

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Center for Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

Loyd R. Oakes

Corpus Christi, Texas

October 31, 2006

528th Bomb Squadron, 380th Bomb Group, B-24 Bombardier

5th Air Force Division

Australia, Philippines

42 Missions

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is October 31, 2006. I am interviewing Mr. Loyd R. Oakes by telephone. His address is 1406 Ray Drive, Corpus Christi, Texas 78411. His phone number is area code 361-854-8451. This interview is in support of the National Museum of Pacific War, Center for Pacific War Studies, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Mr. Misenhimer

Loyd, I want to thank you for taking time to do this interview today and I want to thank you for your service to our country during World War II.

Mr. Oakes

I don't mind.

Mr. Misenhimer

The first thing I need to do is get an alternate contact. We have found out that in two or three years down the road we try to contact someone and they have moved or something has happened; is there someone, a son or daughter or someone that may be able to tell us where you are in case you are not at this number?

Mr. Oakes

My daughter is Cheryl Randall. They are at 1108 Logan here in Corpus (78404). The phone number is 361-884-8728.

Mr. Misenhimer

The next thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the Nimitz Museum. When I do these in person I give them to the man to read and sign but since this is by phone, let me read it to you to make sure it is okay with you. "Agreement Read." Is that okay with you?

Mr. Oakes

That's fine.

Mr. Misenhimer

What is your birth date?

Mr. Oakes

February 24, 1925.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you born?

Mr. Oakes

Corpus Christi.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Oakes

I had one brother, William.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was he in World War II?

Mr. Oakes

No. He was four years younger than me.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your father's occupation?

Mr. Oakes

He was a truck driver mostly.

Mr. Misenhimer

You grew up during the Depression. How did the Depression affect you and your family?

Mr. Oakes

Actually being in Corpus here it didn't really affect us. My wife was from St. Louis and she really felt it and saw the soup lines but I don't recall that here. We weren't rich and didn't have a lot of money but we got by.

Mr. Misenhimer

Your father was able to keep working most of the time?

Mr. Oakes

Long hours.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Oakes

I finished high school in Missouri. We moved back in 1939. But I went the first year to Northside and then I went to Corpus Christi High School for the sophomore year.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to school in Missouri?

Mr. Oakes

Swedeborg, Missouri.

Mr. Misenhimer

What year did you finish there?

Mr. Oakes

1942.

Mr. Misenhimer

On December 7, 1941 as I'm sure you well recall, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Do you recall where you were when you heard about that?

Mr. Oakes

I think I was driving down the road with a girlfriend and we heard it on the radio.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your reaction to that? How did you think this would affect you?

Mr. Oakes

It was awful; not the thing to do. I wasn't old enough to go in the service yet. I went in the service; I actually enlisted 19 days before I turned 18.

Mr. Misenhimer

What day did you actually enlist then?

Mr. Oakes

February 9, 1943.

Mr. Misenhimer

What branch did you go into?

Mr. Oakes

They put me in the Enlisted Reserve. I was going into Aviation Cadets. They sent me home and called me on April 10 to report to San Antonio. I took all kinds of tests and then we were approved for pilot training or whatever. I asked for pilot training and when we got through with all of the tests they sent me to see Major Somebody and I sat outside and everybody coming out was getting ground duty only. They had a punctured eardrum or something. So I figured I wasn't going to make Cadet. But when I got in there he said that I had asked for pilot training and that I had qualified for it but they were almost positive that I could make it as bombardier. By that time I was so relieved that I was going to be able to fly that I said yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

What base did you report to in San Antonio?

Mr. Oakes

It was the San Antonio Aviation Cadet Center I think. It was near Kelly.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then what did you do?

Mr. Oakes

I went from there to Ellington for preflight. That is near Houston.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about your training there.

Mr. Misenhimer

We went through two months. I like to say I took two years of college in two months. (laugh) At that time you were supposed to have two years of college or pass the entrance exam to get into cadet training.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all kind of training did you have there?

Mr. Oakes

It was physics and math and things. It was like being in college but when you finished something you didn't have to go back and remember it later. It was in phases.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you live in there?

