So in our case, it was a P40, we went to Tifton, Georgia. And we had the P40s there, and one of the ones I flew was the heaviest one they ever made. It had a Merlin engine in there that Rolls-Royce. There were not many P40s that had that but one version did and I flew one of those there and I was scared to death. I was only about half through advanced when I went and because they could only take a few cadets at a time, we just went in small groups. So that was exciting. We had to get 10 hours and I did. I got 10 hours and did okay.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have an instructor flying with you or was it strictly solo in there?

Mr. Taylor

No, no, you were strictly solo. They said there it is now get in there and rev it up and look over that instrument panel and take off. Of course, by then we knew how to let flaps down and raise the wheels and control the pitch of your propeller and RPMs, and we knew how to do all that by then. But I was only half through. I was just about half through advanced when they sent me, which is kind of crowding it I thought.

Mr. Misenhimer

That P40's a lot hotter airplane too than an AT6.

Mr. Taylor

Woo! Tell me! Yeah, it is.

Mr. Misenhimer

I mean, that's a big jump. That's a big change.

Mr. Taylor

It was a tremendous jump, yes it was. But as a P40, it's kind of frowned on but it was a great airplane. I mean, it really kept us in the war for a couple years.

Mr. Misenhimer

They used them for a long time. Now when you were in advanced, what uniform did you have now? Had you gotten a cadet uniform?

Mr. Taylor

No, we never did. We never got a cadet uniform. Our uniform was just what the enlisted men wore. But our ensigna was a little bit different. It had that little wings and prop crossed. That signified cadet.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your pay then as a cadet?

Mr. Taylor

\$105 a month but they took \$30 out for your rations. So we, in effect, got \$70 a month.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's still a lot better than 21 a private got though.

Mr. Taylor

Was it?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yeah.

Mr. Taylor

We had to pay for our insurance and I never had an allotment. I was just a single boy, you know, with no allotment. I think finally I got an allotment for savings bonds. That was sending savings bonds every month home for my mother, safe keeping to my parents actually.

Mr. Misenhimer

What are some other things that happened in advanced?

Mr. Taylor

Well, it was uneventful. I can't remember anything exceptional there. We had a few German prisoners on camp and we'd run into them. We'd see them marching and they really wanted to put on a show for us. It was goose step and all that stuff, you know, just really showing out. And they kept the grounds, and I mean they kept it immaculate. And they were allowed to work and they could get a nickel an hour, thirty cents a day or something. I don't know and they could spend that money at the PX, and those that didn't want to work, they could just lay around in their quarters or in their yard. They had them fenced in, but I think most of them wanted to work cause that was certainly therapy. And they kept all the buildings, the grounds, the landscaping and all that.

That's what they did there at Moultrie Field.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now on your gunnery training on your AT6 I'm assuming, did you shoot at ground targets or at sleeves behind another plane or what did you shoot at?

Mr. Taylor

We had ground targets that we shot at of course and then when we went down to Eglin Field is when we got into the aerial part and we would fly out over the Gulf so our bullets would not be falling on civilians. They'd pull a target of a screen and the wires were covered with a fabric and then woven into a screen. And then each plane had bullets the tips that were dipped into kind of a wax paint that when it hit the screen, it would leave some evidence of who shot it, see. Red or blue or yellow or black, and when they'd come down, they would know how many hits each cadet got.

Mr. Misenhimer

And did you say you had one 30-caliber on the plane?

Mr. Taylor

Yeah. It fired through the prop.

Mr. Misenhimer

Through the prop, okay it wasn't on the wings. What else happened there?

Mr. Taylor

Just uneventful. We were winding down, we were getting ready to graduate and we just did that, you know. And of course you got a score and along the way, we had learned to shoot the 45 semi automatic pistol. The Tommy gun, the 45 Tommy gun I think I scored highest with that then I did anything. We did very little rifle. I don't know that we ever shot a rifle and I don't remember if we had a little machine gun on the ground or not. I just remember the skeet shooting with a 12-gauge, the 45, and what they called those

little Thompson Submachine guns, Tommy gums. We did train with those. I really don't remember where. Probably most of that was in advanced.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now when you were in advanced or basic or any time, did you get a chance to go into the towns, get the passes and that sort of thing?

Mr. Taylor

We did go in but not often, not often. I usually had a girl in every...I did not at basic. I did not at Macon. I don't know what happened at Macon. I wasn't out enough I guess.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you'd find a girlfriend in each town, huh?

Mr. Taylor

Yeah, yeah, I was pretty much into girls then. Not in high school at all. I did not date in high school. I had very strict parents so I was not permitted to date. I had girlfriends, you know, at school. I'd see her in class and we'd sit together at ball games but that was about it.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you would visit these towns, were the civilians friendly or how did they treat you?

Mr. Taylor

Everybody loved the Servicemen back then. We were very well accepted everywhere.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you finally finish your advanced then and graduate?

Mr. Taylor

December 5, 1943. I would think every cadet in class 43K graduated on the same day.

Our date of rank is all the same, December 5, 1943.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you were what, a second lieutenant?

Mr. Taylor

Second lieutenant, by then we had a few flight officers. There were a few commissioned officers who went through training in my classes. We had a number of them at Ocala. I told you it was the country club of the southeast and they got their choice of where to train so they would pick Ocala cause it was just known as just really nice. I don't remember seeing any in basic training but there were a few that graduated in my class at Ocala. And there were a few flight officers and we never understood why they had flight officers, but it was just sort of an insult that the kid didn't make second lieutenant, he was a flight officer, which was comparable to a junior grade warrant officer. You know, he was not a commissioned officer but once they got to combat it wasn't long until they promote them to second lieutenant. I don't know why they did that.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was your graduation ceremony?

Mr. Taylor

I think they let us have 2 or 3 invitations but nobody came to mine. And I just sat there and I do remember that at midnight from December 4th to December 5th at midnight, we quite being cadet and became lieutenant. And our serial numbers, we got a new serial number. We had been given a uniform allowance. They had rooms set up there with uniforms and tailors would come out there to measure you and take your order and we

had ordered our uniforms and insignia and stuff like that. We were ready, and Sunday morning we got up and we marched down there and we got our wings pinned on and they called us up, you know. And you were given your commission and after the ceremony, the first GI to salute you, you were supposed to give them a dollar so there's always some GIs standing around to salute for the dollar. It was kind of fun, and I remember the very afternoon that I graduated, I still lacked some time. I had to go and fly that afternoon after my graduation.

Mr. Misenhimer

Any time up to now had you had a leave to go home or anything?

Mr. Taylor

No, not until we graduate. I had not been home. I had not seen a member of my family.

Mr. Misenhimer

So then when you graduated what happened?

Mr. Taylor

We got 10 days delay in route. We got 10 days. We were told to report to the next station which, in my case, was Tallahassee, Florida. It was a fighter pilot replacement pool down there, a big one, in Tallahassee. We were to report there on a certain date and then we did. And then after about 2 weeks, we got 10 more days and came home again, twice there.

Mr. Misenhimer

So what all happened at Tallahassee?

Mr. Taylor

Not much. We sat around and read manuals and stuff like that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now you were saying that you got another 10-day leave after that and went back home and then you came back down to Tallahassee?

Mr. Taylor

Yeah, and was assigned to a P40 unit in Sarasota, Florida and we were there February and March and most of January was either... You know in Tallahassee, they sent us home for 10 days just to get us out of the way, you know. They didn't have to feed us.

Mr. Misenhimer

What unit was that, the P40 unit? Did it have a number or name?

Mr. Taylor

I think they called it the 98th something. They had what they called 2 squadrons there and they did have a designation. I was in the 98th.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do there?

Mr. Taylor

We just flew the P40, just tactical training in the P40. We were learning combat moves. We had gun cameras. I'm trying to think, aerial gunnery on camera, on film you know.

What do they call it?

Mr. Misenhimer

The aerial gun camera they called them.

Mr. Taylor

Gunnery camera! That doesn't sound right.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was this the first time you had flown a P40 since that time in cadet?

Mr. Taylor

Well, we had 10 hours in advanced.

Mr. Misenhimer

And this was the first time since then.

Mr. Taylor

Oh, yeah, and by then you just jumped in there and went right on. It was pretty easy transition, you know, cause we had been through that advanced. The AT6 had all our hours there and 10 hours in the P40 so it really was not near the jump that it was the first time we got in the P40 when you're halfway through flying school. At least I was half through.

Mr. Misenhimer

About how many total hours did you have when you finished advanced?

Mr. Taylor

I think around 200.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now when you were there training in the P40, did you have instructors there?

