

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

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

**Interview with  
Mr. Arthur Burry  
15<sup>th</sup> FG 45<sup>th</sup> Fighter Sqd.  
Down at sea**

## Interview # 1312 with Arthur A. Burry

February 17, 2005

My name is Braynard Parrish and I am taking the interview of Arthur A. Burry. We are at the Bethany Lutheran Church in Fredericksburg, Texas on February 17, 2005. I am taking this interview for the purpose of the oral history project of the National Museum of the Pacific War. I certainly thank you Mr. Burry for being willing to give this interview.

Arthur Burry: My pleasure.

Parrish: Just go ahead and say a few words.

Burry: I just want to thank everybody that is involved in this. It sounds like really a fantastic project.

Parrish: Thank you very much, Mr. Burry. Where were you born?

Burry: I was born in Rocky Ford, Colorado.

Parrish: When were you born?

Burry: March 28, 1924.

Parrish: What did your parents do?

Burry: Best I can remember because I was only with them 3 years. They were farming people and at one point in time when I was about 3 years old Mother was killed in an automobile accident. Things did not work then the way they do now. They did not ask if you wanted to go to an orphanage. They just came and took us and put us in an orphanage.

Parrish: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

Burry: Yes, Sir, there were nine of us altogether. I was third from the youngest.

Parrish: Where was the orphanage located?

Burry: It was located in Davenport, Iowa. That is where the folks who were going to be my adopted parents came and saw me and liked what they saw. They did take me and gave me a very, very good home, excellent people.

Parrish: What were their names?

Burry: Earnest and Irene Burry.

Parrish: Where did you go to school?

Burry: Actually, I went to school in the Davenport High School district because they lived there in Davenport. I was taken before I actually was in school. I did go to school all the way in the Davenport High School District.

Parrish: When did you enlist or join the Armed Forces?

Burry: November of 1942. I went to De Moines at Fort De Moines up there and enlisted in the Air Force.

Parrish: Where were you or do you remember where you were when Pearl Harbor occurred?

Burry: Yes, one of my friends and I were in Clinton, Iowa which was about 60 miles from Davenport. We were just goofing off. It was a Sunday. We stopped at a bowling alley and heard on the news what had happened. So then we went home.

Parrish: You say you enlisted in the Air Force?

Burry: Yes.

Parrish: Where did they send you and what happened after you enlisted?

Burry: I wasn't called in until January of 1943. It took that long. Then we went to Jefferson Barracks and from there to San Antonio and from there to Garden City, Kansas and back to San Antonio. It started the ball rolling one from the other.

Parrish: What sort of training or specialty did you have in the Air Force?

Burry: Well, I was flying Military Planes...Fighter Pilot mostly. We went to San Antonio where they called it the Classification Center. We went from there to Vernon, Texas for primary training. Then to Manhattan, Kansas for Basic training... flying training and then to Victoria, Texas for Advanced Training, single engine flying.

Parrish: How would you rate the training that was given to you?

Burry: It was very good. I made it back in one piece. No, it was very good we had excellent instructors.

Parrish: After Victoria where did you go?

Burry: We did get 10 days leave then from there we went to Richmond, VA and then up to the NE part of the states for gunnery training in P-47's.

Parrish: After you had gunnery training in P-47's where did you go?

Burry: Well, we went back down to Richmond, VA and went all the way cross country to Seattle, WA. From there we were transferred to Hawaii in P-47's to the 45<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron which is what I stayed in.

Parrish: How long were you in Hawaii?

Burry: Let's see. We got there in September of 1944 and we stayed there till March. (Bill said, "We got on the ship in late January 1945".) and then we were transferred on the way down to Iwo Jima.

Parrish: So you got on a ship. When you got on the ship, did you know where you were going ahead of time or was that classified?

Burry: I really don't remember whether we knew or not. All I know is they did not tell us an awful lot.

Parrish: What kind of ship was it?

Burry: It was a Merchant Marine ship. We...fact is there were only 7 or 8 of us on board. They had a large group of Sea Bees and some others but there were only 7 or 8 pilots on board.

Parrish: How was the ship journey going to Iwo Jima?

Burry: It was very comfortable but like I say there was nothing to do. We just sat around and played cards and did whatever little bit we could do.