Mr. Oakes

They had regular barracks there at the base at the time.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was the food there?

Mr. Oakes

As far as I remember it was alright.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then where did you go from there?

Mr. Oakes

From there I was sent to Laredo for gunnery school.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you travel to Laredo?

Mr. Oakes

We were on a troop train.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about your training there in Laredo.

Mr. Oakes

We went through all kinds of tearing guns apart; firing guns, 50 calibers, oh everything. In a way it was really fun. We shot skeet. Then after we finished; that was my first airplane ride. I went up in an AT-6 to shoot a towed target.

Mr. Misenhimer

On the skeet, did they put you in the back of a pickup or something like that and drive around and shoot?

Mr. Oakes

Yes. We stood in the back and they pulled the trigger when you went around the corner or somewhere and you were supposed to shoot it down; the clay pigeons.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long was that school there?

Mr. Oakes

I think it was about ten weeks.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get to fly in any other plane besides the AT-6?

Mr. Oakes

I think I flew in a turret on a Lockheed Hudson.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was a tail dragger with twin tails I think, wasn't it?

Mr. Oakes

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was there more than one of you in the plane shooting at one time?

Mr. Oakes

There would be several but only one of us would shoot at a time. In the AT-6 it was just the pilot and the cadet.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were there other AT-6's up shooting at the same towed target?

Mr. Oakes

Yes. Each one would have a different color of paint on the bullets.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's what I was getting at. So that way they could tell who had hit it.

Mr. Oakes

Right.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you do on the shooting?

Mr. Oakes

I guess I did alright. (laugh)

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your pay when you first went in?

Mr. Oakes

As a Cadet it was \$75.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's better than a plain old Private.

Mr. Oakes

Yes. I think that was \$50 plus air pay.

Mr. Misenhimer

Right. I think it was 50% for flight pay. When you finished your gunnery training there, where did you go?

Mr. Oakes

I went to Midland. I had been in the hospital for a cold. It was in the summer time and I had a summer cold. I had washed back so I was in a GI squadron rather than the cadet squadron. The rest of them went back to Ellington but there were four of us that went on to Midland by regular train. The rest of them came in from Houston.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do there?

Mr. Oakes

I went through bombardier training.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about that.

Mr. Oakes

We had three weeks of school. I had gotten married in Laredo. My girlfriend from Missouri had come down and we had gotten married just before I left; on a four hour pass. (laugh) Then she went back home with my mother in Corpus. We stayed up there three weeks because we were quarantined for ground school. Then from ground school we started flying. Then she came up. We got passes, sometimes. (laugh)

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of a plane were you flying there?

Mr. Oakes

AT-11.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is that the Beech or the Cessna?

Mr. Oakes

The Beech I think because they were used for navigation pilot training; twin engine. They were all the same except for modifications.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did they have twin tails?

Mr. Oakes

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's the Beech. The Cessna is the one they called the Bamboo Bomber. It was a single tail. Did you have any of the WASPs for pilots, the women pilots?

Mr. Oakes

No we didn't have. In fact I had a pilot that had gone through B-24 training and had washed out of B-24's.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you would go up in this AT-11, how many of you would there be?

Mr. Oakes

There would be two of us.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you were doing bombardier training?

Mr. Oakes

Right. Each one would drop five bombs.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of bombs were you dropping?

Mr. Oakes

100 pound practice bombs. They had a little container of black powder.

Mr. Misenhimer

From what altitude would you bomb?

Mr. Oakes

We tried all kinds; from about 500 feet up to 10,000 to 12,000 feet.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you using the Norden bombsight?

Mr. Oakes

Right.

Mr. Misenhimer

Are there any particular experiences that you recall from that training?

Mr. Oakes

No but it was fun in a way. At 18 I guess that's what you do.

Mr. Misenhimer

Any particular incidents or accidents or anything like that that happened?

Mr. Oakes

We slow-rolled an AT-11 one night. The pilot thought he could slow roll a B-24 and that may be why he got washed out. We were supposed to spend two hours in the air so if we got through early we had to fly around until we got our two hours. One night we did slow roll and then picked everything up out of the bomb bay and put it back where it belonged.