Mr. Taylor

Yeah, we did. We had instructors but they just told you what to do. They would fly a plane and lead you and you'd go into formation. They would observe. Maybe an instructor would take 3 of us up and we'd fly a formation of 4 and he would see how you did. We would even fly on instruments and we would have someone fly alongside and watch. We were blind. We were flying blind, just on instruments only. They had a way

to put paper in your goggles and tear a little hole like a bifocal down there and that's all you could see was just that little hole. And you could see your instrument panel but you couldn't see out.

Mr. Misenhimer

Had you had instrument training before?

Mr. Taylor

Oh, yeah, we had quite a bit of instrument training in the link trainer you know.

Mr. Misenhimer

In the link trainer?

Mr. Taylor

Yeah, and even in the AT6, we had a little bit of actual instruments in the AT6. And we did, you mentioned radio, we did have radio in those AT6 and we could fly the iron beam, you know the radio beam, and we could fly over the Cone of Silence and things like that. We knew how to select what station we wanted to tune in on our little radios. We did have quite a bit of radio in advanced. And of course, we went on into the P40s there at Sarasota and the radios were far superior to what we'd been used to.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now there when you were P40 training, your instructors, were they combat veterans?

Mr. Taylor

Some were, some were not.

Mr. Misenhimer

And did they show you a lot of things to do from a combat standpoint?

Mr. Taylor

Mostly just maneuvers, no, not really. Not really. Just different maneuvers, just really getting you familiarized with the P40, what it could do and what you could do and what not to do. But no, they didn't teach much about gunnery and approaches and trick maneuvers and stuff like that. They didn't go into that, no.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long did that last?

Mr. Taylor

2 months, 2 and a half months I think.

Mr. Misenhimer

So somewhere around the first of April '44?

Mr. Taylor

Uh, huh.

Mr. Misenhimer

And then where did you go?

Mr. Taylor

I went to Camp Patrick Henry. Well, of course we went back to Tallahassee. You go through Tallahassee, you know, either way. Went back to Tallahassee and after a few days, we got on a train and we wound up at Camp Patrick Henry which is out rural Virginia near the coast. And from there, it was 71 of us that boarded the ship, the HH Butner. It was an Army transport, a fairly new ship, and we had 5,000 men in the hole. We had about 95 nurses on there and they had about 71 fighter pilots and then the ship's crew. And we left Hampton Roads, there, we left out of Virginia alone and we went down through the south Atlantic and all the way around to the South Africa, went around

the Cape. And then on up to Bombay, India, and we were alone the entire time. And we would zigzag and they'd change the course every 15 minutes I believe. We just kind of zigzagged to keep from setting a constant heading. We were not allowed to throw anything overboard except they dumped everything at midnight I think. They would dump everything. All the refuse was just dumped over at midnight and we were not allowed to have any lights on the ship. Everything was blacked out. We had to stand watch. We were assigned watch in the holds, we would have to go down and stand watch in the holds. And I think we pulled like 4 hours a day.

Mr. Misenhimer

This is the officers, the fighter pilots.

Mr. Taylor

Uh, huh, they used us, yeah. Of course, the men in the hold, they had their own officers, too. They had their own officers with them but they used us, too. It wasn't just a bunch of enlisted men without any officers.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were the accommodations like on that ship?

Mr. Taylor

The men had it pretty tough. They were in those canvas hammocks, you know, they would be like 4 high. You know, just sandwiched in there. I mean they barely had room to turn over without hitting the guy above them. It was just like 18 inches apart or something like that. It was just really claustrophobic. Poor guys that suffered with that must have been miserable. The crap games going on every aisle. Crap games were going, man. And the officers got leave, well I guess we all got leave at Cape Town,

South Africa and the officers got to board a train and go out to a country club some 50 miles away I guess and that's what I did. I got my little nurse and went out there. We were not allowed to fraternize on that ship, not at all but we were with the nurses. We were with them sitting around, eating, walking the decks, but you were not allowed to fraternize. But we did, we kind of paired off anyway. And I said the thrill of the day was the occasional knee bump under the table when you're playing hearts. That was called the thrill of the day. You get to bump your girl's knee. But you were not allowed to touch her. You couldn't hold hands. You were not allowed to show any fraternization at all. But I took my girl. I couldn't hardly wait to get her off that ship. I thought, "Boy, this is gonna be fine tonight." And she got drunk and threw up on me. (laughing) We were coming back on the train. It was a country club and a dance and I don't know what she had eaten but it was white. It was white, I remember that. She threw up, I was holding her on the train, she just kind of passed out there laying in my arms, you know. And during the ride home, of course we were just in there like sardines, you know the guys and the girls we just all packed in that train, and she threw up on me. (laughing) Old Doc Mulder. Her name was Dorothy Mulder. And she is now dead. I never heard from her after we got back but I have heard from her closest friend and I still get Christmas cards from her nearly every Christmas. I haven't called her in a long time. I guess I should do that. My closest friend sort of picked her out and I picked her closest friend out. But my closest friend, he don't like to even remember that (laughing) but I do. It was fun to me.

Mr. Misenhimer

Some of the things you do when you were in the Service. So how long were yall there at Cape Town?

Mr. Taylor

Overnight. We had to take on supplies I guess. We were probably there a couple days. We went past Madagascar, which is a large island off the coast of Africa. I think we must've gone between Africa and Madagascar. And there was a woman, sort of a Kate Smith singing 'God Bless America' as we slid by on the ship. And it was broadcast to us there through loud speakers.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of accommodations do you have as an officer on the ship?

Mr. Taylor

Well, better than the men in the hold of course. We had built in permanent bunks that were kind of built out of iron pipe and had about a nice 6-inch mattress in each one. We had adequate blankets but there was no closet. There was no storage place. All you had was just room on the floor to set your barracks bag. We just had to live out of that barracks bag, and it was just on the floor at the end of your bunk. And I think our bunks, we were like 3 high in there but we had plenty of room. We were like two and a half feet apart. You could sit up in there, in your bunk, without hitting the guy over you.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many in a room?

Mr. Taylor

I guess it was 6 or 9 in each little compartment there.

Mr. Misenhimer

And how about the latrine or the head, was it in the room?

Mr. Taylor

No, no, we had a community thing down there and the same with eating. We got to sit. We were seated. When we went to mess, we were seated in the officer's lounge, and I remember you'd have to hold your bowl there and you'd have to tilt it with your hand as the ship would roll. And you would lock your feet on to the legs of the chair across the table from you, you know, to keep from sliding away. I had forgotten about that.

Anyway, we ate mixed. You could sit where you wanted to. The girls were in there eating with us, you know. Sometimes we'd sit with some of the crew, sometimes the girls, sometimes just with other guys. We were seated at a table that probably had 6 or 8 down each side.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have waiters that waited on you?

Mr. Taylor

Yes, we did, we sure did. And they were all black. You know, back then we were segregated and those mess boys were all black.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now this was a Navy ship, right?

Mr. Taylor

Navy operated but they called it Army Transport. It was USS HH Butner and I've read about that ship in articles. That's all it did. It just went back and forth transporting personnel. That's all it did.

Mr. Misenhimer

How fast was it?

Mr. Taylor

I don't know but above average.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long did the trip take?

Mr. Taylor

It took about a month.

Mr. Misenhimer

Any seasickness along the way?

Mr. Taylor

We had, of course, pilots were pretty well immune by then to any motion sickness, but we had one guy that was sick from the day we left port until we landed. He was sick every day. He unfortunately was killed in one of his early combat missions.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you land, then?