Parrish: Did you ever hear Tokyo Rose?

Burry: I don't recall. I know. We did, when we got on Iwo Jima. But I don't recall if we heard her on the ship or not.

Parrish: What about mail service?

Burry: That was pretty much a thing of the past for a while there till we got through.

Parrish: So when did you get to Iwo Jima?

Burry: We got there the latter part of February, (Bill said "It was D plus 8. D-day was the 19th of February".)

Burry: It wasn't long before my birthday.

Parrish: What happened when you got off there at Iwo Jima?

Burry: Well, we were sleeping on deck of the Merchant Marine Ship. The first thing we knew was one of the big warships was shelling the beach up in Iwo Jima. We heard these

things whistling overhead. They were the big shells. That was the first we realized we were in Iwo Jima. And so after that things moved pretty fast. They took us in and put us on the beach.

Parrish: How did they put you on the beach?

Burry: That I can't remember. I imagine it was some type of landing craft. But I can't really remember because it was pretty exciting at that time.

Parrish: What happened then? What was your job going to be?

Burry: We really did not have a job. It was just to stay out of the way and not bother anybody because the Marines and the rest of the people on the beach were still fighting. There was still heavy fighting going on. Mainly stay out of the way and behave.

Parrish: What happened when you arrived on the beach? What was the situation like?

Burry: It was pretty much touch and go for awhile? One of our squadrons was in the 15<sup>th</sup> fighter Group. They were attacked by a group of Kamikazes. What did they call them? Bonsai Chargers? We lost a few of the pilots from that. We, fortunately, were not involved in any of that. It was still touch and go.

Parrish: Had they already taken the airfields before you got there or was that still something that had to be done?

Burry: The Marines had partially taken over airfield #1 , our airfield. But I think mainly the airfield still had left to be secured.

Parrish: Did you help bring in supplies? Or how did that work with getting the airfields ready?

Burry: No, we did not do much of anything until our planes came in and we were ready to start on our missions to Japan. We were not equipped to bring in supplies. That was a different type of aircraft. We were strictly fighters.

Parrish: Were you there when the flag was raised or was that before?

Burry: We were there but I don't recall seeing it at the time. In other words we were down closer to the beach and away from the actual fighting.

Parrish: Did you have any contact with the Japanese Forces that were there?

Burry: No, nothing to do with them at all.

Parrish: So the Marines were still out fighting with the Japanese.

Burry: Right. They were in some heavy battles after we got there but we did not get involved.

Parrish: Were you there when they did Bonzai attacks?

Burry: We were in our area but we were not in the group that was attacked. They were part of our 15<sup>th</sup> Fighter group and so we heard about it right away. That made things a little bit edgy for a few nights.

Parrish: What rank would you have been at this time?

Burry: I was still a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant.

Parrish: Of course, this is the Army Air Corp before the Air Force.

Burry: Right

Parrish: Well, how long did it take before they started bringing planes into Iwo. Did it take awhile? Did you have to wait for a very long period of time?

Burry: Not long. I imagine a month and a half or two months. (Bill said, "It was D plus 15 when the planes arrived.")

Parrish: So it was really about 7 or 8 days later. These planes arrived from Saipan. What was your mission there once the planes arrived?

Burry: I think originally we were flying air cover for the bombers. But it did not take long to realize that they were really not in that bad a shape now. The Japanese Air Force was really down the tubes as far as that goes at this time. Mainly, the thing we did was go on strafing runs and to look for any Japanese fighters that might be up in the air. We did mostly that from that time on.

Parrish: How long was the 45<sup>th</sup> fighter Squadron on Iwo Jima? Did they stay there?

Burry: They were still there when I left in August so they stayed there for awhile.

Parrish: Did you stay on Iwo Jima till the war was through?

Burry: Well, I had quite a detour. I was on a strafing mission to Japan. This was on the first of June. We got about 300 miles up there toward Japan and we got in a heavy cloud bank. I mean really heavy. Just not the kind of weather you want to be flying 4 ship-formation in with fighters because they are smaller planes. We got started going into the fog bank. About 20 minutes in there, my engine cut out on me and by losing my flight I was on my own. I went to about 10,000 feet and got my engine started again but there

was no way I could go after them to try to find them. I turned around and headed back toward Iwo Jima.