Mr. Misenhimer

I was going to say if you slow rolled in that plane it would have really scattered things around.

Mr. Oakes

It did.

Mr. Misenhimer

No one caught him and reprimanded him for it?

Mr. Oakes

As far as I know he got by.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you bombing in the day time, night time, or both?

Mr. Oakes

We did both.

Mr. Misenhimer

At night how would you find your target?

Mr. Oakes

They would have the lights on the target.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else that you recall from that training there?

Mr. Oakes

No. I went through pretty easy; at least I got through. I graduated on December 4, 1943.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get a commission at that point?

Mr. Oakes

Second Lieutenant. They were just starting flight officer commissions.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you had been in at that point about eight months?

Mr. Oakes

Yes from April until December.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did they have any kind of a ceremony when you were commissioned?

Mr. Oakes

We were in a theater. That's where we got our wings. I guess we got commissioned there.

I don't remember that. I remember when we walked out the door there were a lot of enlisted men there to get the first salute. You were supposed to give them \$1. (laugh)

Mr. Misenhimer

They lined up waiting for that, huh?

Mr. Oakes

Yes. (laugh)

Mr. Misenhimer

Then where did you go?

Mr. Oakes

I came back to Corpus for about a ten day leave and then I was sent to Hammer Field in Fresno, California.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do there?

Mr. Oakes

We were assigned to a crew. The pilot, co-pilot, navigator, bombardier were assigned there. Then we were sent to March Field at Riverside.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of a plane were you assigned to?

Mr. Oakes

A B-24.

Mr. Misenhimer

Had you been in a B-24 at all before?

Mr. Oakes

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Had you been in a four engine before that?

Mr. Oakes

I had been in the AT-6 in gunnery school and the Lockheed.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes but those are single and twin engine, not four engine. Tell me about what happened up there.

Mr. Oakes

The same bombing partner that I had was there. We bought a \$200 8 cylinder Dodge and drove down to Riverside. He was married and I was married so we drove down there for overseas training. We went through three months, or a little more than three months of training at Riverside at March Field.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all did that training consist of?

Mr. Oakes

We did navigation and flew practice missions; bombing. We bombed with a camera rather than dropping bombs. We put a camera in the bombsight to make sure it stayed where it was supposed to. We would do navigation missions. I know we went to Albuquerque one night and came back at 4:00 in the morning or so.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was your crew together at that point? You were training as a crew?

Mr. Oakes

Yes. The rest of the crew was assigned at the time we got to March Field. So there were

ten of us by then.

Mr. Misenhimer

You stayed together from that point on for all of this other training?

Mr. Oakes

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything in particular from that training that you recall?

Mr. Oakes

No. We lost several planes during training. They were flying war weary planes and they had been overseas and back. So we did lose a few there. In fact for a long time we lost, well I guess they still come in threes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were the crews lost with them?

Mr. Oakes

Some of them, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go from there?

Mr. Oakes

When we finished the overseas training we were sent to Hamilton Field in San Francisco. They gave us shots getting ready to go overseas. They gave us heavy Arctic clothing. We ended up in the South Pacific (laugh).

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you go overseas?

Mr. Oakes

We flew.

Mr. Misenhimer

From where to where?

Mr. Oakes

We left Hamilton and went to Fairfield-Susiam and that's where we took off to fly to Hawaii.

Mr. Misenhimer

To fly to Hawaii did you have to have extra gas tanks or could you make it without that?

Mr. Oakes

No. They used two 400 gallon tanks in the forward bomb bay.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you know what day you departed to go over there?

Mr. Oakes

Right off hand, no. It would have been early April of 1944.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you land in Hawaii?

Mr. Oakes

Hickam Field.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long were you there?

Mr. Oakes

We had a gas problem. The gas was leaking and we stayed an extra night. We spent one full day on Hawaii.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get a chance to get off the base at all?

Mr. Oakes

No. We went down and found out that the beach there had a lot of coral in it.

Mr. Misenhimer

What about the wreckage in Pearl Harbor? Did you see any of the wreckage left there?