Mr. Taylor

We landed at Bombay. And we went into British quarters there, which was very, very different than what we had been used to. We met up with a lot of the British people and the fighter pilots, we just went together and everybody else went separate ways. Nurses went one way, we went one way, all the Army the ground forces, they went some way. Eventually, we were put on a train. I guess we were in Bombay a week or 10 days and then we boarded a train bound from Bombay for Karachi and that train ride was, we were like, they called it second class. But it was I guess maybe a 3-day train ride that stopped

at every whistle stop. And the Indians were all over that train and when it would stop, they would fly off of there and when they'd blow that whistle, they'd fly back on. And they were on the top, hanging on the sides, inside they had all the cars filled. And just all over that train like flies on horse dung, you know. They were just all over it, outside, just every way. We thought that was amazing. There was 6 of us to each compartment on the train. We had just a very small compartment and it was sort of a fixed seat that was hung on a chain that would let down. The 3 on the bottom, they had 1 on each side and 1 at the back and then above that was another bunk but it was just a slab, just sort of an upholstered slab it what it was. And you would fold them up, the top ones and you'd sit on the bottom ones all day and then when it would come time to go to bed, you'd let the top ones down and 3 guys would jump up there and 3 guys would stay on the bottom. And when we got to Karachi, we went out to Maleer, desert. It still was English housing and of course Americans didn't have anything over there. We were just there as their guests so we used their facilities. And we stood out there in that desert waiting on a call and my closest friend and I, we got a place assignment to go into town and be assistant club officers at this big allied officers' club that was operated by a major, a United States Army Major. And he said, "I need some help. Send me 2 lieutenants." So Kirk and I got to bid. We drew straws. There were 7 guys that were there and we drew straws and darned if Kirk and I didn't get it. And we were there about a month. We were in danger of losing our flight pay. You could go 3 months but you had to get 12 hours within that 3 months and we were to the last day. Kirk and I got our flight pay and the other guys lost theirs. They were out there in that desert and old Kirk and I was in there living in this country club and having all these servants. We had a bunch of Chinese that lived in the

servants' quarters behind. They took care of the cooking concession. They had a cooking concession and then we had the laundry. The Indians did laundry. They were the dobie wallers. I believe they called them dobie. And they did the laundry. We had a crew that just kept the grounds. We had just a lot of servants. We even had personal, we had a personal bearer that took care of major and then he took care of us. And he would want our used razor blades. We'd ask him, "Well, how do you shave with them?" Well, he'd hold them with his 3 fingers and a thumb and just rake down his face. That's the way he showed us how. Your first 3 fingers and your thumb and that's the way he'd use those razor blades and just naked. (laughing) Anyway, he never did seem to get cut. We were there about 3 weeks and we got behind the rest of the boys because they were beginning to get sent on up to China and we fell a little bit behind them. And we went out, and we had 10 hours. They give you 10 hours out at a station they call Landhi, L-a-n-d-h-i and we got 10 more hours out there that we would fly combat tactics. We flew A36, P51A, and P40s. That's what they had there. They were all just worn out planes but they were still flyable. And I flew over the hump in a P40. We left in P40s and we got rained in somewhere and we were playing poker and one of the guys asked, he said, "Taylor, you want to fly a P51 to China?" And I said, "You bet." And I really had mixed emotions. I wanted to fly the P51 but I hated to leave Kirk. But I did, I left Kirk, and by then I had some P51 time. I had that P51A and the A36 time and also I had flown a P51B over on the Karachi air base while I was getting my 12 hours in. So I had checked out in a P51 and at the first landing, the guy behind me overran me and totaled both planes, brand new plane. I was sick. And we had to go back to Calcutta and we got called in on the carpet and I think he got busted. I got a reprimand and he got busted. I

think they sent him to transports or something like that, reassigned him or something. They didn't take his commission but they other 2 guys, there were 3 of them, you know. So the other 2 guys, they consoled me, they said, "Hey, don't worry about him. He's a gold brick anyway. He just messes up." And they really didn't speak very well of him at all and they just barely knew me.

Mr. Misenhimer

But neither one of you were hurt, huh?

Mr. Taylor

No, we weren't, that's right sure weren't.

Mr. Misenhimer

His prop just chewed up the tail on your plane or what?

Mr. Taylor

No, his wing. His wing caught my tail and knocked the tail off and went up the back as far as it could and eventually, it couldn't go any further so it just jack knifed and turned right into me, and his prop chewed my wing off all the way up to the landing gear, coming up that wing at me, you know. And that prop's still flying, you know. And we were just sitting there stunned. They had to tow both planes off cause they were still on the landing gear. The landing gear was fine, and once they pulled them apart, they just towed them off.

Mr. Misenhimer

But he just didn't get stopped in time and hit you from the rear then.

Mr. Taylor

He landed too close behind me. He landed way too close behind me. It was just poor judgment on his part. He just didn't have his spacing out there right.

Mr. Misenhimer

It really was not your fault at all. Is that right?

Mr. Taylor

No, it was not.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did they give you the reprimand for then?

Mr. Taylor

Just for being involved in an accident.

Mr. Misenhimer

So then you had to go back to Calcutta, right?

Mr. Taylor

Yeah, we flew back, they sent us back to Calcutta then I left from there again and flew over the hump.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of plane this time?

Mr. Taylor

A P40. It was about 16 P40s. They had one B25 to lead us over. They had a navigator on board so it was really a pretty day and we took off and they carried us over the hump in that P40.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was it flying over the hump?

Mr. Taylor

Oh, it was fine. It was easy. No problem at all, just a bright clear day. Went over there middle of the afternoon as far as I remember. And the guy that landed next to me was a full colonel.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you were a what, a first lieutenant or second lieutenant at this point?

Mr. Taylor

I was second lieutenant.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you land then?

Mr. Taylor

We landed at Kunming and I was there one day and overnight and they said get in the plane. I never knew where I was after I started flying over there. I never knew where I was until I got home. I was lost the whole time. They said, you know, follow the guy in front of you. Okay. So I did and we flew from there to Kweilin and I flew one mission out of Kweilin, I think I was there maybe 3 days, flew one mission out of Kweilin and they abandoned the base and blew it up. And I guess I was one of the last ones there. I was among the last. And we flew down to Letuchow, which was next stop down. It was sort of a string of bases running north and south in there. It was Kweilin, Ling Ling?...not it was Hing Yang? and then Lingling? and then Kweilin. And then on south of that was Lusho?. Kweilin was noted for what they call those vertical mountains, you know look like ice cream cones that spring straight up in the air. That was Kweilin. Those things were all around the base there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now your first mission you flew up there, what did that mission consist of?

Mr. Taylor

I just went with a guy and we went up this river valley and it was overcast. And it was like flying in a tunnel. We couldn't see out from the mountains and we couldn't see out the top for the overcast. We flew up this river and we got to a fork in the river and we flew up that fork in the river and went up there and shot something, boats, some little boats at a dock Sampan and we just shot them up and turned around and came back the same way we went up there. And I think the next day, we flew our planes off of the base and they blew it up. I really don't remember very clearly about that. But I wound up being assigned to the 75th Fighter Squadron, which was known as Tex Hill's squadron. He was the first commander of that squadron. He had been a flight commander of the Panda Bears, which was the Second AVG Squadron.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was he still there at the 75th when you were there?

Mr. Taylor

In and out. He had been to group, you know, and I think that he was group commander then, but he was not the CO when I went to 75th. But he had been there and following him was Johnny Allison. The name of the 75th is the Tiger Sharks, Flying Tiger Sharks. Tex Hill was the first CO. The second CO was Johnny Allison, who is now Major General retired. Tex is I guess Brigadier General retired but he's always known as Colonel Hill. He was just always known as Colonel Hill. He made General after World

War II during the Air National Guard. I think he commanded maybe one of the first jet squadrons we ever had.

Mr. Misenhimer

Could be.

Mr. Taylor

But anyway, he was always known as Colonel Hill. We all called him Tex. You know he was really an entertainer and he's getting pretty feeble now and I knew him when he wasn't so feeble. I know his wife as well as I know him really.

Mr. Misenhimer

I met her the other day.

Mr. Taylor

She was a University of Alabama Beauty and still a pretty woman. I had the same fortune. I had a beautiful wife and she died December, Pearl Harbor day a year ago and was buried on her birthday, her 81st birthday. And I kept her home, she had Alzheimers 15 years and I kept her home until her death.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yeah, that's tough.

Mr. Taylor

She was my college freshman sweetheart and we parted ways when I left school and 6 years later, we re-met. And she was available and I was eager and boy, it didn't take long. Within 13 months, we had a baby. 13 months later, we had our first little boy. We have 3 sons.

Mr. Misenhimer

So when you got to China then, they assigned you to the 75th Fighter Squadron.

Mr. Taylor

Yeah, I did and then I was detached to the 76th. I flew some missions with the 76th Squadron down at Luzo. The 75th was based at Chichking.

Mr. Misenhimer

I missed part of that, so when you got there...

Mr. Taylor

I joined the 75th, which was based at Chichking the end of September '44. and some of the squadrons already had P51s by then but we did not. We got ours in October, the end of October is when the 75th got brand new P51s. There was some P38s in China. They called them, I believe the 449th Fighter Squadron, at P38s. There were some rigged as photo recon P38s. They had photo recon. There was not one on my base that I ever saw. We used the P51s because the P51 had such great range, so much better than the P40. P40 could go about 800 miles. We could keep that thing up about 4 hours, 4 hours or 4 and a quarter hours was about the max that you could keep the P40 in the air using auxiliary tanks and all that. And I did that on a couple of occasions out of Luzo. We would fly down to Canton, which is down near Hong Kong and we took 2 flights down there. Incidentally, I got separated from Kirk but lo and behold, a couple of weeks after I got there, here he shows up in the same squadron. And (laughing) it's just amazing how our paths had crossed. He stayed in and he was recalled during the Korean Conflict and he stayed in and retired a full Colonel and after that he worked for Boeing for about 12 years. He has a great retirement. He was born exactly a month after I was and just about 40 miles away and our lives have been very, very parallel although we never knew each

other until we got on a train headed for Nashville for Classification Center back on March 10, 1943. And he was living there in Memphis and making all the little honky tonks just like I was. But somehow we never met until we were called into the cadet. And since then, we have remained fast friends, and still are. He retired and lives in Spokane but we e-mail almost every day. And of course we see each other at reunions often. And we have kept up with each other. He has no children but he knows mine and just almost like family.