Parrish: What happened?

Burry: Probably 40 minutes later I was heading back toward Iwo Jima my engine cut out again. This time I couldn't get it started so I had to bail out.

Parrish: So you bailed out. Did you have any kind of raft or anything?

Burry: Oh, yes, you always carry a one man life raft with you that is on your back-pack. So I had that with me. It floats, of course.

Parrish: How long were you in the water?

Burry: Six days and the beginning of the fifth day a bad storm, a typhoon, hit and it was really rugged there for awhile. I did tie myself to the life raft which saved me because the night between the fifth and sixth day I was dumped overboard six times and if I had not been tied to the raft I never would have found the raft again.

Parrish: Would you consider that your most frightening experience?

Burry: Oh, yes, oh, yes.

Parrish: What about food?

Burry: Well, I didn't need much food. We had some rations in our back-pack called pemmican which was an energy type food. Coconuts, bacon, peanuts things of that type were there. But I only ate a couple of times I really didn't get hungry.

Parrish: What about water? Did you have potable water?

Burry: We had about a pint of water in our pack and also we had little kit that we could make drinking water out of the ocean water. Here again I just didn't seem to get thirsty so I only drank a little bit of water and that was it.

Parrish: What happened next?

Burry: Well, the submarines from Guam were on stationary duty there. They would go up to Iwo Jima and would start working their way up to Japan on guard duty mainly to pick up fighters and pilots or any airmen that were down and bring them back. This one particular submarine, the Trutta, picked me up on the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup> day.

Parrish: And they took you on board. Where did you go from there?

Burry: They took me on board and I have information from them that would indicate that they were there the night of the fifth day but had to submerge because of the rough

water. They kept me on board 5 or 6 days and by that time I was in pretty good shape again. They contacted another submarine that was going back toward Guam and they transferred me to the submarine, Peto. They took me back to Guam.

Parrish: What happened when you got back to Guam?

Burry: The army medics turned me over to the submarine group and let them take me over to their rest camp for a couple of days. Then I went back to Iwo Jima and they sent me to Hawaii for a few days of rest leave. When I came back from there I got my orders to go home. So that was about the long way around of it.

Parrish: That was the longest way to go to Hawaii and then back to Iwo before you got your orders.

Parrish: Were you there when the Atomic Bomb was dropped?

Burry: I was half way between Guam and Hawaii flying in a C47 transport plane. The pilot sent word back to me to sit with him because it was more comfortable and his co-pilot was going to take a nap. I was sitting up there with him and we were listening to the radio when the news came about the bombing... the A-Bomb. I looked at him and he looked at me and neither one of us knew what they were talking about and of course, we found out later that it was the original bombing of Hiroshima.

Parrish: You had your orders to go home. You had already gone back to Iwo. How did you get home... on a ship?

Burry: We flew from Iwo to Honolulu by transport plane then on another boat back to San Francisco.

Parrish: How long was it before you got discharged?

Burry: It wasn't long, probably early September because I was one of the first groups that came back from over seas.

Parrish: Where were you discharged?

Burry: Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

Parrish: You said that when you were on Iwo Jima you heard Tokyo Rose.

Burry: I think so but we never paid much attention to her. She wasn't one of our favorite people.

Parrish: What about the soil there on Iwo Jima? Did that pose a problem with the air strip?



Burry: Not really, the only problem with me was walking in it. It was just like sand, very shifty and hard to get a footing in. No, it did not seem to bother the flying planes much.

Parrish: Can you recall any humorous incidents while you were in the service?

Burry: Not really. Everything was humorous when it was over with.

Parrish: Did you have any particular friend who went through training with you.

Burry: No, I was talking with Bill Brown who is with me here and we were in the squadron together and I really didn't realize that we were together all the way through. We were there from Advanced Training on. Bill was one of my oldest standbys.

Parrish: Is there any thing you want to say in the interview that I haven't thought to ask?

Burry: No. Like I say. I am really impressed by what they are doing here and I think it is fantastic. I hope more people would take advantage of it.

Parrish: I want to thank you, Mr. Burry, thank you very much on behalf of Museum of the Pacific War for giving us this interview.

Burry: My pleasure.