Mr. Oakes

We saw a little wreckage. The machine gun bullet holes were still around everything and in the buildings.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go from there?

Mr. Oakes

From Hickam we flew to Canton Island.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about your trip when you left Hawaii. Tell me about where all you went and what happened.

Mr. Oakes

We had a good navigator. In fact from San Francisco we circled the Golden Gate and took off and about two hours later the plane had been veering on automatic pilot. So he started over two hours out and we hit it right on the button. I remember standing looking down at the coral reefs when we got around the islands there; the different colors and things.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you by yourself or with a group of other airplanes?

Mr. Oakes

We were alone. There would be others probably in the air but not in formation.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your first stop after Hawaii?

Mr. Oakes

From Hawaii we went to Fiji.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you make any stops along the way?

Mr. Oakes

No. We landed in Canton and then Fiji and then New Caledonia and then Townsville, Australia.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long did you stay in Fiji?

Mr. Oakes

Just overnight.

Mr. Misenhimer

And New Caledonia, the same?

Mr. Oakes

The same, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you go straight from New Caledonia to Townsville or did you stop somewhere else?

Mr. Oakes

Townsville, Australia.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about that.

Mr. Oakes

We got there and had several days, a week or so in Townsville. I'm not really sure why. We went to the races. We went horseback riding around. It seemed like it was a 1920's town, a western town. We flew to New Guinea from there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to in New Guinea?

Mr. Oakes

Port Moresby. We were in Port Moresby about two to three weeks being assigned to a group. Again I don't know why we stayed that long. We were in a transit camp there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you assigned to a unit at that point?

Mr. Oakes

We were assigned to the 380th Bomb Group which was in Darwin, Australia. It was at Fenton Field which was about 100 miles from Darwin.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you in a bomb squadron at that point, or not?

Mr. Oakes

When we got to the unit we were assigned to the 528th Bomb Squadron.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you went from Port Moresby to where then?

Mr. Oakes

Darwin, Australia or in that vicinity.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were in Port Moresby for a week or two did you say?

Mr. Oakes

At least a couple of weeks.

Mr. Misenhimer

There was still quite a bit of fighting going on in New Guinea at that point wasn't there?

Mr. Oakes

Yes. They were on the other side. They had already retaken it. Actually we left Port Moresby and flew over the mountains to Nadzab. Then from Nadzab on into Darwin. But we were only in Nadzab for a night or so.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got to Darwin what did you do there?

Mr. Oakes

We were welcomed. We were one of the first crews to come in for some time. It meant that somebody could go home. We flew our first mission I believe about the 3rd of June. We did spend some time flying practice missions at Darwin.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where was your first mission to?

Mr. Oakes

The first mission was to Liang Airdrome which was on Ambonia Island. That was on the 2nd of June.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about that mission.

Mr. Oakes

We didn't hit the target. Everybody turned around and came back due to the weather.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you came back did you bring your bombs back or did you drop them?

Mr. Oakes

In this case it says in the report that everyone returned with their bombs.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then what happened?

Mr. Oakes

We sat around for a while. I guess on the 8th of June we bombed Babo Airport.

Mr. Misenhimer

And that's where?

Mr. Oakes

I've got the mission reports here. It just says Babo Airport. I've got it as eleven hours.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any fighter opposition or antiaircraft fire there?

Mr. Oakes

From shipping but not fighters.

Mr. Misenhimer

But antiaircraft, right?

Mr. Oakes

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many planes went on that raid, do you have any idea?

Mr. Oakes

In our squadron there were six.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did all of them come back?

Mr. Oakes

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about some more missions. Where else did you go?

Mr. Oakes

Namelia was an airdrome that we bombed quite often. That was in July. We only flew two missions in June. We flew seven missions in July. A couple of them were going out looking for shipping but Namelia we hit four times. Kendari which was near Namelia we hit twice. That was a seaplane base I think.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of results did you get on your bombings?

Mr. Oakes

We hit some and we missed some. We did alright.

Mr. Misenhimer

From what altitude would you normally bomb?