Mr. Misenhimer

Good. Tell me some more about your experiences there with the 75th.

Mr. Taylor

Okay, we were based at Chichking and I got a damage. I damaged a plane in one of my early, early missions. And after that, we just didn't find the Japs. They were just pretty much out of sight. They stayed out of our range as much as they possibly could, so I really never had much air-to-air combat. The day I was shot down was a disaster.

Usually, our targets were ground targets of course, and we'd just go out strafing usually.

We were searching for trains or shipping. In our case, it was both. I never saw a train to shoot at in combat. Some of the squadrons north of us did, but I never saw one. We saw trucks. Occasionally, we'd find a truck or something out there or we'd see where we thought some maybe gas was stored or something like that. Just go around shooting up the airfield or whatever, you know, just targets of opportunity. We would go assault maybe a radar station or something. Sometimes we had specific targets. Other times, we really didn't. Just go out and search and destroy, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many would be on a fighter sweep that way?

Mr. Taylor

We never flew up more than 16 planes and often 8 or 12 or 4 even. And on occasion as few as 2. We'd send two guys out to do something. But we usually had about 16 planes that were close to flying condition. When we got our P51s, that is what had, 16.

Mr. Misenhimer

How often would you go out? Every day?

Mr. Taylor

No, generally we would be assigned every other day weather permitting. And I noticed that we wouldn't fly every day, we'd fly every other day and sometimes we'd fly 2 missions in one day, 2 long missions in one day. But then you'd have a couple of days off sometimes 3 depending on the weather. Sometimes you wouldn't fly for 2 weeks.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many total missions did you fly?

Mr. Taylor

I had 14.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you live in there?

Mr. Taylor

We had wooden barracks and they were not bad, really not bad. They were kind of cut into a pretty steep hill there, kind of like stair steps that you could notch in the side of a mountain and we would have a barracks there. And that's pretty much the way we were. The mess hall was kind of at the bottom of the hill and we had about 2 barracks above

that, and then they were 3 or 4 long they would be. And some of the guys, they finally got down to tents. I was in prison camp by the time they got to tents but they had to live in tents for a while. There was no bed of roses over there.

Mr. Misenhimer

How far were you from the coast?

Mr. Taylor

A long way, a long, long way.

Mr. Misenhimer

So when you were looking for boats, you're looking for them on rivers then.

Mr. Taylor

Oh, yes, yes, rivers. We flew to Canton twice. I flew there twice. I'm sure they made more trips than that but we followed B25s down there. We went to stay at the biggest mission they had to date. I think they had about 40 bombers and 40 fighters up together on one of those missions, and that was the biggest air armada they had ever had I think in China, and I was on that. We flew to Canton and even on out to Hong Kong, you know, off the coast there. And the B25, they hit some shipping out there, some big ships, and we were there to protect them and that was our thing. Of course, we shot up a little bit, too. You know, we had our 6 50-calibers you know and we just barely had enough gas to get there and back in a P40 by conserving it.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were in a P40 at that point okay.

Mr. Taylor

Still P40s, yeah, but once we got those P51s, you know, I guess it just about almost doubled the range. It greatly increased it. I don't know how much but a lot.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now on that raid there with the B25s, did you encounter any enemy planes?

Mr. Taylor

No, uh, uh.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was your base every bombed by the Japanese or attacked by the Japanese?

Mr. Taylor

Just about every night. They would come over and drop these bombs right down the middle of the runway. Of course, there was nothing there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you all go up to fight them or anything?

Mr. Taylor

We would send a plane up but it's almost impossible to find them, almost impossible to see them at night.

Mr. Misenhimer

You didn't have the night fighters with the radar and stuff like that.

Mr. Taylor

Well, yeah, there were some in China. They had what they called a P63, and it was I think one came to our base one time. It was not our plane. I don't know but I think it came through there. As a matter of fact, a lot of planes came into Chichking. There was a Chinese/American composite wing of P40s there, about 3 squadrons and they had

American pilots flying with Chinese pilots, and they called it a CACW, Chinese American Composite Wing. But we didn't know them. They were housed separately from us but we were on the same base. And I knew some of the guys later on, and we even had a B29 to come in there once. And transports and B25s would come in there real often, even B24s on occasion.

Mr. Misenhimer

What material was your runway?

Mr. Taylor

Gravel.

Mr. Misenhimer

I've seen pictures of the Chinese building those with hand laborers. Did you ever see?

Mr. Taylor

They pretty much all did that and they had those giant rollers they rolled that thing down with human labor and they just had endless supply of labor. I mean they made the gravel with hammers. I mean they'd sit there with a hammer breaking big rocks into little rocks. And a little basket on the end of a yoyo pole, you know, and that's the way they hauled it. And it's just amazing how primitive that was.

Mr. Misenhimer

You didn't use that Marsden Matting, that metal matting then.

Mr. Taylor

I landed on those a couple times where it would be real sandy down in Burma. We had some of those and you could see that thing roll up in front of you. It would have a little wrinkle in it you know and it would just run in front of you when the weight of your

plane would cause it to push the slack out and it would just follow a little roll right there in front of you just like a wave in front of a boat you know. It was just right along in front of you. It was really strange to see that. But it was perforated steel spars, you know, and it kept the planes up out of the sand.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do out at Burma?

Mr. Taylor

I was just passing through, just flying through there. I was out there during the monsoon season. That's where I was when the P51 over ended.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were on your way up there from India.

Mr. Taylor

Yeah, I was in route to China but we didn't get there. We just made one landing. We made the next base and that was it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Those runways there at your base, would you have a lot of dust from them? Any trouble with that or the rocks flying up?

Mr. Taylor

Yeah, all of that. All of that, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

There was no way to wet them down or tar them or anything like that, oil them?

Mr. Taylor

Well, it didn't tar. I don't remember them wetting.

Mr. Misenhimer

So just take your chance with the rocks and the dust.

Mr. Taylor

Yes, you did. I don't remember dust being that big of a problem. Sure don't. I remember the first time I landed, I left Kunming and I told you I went to Kweilin. And the first time I landed there, I landed on gravel and I didn't know it. It was about dusk when we got there and I landed and I never heard as much racket in my life. And I thought gosh, I forgot to put my wheels down! Those rocks were just flying up hitting those flaps. Man, it sounded like a hailstorm. Of course, we learned as soon as you can, you get your flaps up as quick as possible to keep the gravel from your tires from damaging your flaps. You'd get them up as quick as you could.

Mr. Misenhimer

How much damage would it do?

Mr. Taylor

Well, it would just ding them up.

Mr. Misenhimer

What's some other things that happened?

Mr. Taylor

Well really my combat experience was not that exciting. I guess the most exciting mission I had was the mission I was shot down.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell us about that.

Mr. Taylor

It was my first mission in a P51, I had some P51 time but not in combat. We went off that morning, it was November 11, 1944 and 16 of us took off and one guy turned back and we were informed by the Chinese that there were some Japanese planes in the area. And we went to these old, I told you about that string of bases down through there Hingyang, Lingling, and Kweilin. And we went to Lingling and they weren't there so half of the planes turned north and the other half turned south. And I was in the set that went north and we found them at Hingyang. And 4 of us went down and 4 stayed up. And there was about 30 or 40 planes in the process of taking off or had already taken off or were trying to take off, and the guys of course we radioed the other boys to turn around and come on to Hingyang. Of course, it took them a while to get there, and I was shooting at the gun emplacements on the runway rather than chasing planes in the air. And eventually, they got me. I was flying directly into their fire and I was lined up on them and they, gosh, they had a bead on me, too. I never knew I was hit, never knew until the engine quit. So my plane quit and I was just on the deck strafing so I pulled up into an immelman maneuver, which is you pull straight up and going back like you're starting a loop but when you get at the top on your back, you rolled over and you're flying upright but in the opposite direction. It gives you a 180-degree turn is what that accomplishes. Well, I was flying right back over the runway, and the reason I did that was because ahead of me lay the river and the town. And I sure didn't want to go into the town, so I did that to avoid going in the town. I might could have gotten enough altitude to have gotten over the town and probably would have been better off. I had a friend that did go down over on that side and he got back. He went down the same day I did. There was a boy that was killed that day and another one got lost and had to bail out of his

brand new P51 and I was captured, so we had a variety of losses that day. When I pulled back over the runway, they got a bead on me and hit me 3 times with explosive shells right up on the canopy and I had to duck down to get out of their range and lost about 300 feet. I probably got up maybe 1200 feet and then I had to give up 300 of that to get out of the gun range, and I had set me up a glide as slow as I dared and that's why I was such an easy target, you know, just up there about 120 miles an hour and I was an easy shot then. And I glided maybe 2 miles away from that field, maybe a mile, not far at all. I finally had to bail out and I didn't get out as quick as I wanted to and I was pretty low when I finally got out. And as a matter of fact, I landed right beside my plane and it was starting to burn. It hit and of course started to burn, not an explosive fire but fairly slow and my parachute just drifted right over on the plane just where I was standing. I of course went to my knees I guess and then I jumped up and my parachute just went right over the plane. I describe it as a shroud over that beautiful broken bird. And I looked down and I saw my little plane broken. It looked so pitiful. What once had been a proud, fighting machine was now broken. It was broken and I was down and soon captured.

Mr. Misenhimer

How high were you when you bailed out then?

Mr. Taylor

Maybe I don't know, maybe 300 feet, maybe less.

Mr. Misenhimer

Boy, and your chute opened, huh?

Mr. Taylor

Oh, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

I wasn't sure that opened that low.

Mr. Taylor

It opened and I remember looking up and thinking well, it worked. That was my thought: It worked. I remember sitting there with that D-ring that has that cable that goes to your chute. I pulled that and I remember sitting there just in the air looking at that D-ring in my hand and the next thing I knew, the chute had opened. I looked up and there it was and I said it worked, I looked back to my hand and the D-ring was gone. And we used to laugh about, you know, when you bail out, you're supposed to hang on to that D-ring. Bring that back. (laughing) But I didn't. I don't know when. It just went.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you didn't have very far to fall in that parachute then cause it must've been...

Mr. Taylor

I didn't, I sure didn't. I just went right in behind that plane, and I was amazed at landing that close to it, you know. So I just took off my harness and we had escape materials, maybe not escape, survival materials in our backpack. We had really a thick back on that chute which was a real heavy felt I guess and it was cut out with little holes cut in for a compass and the chocolate for D-ration chocolate bars, 2 boxes of bullets, 45 ammunition, money, maps, and it was all packed in your backpack, not like a knapsack, but just laid out thin. And it went all the way up and down your back. See that was part of our cushion but it also had our survival gear in there. I had a machete in there and I threw mine right over on the plane and I'm sure it burned with the plane. And I even took my helmet off and threw it over there and then I started running away from the plane

and ran right into the Japanese that were looking for me. There was about 12 of them and I was captured in a matter of 5 minutes, 4 or 5 minutes. I didn't get a mile, I didn't get a half a mile from the plane.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do with your pistol?

Mr. Taylor

I laid down in the grass to try to hide from them. There was very little grass there to hide in, but when they got closer and closer and closer. And I thought I can't stay any longer. I've got to get up, so I jumped up and by then they had me cause they were punching and gouging me and of course, they took my rings and my watch and my pistol. They were fascinated with the red top matches I had in my pocket. They took my cigarettes. Of course we all smoked back then and we had those red top matches that were big old strong sticks. I learned later why they were fascinated with those matches because theirs were made like little old flat toothpicks, just had a little phosphorus on there and they would have to hunt and hunt. It would take about 3 of those together, 3 or 4 together then try to find a place on the side of the box where they could get enough spark. They were just so inferior, what they were using, and ours was so superior. I think it was just shocking to them to see the difference but they were fascinated with my matches, with my box of matches, red top was the brand. I remember that just so well.

Mr. Misenhimer

It's that small box, right?

Mr. Taylor

Yeah, what we call penny box.

Mr. Misenhimer

These were Japanese soldiers that caught you?

Mr. Taylor

Yes, Army. Yeah, Rag Tags, they were just very worn, you know. They lived in the field out there.

Mr. Misenhimer

They didn't threaten to kill you or anything?

Mr. Taylor

No. No, they were just excited and they took me, marched me on into this place and there was a house there. You know, there was a settlement there of soldiers. There was a house and some other couple of buildings around. I don't remember much about how I got from where I was to there but I know I walked. I know that, they marched me. Of course, they tied me up, first thing they did was tie my hands behind my back and then they were punching and gouging, you know, just brutal. They carried me in there and set me on the ground and tied me to a tree. And I thought they were gonna kill me. They were digging a hole nearby which I thought was my grave and there was a guy over there with an ax and he was chopping wood. And of course, my imagination ran away and I was like, gosh, he's gonna cut my head off with that ax. I thought, well, that's it. I know guys get killed and I guess this is my time. I pretty much reconciled there and I was not overly distraught about it but it was just... I gave it my best shot and I guess this is it, but it wasn't it. About dusk they got me up and they started parading me and they took my shoes off, hung them around my neck. One guy threw a horseshoe and hit me in the forehead with it. Everybody saw me wanted to spit on me, all the soldiers. I met a Jap

officer and he had on leather gloves, nice soft leather gloves. He reached over and patted me on the cheek and he said, "Showy baby, Showy baby." Showy was second lieutenant. I don't know how he knew I was second lieutenant but I guess he... Showy. And baby of course meant young. Just young baby. That was the kindest thing I had all day, and they kept that going all night and they carried me across that river about 3 different times, paraded me up and down the street, showing me off to the Chinese trying to impress on them how great they had captured this American pilot, you know. That was very demeaning. They put me in a little unheated room for the night, a very small room, no bed. I was just on, it seemed like, just like a box up there and a just a chest or something. Of course, I was tied and it was real cold. I remember that. I somehow slept through the night, and I got up the next morning and they had a mirror. I looked in that mirror and I didn't even recognize myself. I was so swollen and my face was swollen, bloody, and snot and just everything. I had taken pretty good beatings all that night, and but anyway, they untied my hands and I lifted my hands and they looked like rubber gloves, you know, that you'd blow up. It was just in a strut, swollen in a strut. And I had that ice-cold water and I washed my face and washed my hands there and I really don't remember what happened after that. They put me in a truck, I remember, at night and carried me out somewhere out in a field, to a little old hut out in a field and there were about 8 Japs out there and they had a dog. They had one of these German police dog, we call German police. The dog finally made friends with me, you know, and I sure was relieved because the first night I got there, I could feel his breath. I was blindfolded. I couldn't see him but he was growling and snarling and barking and I could feel his breath. They let him get that close to me. I was terrified. I couldn't see him and you can imagine, no defense,

hands behind you, blindfolded, just nothing. They're a mean little bunch of bastards I'll tell you. Anyway, they kept me there for a couple of weeks and then they put me on a plane and flew me to Hankow, which is where I entered a jail cell in solitary confinement for 2 months. And everybody went through that and the rations were horrible. The conditions were terrible. We didn't get out of that cell. I found out there were 3 other Americans down there and that's what bothered me, was there any other Americans in here? And I thought I could take anything if I knew I wasn't the only one. And it turns out there were 3 other boys in there. There was a Captain Burch and he was a P40 pilot and had been in the Chinese American Composite Wing and then there was a Lieutenant James E. Thomas, and he was a P40 pilot and had been in the 26th Fighter Squadron, and there was Jimmy Mehan, who had been a crewman on a B29. And it turns out he was the oldest one of our entire group. He was over 30, 32 I think. I was 22. So anyway, we were there 2 months in solitary confinement. Once a week, they would let us out to empty out the wooden bucket we used for our latrine, once a week. There was a toothbrush that hung on the outside of the cell and I guess that was for whoever was in the cell. And if they had Chinese, they would have like 8 or 10 in that cell at a time. I was alone. We all were alone in our cells. It was about 6 by 8 feet, something like that. After 2 months, we were taken down to the river docks and there we met 2 more guys, clean and their clothes were clean and they were shaven and their hair was trimmed and they looked great. But they had been prisoners a lot longer than we had and were living together in a place, and the Japs took a lot better care of them for some reason. But they had been through this solitary thing like we had just been through. We got on a river boat and on that Yangtze River, went to Nanking and we got off the boat and got on a train

and went to Shanghai and they put us in trucks and trucked us out to a large prison camp which was called Kiangwan, and that was where there was about 1100 prisoners out there and they were mostly Marines and civilians that were survivors from Wake Island. And there was a principal number of people there in that camp. There was a crew from an Italian ship that had scuttled out there in the river at Shanghai. They just scuttled their boat and got in their life boats and of course the Japanese captured them. I think there was about 80 of those Italian. And then they had the entire compliment from the North China Embassy Guard Peking, and they were there. They were all Marines and Navy doctors and corpsmen and whatever you would have. And they ministered to us, the doctors and the corpsmen did. They came and examined us and treated us. Of course, there was no medication. You know, just kind of come in, look you over and I don't know if they even had any Aspirin. I don't know what they had. Of course, we didn't need much. I mentioned this one guy Thomas. They kept him in the hospital for a good while and he had been pretty sick with dysentery and stuff like that. That was on New Year's Eve of 1944 going into New Year's Day 1945, and when we got out to that camp, they took us to a room in a vacant building, and it was six of us, see. The 4 of us had been down there in that basement jail and met the other 2 men. There was 6 of us, Quiggley and Watts. Quiggley had been the CO of my squadron when he was shot down in August. And the other boy, Don Watts, had been a crewman on a C47 transport and he was shoving out supplies at night and he became entangled in the shroud line and pulled him out so he went out with the supplies. He was captured by the Japs and when they captured him, he was at the river, had taken his pants off, and was putting sticks. He had knotted the end of the legs and was putting sticks in there trying to build him a life

preserver. He was gonna float across the river and they caught him. And he had about 13 puncture wounds from bayonets. Yeah, like I said, they're a mean little bunch of bastards. You know, when they have the upper hand, they get really bold. So that made our six and there were 3 guys in this room when we got there and they were all crewmen from a B29, the same plane. And their plane, their bombs exploded, they dropped their bombs but they exploded when they dropped them and the plane blew itself up. Its own cargo blew it up. And these guys escaped and they don't know what happened to the rest of the crew. So that made 9 of us and then every week or 2 they'd bring one or two more in they had captured somewhere. But these were all officers and they were all pilots and we never saw any more enlisted men. Now that made 5. We had 5 enlisted men. And eventually, they took 4 away from us and left 12. By then, we had gotten to be 12. They had 1 B29 co-pilot and all the rest of us were fighter pilots, P40s or P51s. So we had moved the camp in May. They broke that camp in May and we got on train and they cleared us to Peking. We stayed there a couple weeks, we got on a train and went all the way up to Mukden, all around through Manchuria and down the Korean Peninsula to Pusan. Jumping all over the place. We were there, oh 10 days or so, and they put the whole camp on this one ship and we started away from Korea over to the mainland of Japan. And we landed on a small island just south of the main island Honshu, and there we were debugged and deloused and all that and then we were put on passenger trains, just packed in there and went all the way up through Honshu Island through all those major cities. Tokyo, we went through Tokyo on July 4th and we went to the northern tip and we got on a ferry and went over to Hokaido Island and eventually on up to Soporoo. And then they came in and got the 12 of us out of that big camp. It was a brand new

facility with the buildings and the fences, you know. It appeared to be brand new, very plain and very austere but they were there nonetheless. Came in and called us out by name the next day and put us on a train and we went back down to a northern Army headquarters, which was near Sopor and that's where we wound up at the end of the war, the 12 of us. We called ourselves the Diddled Dozen. And that's about the end of my story. We were there when they dropped the atomic bombs. And of course, we had never heard of the atomic bomb. There was a Major Miki, he was our Liaison and he spoke a little English. And I remember the day he came in, "Do you know atomic bomb?" And we said, "No, we do not know atomic bomb." And we laughed at him and we said, "Hey, yall just now getting the heavy stuff! Just wait!" And he said, "Wonderfully great destruction." Everything destroyed in so many kilometers. All the buildings knocked down in so many more kilometers. Glass broken in another ring of kilometers, you know. He just told about wonderfully great destruction. He told 150,000 dead and still dying and said they don't know what to do. He was just frantic. He didn't know what had happened and we began to look at each other and "This guy's lost his nuts, you know." He's going crazy. We didn't know either. I said 150,000 dead. I don't know how many died in that first blast. That was what he was telling us about. It was phenomenal destruction I'll tell you. And we, of course, have learned since that it really is horrible, and then 3 days later I believe they dropped the 2nd one and that was the end of that. And then they began really wining and dining us. "We want you to go home happy. We want you to look good for your family." You know, they had just completely turned around, you know, and we were just really put out with them for that. We just thought yeah, right. Now you're wining, you know. Why were you so arrogant up until

yesterday. Now you're licking our boot virtually. And they brought us Jap uniforms, new shoes, everything, you know. Of course, we couldn't half wear the stuff. I kept up with mine for a few days and then I just threw it away. I thought I don't want to keep up with this mess, but it would have made some good souvenirs. So we eventually got out of there. They told us that we would be leaving in a few days. They kept promising that we were gonna leave, we were gonna leave, we were gonna leave. Well, it took a month before we ever got out of Japan. After the atomic bombs and after they capitulated, it took us a month. It was September 12th when we finally got away from Japan. Of course, we were up north there and we had to wait on our people to fly in and get us and there were a lot of negotiations going on and stuff like that. Now they came over the first night there and read a statement. And it said, "All the planes you see flying will be American planes. And planes will fly over soon and will be dropping supplies, and they will require to remove the propellers from all their planes." And they told us that. That was in case some of those hot head pilots would run up there and want to take on the war by himself and be a hero or something. So they just had the propellers removed from their planes, and we were carried from where we were to a Navy base, a Japanese Navy base, and they had really fine facilities there. And we got good quarters and we got those good hot baths, you know, all we wanted. Before then, we had just been very limited. I think the 2 months we had been in Japan, we had got one bath. Then we moved into these quarters down there and we could go twice a day if we wanted to. You know, just entirely a turn around. And of course, they were feeding us the best that they could and they were hurting themselves. I remember one of my favorite things was this smoked fish, I guess salmon maybe, but anyway smoked and I thought that was so good. Of

course, we could have eaten anything. We'd have eaten a dead cat, I guess, we were so hungry. But it really turned around and on September 12th, our people came in and we got on board a transport, I guess it was a C46, and we flew to Okinawa and spent the night. I remember we slept out on the ground under the wings of the plane and then they flew us to the Philippines the next day and we went to identification camp there. They brought us in for all kinds of medical, you know everything medical, you know all kinds of examinations. They checked you over inside and out and seeing what was wrong if you needed anything, beginning to give you vitamins and they kept a mess tent open that we could walk to 24 hours a day, any time of night or whatever, go down there and eat. They had something prepared to eat, not what you would want to walk in and order but there was always something to eat because they know we had just been famished for months and months and months. We would eat until we got sick at first but then you get over that. We were issued some uniforms, not very good, not real class A stuff but we were issued some new clothing and they had to identify us. You know, fingerprints and everything and they had to hear from the war department in Washington where our identification was on file, you know our name, rank, serial number, fingerprints, all that and they had to identify us. Not just me tell them who I was and they accepted. They accepted it but it had to be proven, so that kept us there another couple of weeks. And I got on a ship headed home. We got separated. Everybody went a different way I think. Some of them flew out and I don't know what happened to them but I remember when I got on the ship coming home, I was the only one of our bunch on that ship, so I just came across there by myself. And we stopped at Hawaii, I guess for fuel, and then we came on up to San Francisco and went into Letterman General Hospital. And then from there on a

hospital train across a northern route, went through Salt Lake City, I know we went through Chicago and then on down into North Carolina. And they sent me to Swannanoa, North Carolina, which is about 8 miles from Ashville, and it was an Army hospital there. It's now a veteran's hospital, but it was an Army hospital there for tropical diseases. So I wound up there and still had not seen a fellow prisoner that I knew. So from there I got 90 days leave and I went back and I got another 104 days leave, which included 2 weeks at Miami Beach, R&R. And I took my sister with me and from there I was separated and, you know, eventually I was home on TDY for 6 months and had got to the States in October. But I virtually had 6 months leave and I re-met my sweetheart and we married in June and I was separated in August 6th of 1946. So I was on leave from October until August. I really was never on duty. I was just going through hospitals and stuff but I was not sick and I was not being treated for anything. I didn't have any recovery or recuperation or anything else. I was just in the hospital being observed and was going through just a battery of physical exams.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Taylor

I missed a promotion when I was shot down. I kept trying to get that reinstated to first lieutenant. I never did. I would have been captain. If I could have gotten that reinstated, I would have been promoted captain on being released from prison.

Mr. Misenhimer

You got your orders signed by whom?

Mr. Taylor

I don't know who it was.

Mr. Misenhimer

The President?

Mr. Taylor

It could not have been Eisenhower, no.

Mr. Misenhimer

It would have been Truman.

Mr. Taylor

It must've been Truman. It said, "You are promoted to First Lieutenant." And I don't even remember the date of rank on that thing. But anyway, I finally got made first lieutenant, you know, but it was after the fact really. So all it was was just kind of an honorary thing so I could say I was a first lieutenant.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me go back to ask a few questions about your time in the prison camp. When you were in that solitary confinement, how did you find out that there were 3 more Americans in there?

Mr. Taylor

By yelling and screaming. And they were saying, "Be quiet, be quiet." We were not allowed to talk and I was so rambunctious. They had taken my shoes off for one thing. I had a pair of paratroop boots. Some of the pilots had started buying these paratroop boots and I was one that did that. I told you that we left from Patrick Henry and they had a PX over there and you could buy anything you wanted, you know, fountain pens, cigarette lighters, just everything. And I went down there, Kirk and I did, my good

buddy friend, Kirk, we went down and bought us a pair of paratrooper boots cause they were so much cooler than what we were wearing, you know. They were cut in at the ankles and fit real snug. So that's what we bought. So the Japs had taken my boots away from me and I was in there barefooted and I didn't like it. And I was raising cane about that and I also wanted to know if there were any other Americans in there. Well, they came down and unlocked the door. Now the cells were solid masonry with solid wooden doors. They were not bars that you could look out and see, like you think of a jail.

Mr. Misenhimer

No windows at all, huh?

Mr. Taylor

Well, we had a window to the outside. It had a box built around it and it would let light in but you could not see out. And at least my cell did. Anyway, the commandant carried the keys to the cell. Now the guards on duty could not get to you. You were locked in and they were locked out so they'd have to go get the commandant and they came down there and they put me in restraints, in the cell now in solitary confinement, they put me in restraints. But these other guys were yelling, "Be quiet! Be quiet!"

Mr. Misenhimer

The other Americans.

Mr. Taylor

Yeah. I was yelling, "Any other Americans in here?" And they laughed at me because I was so frantic. One guy wrote in his memoirs, he said, "They bring us this nut from Tennessee. His name is J.M. Taylor. We thought he had lost his marbles." (laughing)

But anyway, I had not. They had been broken and I had not, but they'll break you. It was just a matter of time. They'll break you.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of food did you get in the prison there when you were in solitary?

Mr. Taylor

Well I called it slop. Just almost nothing. Just a little rice, a little thin soup usually.

What they called tea was just stained warm water.

Mr. Misenhimer

How often a day?

Mr. Taylor

Twice a day.

Mr. Misenhimer

How much weight did you lose in prison?

Mr. Taylor

I lost about 40 pounds I guess. I went down, of course, I was muscle and bone, nothing.

There wasn't an ounce of fat on me. When I went in there, I was a skinny build and muscular. And of course, we were in top physical condition and only 22 years old, so you can imagine. They didn't have fat kids much when I was growing up. I can't remember but just a couple of guys in school. Now everybody you see is fat. So anyway, I lost 40 of that. I lost down to 125 pounds.

Mr. Misenhimer

Down to what?

Mr. Taylor

Down to 125. My normal weight would be 160, 65.

Mr. Misenhimer

You went to a larger prison in Shanghai. What did they feed you there?

Mr. Taylor

A little bit better, not a lot, but a little bit better. It was, you know, we existed on it but our weight stayed down. We didn't gain back any weight. We'd get Red Cross food packages. I think I got about 3 or 4 and they were designed to be passed out every week. And I got 3 or 4 in 10 months.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now when you were up on the north there when the war got over, how long after the war was over before you saw your first Americans?

Mr. Taylor

You mean besides prisoners.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yeah.

Mr. Taylor

The first free American.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yeah, the first ones coming to get you.

Mr. Taylor

I guess was the day they picked us up, came in in those C46s and picked us up.

Mr. Misenhimer

About a month after the war was over.

Mr. Taylor

Yeah, uh, huh.

Mr. Misenhimer

But now had they dropped you any supplies in the meantime?

Mr. Taylor

Yes, they did. The B29s came over and the Japs were supposed to mark our camps, you know. There was only 12 of us there and they were supposed to put a big, white cross on top of the largest building in the compound. And they supposedly did that. They told us they did. But the B29s did not drop anything, but you know what? They did see us, and this one B29 flew by and dropped something out. The Japanese brought it to us. It was a red sail from a life raft that's on a big plane and it had the rope on there. It had a note that was written on the back of a navigational map or chart and it was weighted with a wrench. And they dropped it out of that B29, the Japs saw it and brought it to us. And I have it in my possession. You talk about a museum piece! I mean that is the real McCoy. I have that map framed. I have it in a picture frame and the caption on there, and this note said, "Hi, fellows. We will be back with supplies soon. We know you need them." And it was signed a Major Vance from the 500th Bomb Squadron, and I ran that guy down. I told you that I had been kind of the one to keep up with our little bunch of POWs. I located them all, I've written newsletters, and I was writing the obituary when someone would die, and I was just sort of the adjutant. I don't know why, but it just kind of fell my lot. And we had a Major Quiggley, who had been the CO of my squadron, we had a Captain Burch, and we had several first lieutenants and several of us were second lieutenants. But after the war, and 50 years later and my kids got grown, I decided I

wanted to locate everybody and I did. But I eventually wound up with this chart and it was signed by this Major Vance Black, and that was the first tangible thing. I remember being so impressed. That was the first tangible thing that we had contact with the free world in over a year, and it had just really meant something to us. And Quiggley kept that map and eventually gave it to me. Now I don't know what happened to the wrench. It got lost in the wayside, but I searched down this Major Black, and come to find out that he was still flying in Korea, was shot down and captured himself and died in prison camp. I thought that was ironic.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yeah, it was.

Mr. Taylor

And I found out from the historian of his group, I eventually found that guy, and I don't know how I did it. But you're just determined. I have a very close friend here who's just a little bit younger than me. He was a corporal over there in India and Burma, and he said, "I guess I was pretty good at it cause I held that rank the whole war." (laughing) And he came home and he became a pharmacist and then later a doctor and later an anesthesiologist. But he went back to just doctor and he's retired now, virtually retired, but very, very close friend. And about me, he says, "Well, I'll tell you one thing, he usually gets what he wants." But I wanted to find that Major Vance and I did. That was one thing he said, "Well, he usually gets what he wants." (laughing) Determination I guess is what he meant. I'm only taking that as a compliment.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did they come back and drop your supplies pretty quick after that, then?

Mr. Taylor

They dropped supplies elsewhere and the Japs took the truck over there to get the supplies, and they brought us back, you know 12 of us there, they brought back like 180 pairs of shoes and just outrageous numbers of supplies.

Mr. Misenhimer

Food, though, too?

Mr. Taylor

Oh, we had toothpaste, toothbrushes, clothes, jackets, pants, everything. And we had a vacant room in this building we were in so we put all the leftovers in there and we were distressed because the Japs were gonna get it. We should have said, "Who cares?" Get what you want and let the rest of them have it, you know. Of course, we were all conservative. We were brought up in the conservative atmosphere our whole life. You know, you waste not, want not. And we were determined that, you know, the Americans need to come in and get this stuff. How are we gonna save this until the Americans can get it back? Of course, they didn't. I'm sure they could care less. Once they left that plane, it was over. And they dropped that stuff in barrels with parachutes but it was not very effective. Stuff came in pretty bent and cut up and I remember the shoes in particular. They had a little can of dubbing stuck down in one boot of each pair, and when those things hit, that little metal can sheared through the side of that boot or the toe or something. It just cut through that leather and nearly every one of them was cut through.

Mr. Misenhimer

I heard that some prisoners were killed by those things falling on them.

Mr. Taylor

Well, I think that was a freak thing and I heard that story myself, and I remember one guy being blamed. The CO was blamed for allowing them to go out, which I think was so unfair.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me ask you, what ribbons and medals did you get?

Mr. Taylor

I just got the usual things. I got no medals for bravery or for outstanding, nothing distinct at all. I have one medal from China, which is the Victory Medal, and I believe they call it the Victory Medal. I can't remember. And I have a POW Medal, which only POW get that. I did not get a purple heart. I should have. I did not get a purple heart. I was not there long enough to get an Air Medal and certainly not a Distinguished Flying Cross. Those are given based on number of missions and in China, you fly 25 missions to get an Air Medal and 50 missions to get a DFC, Distinguished Flying Cross. And most of the combat pilots get those, and with oak leaf clusters but I didn't.

Mr. Misenhimer

In April of '45, President Roosevelt died. Of course, you were in prison at that point.

Did you hear about that at all?

Mr. Taylor

I'm trying to remember. We knew about the invasion, we knew about Europe being over.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was before you were captured. No, I'm sorry. That was in May of '45.

Mr. Taylor

That was in '45. It was about the time Roosevelt died I think.

Mr. Misenhimer

Well, he died April 12th and that was like May 7th.

Mr. Taylor

Yeah, I knew it was close together there. I thought it was. They were both in the spring.

You know, I can't remember how we knew that Roosevelt died. Maybe the Japs told us.

Mr. Misenhimer

I just wondered if they didn't brag about it.

Mr. Taylor

I think they did. I expect the Japs told us to try to demoralize us, cause to them that

would mean a big thing if their Commander in Chief died. Yeah, if Hirihito had died,

they would have been very upset. I guess they told us that. I really can't remember.

That's one thing I just don't remember.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get home with any souvenirs?

Mr. Taylor

I did not get home with any souvenirs except that one, that map and note I have.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yeah, but I mean that you brought home yourself.

Mr. Taylor

No, well this was brought home by Quiggley that was in our group. No, I did not bring

any. Yes, I did. Yes, I did. I've got a spoon. We told the Japs we wanted some ice

cream. They said they hadn't had any ice cream since the war began. The factory shut

down. We said, "Well, open it up." And somehow they made some ice cream and brought it to us and they brought these little spoons and they were real flat. They were kind of square, had a little curve, but basically a rectangle, but they were real flat and stainless steel. And they said, "Please return the spoons." Well, of course, I kept mine. I still have it. Now that would be a souvenir from prison camp. Other than that, I don't know of anything else I had. I had a notebook that they gave us, and pencil, and I recorded events and dates of names and places and I think I told you I had everybody's serial number and rank and their home address and where they were shot down, what plane they were flying. I had just a total document about each person I knew there, and I still have that. And there was this one kid that drew sketches of each one of us, and I have mine that he drew. I have one that a Japanese drew of me and it's pretty good. It's sort of a charcoal sketch on just a big rice paper.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me ask you, did you ever have an experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Taylor

Only those packages that were sent by the Red Cross, and they would have given us one a week but the Japs would not cooperate.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever see any USO Shows anytime?

Mr. Taylor

I never saw one.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now when you were overseas before you were captured, could you get your mail with any regularity?

Mr. Taylor

Yes, we did. Our mail would fly in once or twice a week usually.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were in prison, of course, you didn't get any mail then.

Mr. Taylor

Of course not. And we were not allowed to write out either.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did your parents know that you were a prisoner?

Mr. Taylor

No, they did not. They only knew missing in action for a year.

Mr. Misenhimer

The Japanese did not report who they had captured or anything.

Mr. Taylor

No, they didn't, and when we were all recovered, they got a wire from the War Department saying that your son has been recovered by military personnel and presumably in good health. The next day, they got a letter from the 4th Ferry Command based in Memphis which said, "Dear Mr. and Mrs. Taylor, We regret the recent death of your son, Second Lieutenant James M. Taylor, Jr." And it just about crushed my family. They found out the next day, my aunt lived in Memphis and she went out there and found the next day that this was very much an error and that my name had gotten on the wrong list, and they were sending out this letter to those that were killed and my name had

inadvertently gotten over on the wrong list. And they were telling them that they would be contacted and my personal effects were being held at the Quartermaster in Oklahoma City or Kansas City or somewhere. Stuff like that. I still have all that mail and stuff. My mother saved all the letters I wrote home from overseas.

Mr. Misenhimer

You've had reunions. Is that right?

Mr. Taylor

Definitely have, and I tried to get my POWs to, well they're not my POWs but you know the members of my group...I tried to engineer a reunion. They never would cooperate. Finally, I got my squadron to invite them as special guests. So they became honorary guests of my fighter squadron and they got the newsletters and they would attend reunions when we would have them, some of them would. I think the most we ever got were 6 at one time. Usually one or two would show up and I think 6 is about the most we ever got one time.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got home, did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life?

Mr. Taylor

I didn't have any trouble at all. I mean I knew exactly what to do.

Mr. Misenhimer

You got married.

Mr. Taylor

Well, before that, I was really bored. I was looking, I couldn't find me a girl and I really was looking. And I had lost 3 due to the war, you know, and I never had but 3 really,

really girlfriends. I only had 3 and all 3 of them got married. But my first one was divorcing when I got home. She had had a 3 year, you know, not a good marriage. A war time 3 year marriage that was just not good from the start, no children, no nothing. To me, she was a virgin to me. And I loved her dearly and it just never made any difference. It did at first but it didn't take me long to get over that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you use your GI bill?

Mr. Taylor

I did. I used that on the farm training, not for the training but just for the subsistence. And we were really, really poor there at one spell. We mentioned dairy farms and I told you my dad had been sickly since he was 45 years old, and they needed me. They needed me physically, they needed me emotionally, and they needed me financially. And dad got a little veterans pension. It was either \$50.40 or \$40.50, I forget. And my allowance was like \$97.50 a month and I had 2 little boys and a wife and my parents and the cows, and we all lived off of that plus what little dab we got from our milk. We sold our milk and we were getting some return off that, but not near enough. I mean the cows were barely feeding themselves. I don't know why we... You said you own a dairy farm.

Mr. Misenhimer

Right, I grew up on a dairy farm.

Mr. Taylor

I don't know why, but we weren't big enough. We didn't have enough cows. We had about 12 and we should have had 40. We just didn't have enough cows to pay for the

operation, and the reason we didn't have the cows was because we were limited in acres, you know the pasture and the hay and stuff we just didn't have.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you think of the officers you had over you?

Mr. Taylor

I never saw a bad one.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you know Tex Hill?

Mr. Taylor

Oh, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were in the Service.

Mr. Taylor

No, I did not know him when I was in the Service.

Mr. Misenhimer

And how about John Allison?

Mr. Taylor

No, I didn't know him in the Service.

Mr. Misenhimer

Or Don Lopez?

Mr. Taylor

Yes, I knew Don Lopez. He led the mission I was shot down on.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was his rank there? Was he leader?

Mr. Taylor

I think he was First Lieutenant. I think the highest rank he attained was Operations Officer. I think that was his highest position. He was flight leader for a long, long time. And the guys I knew were just line pilots pretty much. They were the ones I knew, the intelligence officer. They would interview us after each mission. I knew him. Like I said, I was lost the whole time I was there. I never knew where I was.

Mr. Misenhimer

Okay, go ahead.

Mr. Taylor

One of our prisoners was named Harold B. Klota, and he was about 26. He was a little bit older than the youngest of us, a little bit younger than the oldest, but he was sort of the middle range of that. And he was a P51 pilot. He had been shot through the leg on a mission and his plane was disabled and the only way he could get out was to turn it upside down, and he was flying pretty fast of course, in a P51. And he just turned it upside down and just let gravity pull him out of the plane, and when he hit the ground, he hit it with tremendous impact and he compound fractured his leg. And the Jap soldiers just cut his leg off right there with him screaming and begging, pleading not to but they cut his leg off right there in the field where they picked him up. He eventually overcame that. And he got to see a surgeon and they fixed him up, and he had him a little stump there. And they gave him crutches and his spirit was excellent. But anyway, he was from up in Michigan and he had had a failed marriage before the war and had been a Detroit City Policeman or something I think. Anyway, he was kind of a rough character

but slight built, but he had made friends with a family up there, a Polish family. And one of the sons of that family remembered him, and Harold was actually a friend of the father and this son was sort of between him and Harold in age. I mean Harold was between the father and the son in age so he could relate to either way. And this friend is named Bob Gancorse and after the war he finally found me. He got in touch with me some way and wanted to know everything about Harold and just really, really interested. Well, he became permanent on my mailing list and I would always include him with everything I did, and when we were raising funds to get that P40 given to the Air Force Academy, I raised money from my group for that, and he was one of the proud contributors. And he wants to see the graves and he wants to see the plane and everything else and he calls me on the phone. He has been here to see me twice, once just about a month ago. And I thought that was interesting that this guy was just not even related, really but just through a friend, and showing that much interest. And it turns out that he is just a fine person, he and his wife both.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now this Harold that got his leg cut off, he came home from the war, did he?

Mr. Taylor

He came home from the war but he didn't live long. He died kind of an early death, substance abuses maybe. I don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get any kind of pension or anything from your service as a prisoner?

Mr. Taylor

No, I have a 10% veteran's disability, and having been a POW, I get all of my eye and dental needs, you know, that's just an automatic.

Mr. Misenhimer

I knew there were certain benefits. I just wasn't sure what they were.

Mr. Taylor

And I do go to a podiatrist once a month and the VA picks up that tab.

Mr. Misenhimer

You have trouble with your feet then?

Mr. Taylor

Yeah, a long time, from the Service. You know, back in the Service.

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