Mr. Oakes

Usually around 11,000 to 12,000 to 13,000 feet.

Mr. Misenhimer

I believe you went on 42 missions, is that right?

Mr. Oakes

That's what I have.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were some of the more exciting ones?

Mr. Oakes

Just skipping through. We had a shell go through the wing. We were flying at about 16,000 feet. It exploded above but it left a big hole and moved the gas line and moved quite a bit. If we hadn't been coming back, the pilot wasn't sure if everything was going to hold together so he went slowly while he tested. But we made it. We had a mission bombing Morotai. Not really bombing but harassing Morotai at night and keeping everybody awake after we had landed there. So we went out to get two of the airdromes in the Celebes. We had the Lieutenant Colonel from the Squadron Headquarters instead of our pilot. While we were bombing, we had ten bombs; 100 pounders and extra gasoline. So every 30 minutes or so we would drop a bomb on one of the airdromes. We took pictures of the airdromes to see if there were fighters or planes on the ground and there weren't. I don't know if they ever found out where they were coming from or if they thought they were coming in, landing and then taking off.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many planes on that mission?

Mr. Oakes

Just one; we flew 15 hours and 34 minutes.

Mr. Misenhimer.

You have to have extra gas for those kinds of missions which would reduce the number

of bombs you can carry.

Mr. Oakes

Yes. We only used two bomb bays. You had to go back and set the bombs up, every time, so I got a lot of exercise that night.

Mr. Misenhimer

As bombardier were you responsible for arming the bombs before they were dropped?

Mr. Oakes

We would set our own time of release. If you were flying wing then you would drop on the lead bombardier. That was for vertical. You would synchronize but you wouldn't make any changes on the plane.

Mr. Misenhimer

I've heard people say that they had to go back into the bomb bay to arm the bombs. Is that true or not?

Mr. Oakes

They were on safety. They had wires that would keep the bomb from going off if it was dropped. You had to go back and put those wires back in after you were airborne because they would be pulled out.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you do that or did someone else do that?

Mr. Oakes

I did that.

Mr. Misenhimer

I understand that the bombs had a propeller on the front that had to turn so many times; is that right?

Mr. Oakes

They used to have two fuses. A tail fuse and a nose fuse.

Mr. Misenhimer

The wire I think would keep that propeller from spinning, is that correct?

Mr. Oakes

Yes. It would have a ring and there would be a wire going from that ring to the tail fuse and to the nose fuse. When they put it in the bomb bay they left it off of the hook in case

there were problems. I would go back and put the hooks on them.

Mr. Misenhimer

So then when they were dropped, after they got a certain distance that wire would pull out?

Mr. Oakes

Right.

Mr. Misenhimer

Okay, tell me about some more of your missions.

Mr. Oakes

We had a scary one in that we were bombing the Legaspi Port in the Philippines. We moved to the Philippines in February of 1945 to Mindoro, one of the islands. They were still landing off of Luzon. They were going into Legaspi Port and we bombed the morning after afternoon missions. One of them we were leading that day. We were going from land to sea. About the time we got ready to drop the bombs we ran into cloud cover. So we kept on flying and we had five planes behind us. The pilot started turning and telling them to turn around and go back. We didn't get through the cloud front like they thought we would. So when he turned all of a sudden we went into a dive and came out at about 1,800 feet or so. I had borrowed a parachute harness that day and the fellow I borrowed it from was shorter than I was so I didn't have it on. I tried to get it on but it wouldn't fit. About that time we broke through but I figured that was it. Anyway, when we broke through we leveled out and kept going. I got it on in a hurry then. About that time we were supposed to put the bombs on safety to drop them because we had friendly ships in the area. I started away from the nose and couldn't see the altimeter. I had already decided that I was going to go if we went any lower. So I didn't go back and I salvoed the bombs just like they were.

Mr. Misenhimer

This dive, was it intentional or was it an uncontrolled dive?

Mr. Oakes

We were on automatic pilot and something malfunctioned. When he made the turn he was using the automatic pilot and it didn't take but a few seconds and he hit it. He got it off automatic pilot and leveled out but nobody was saying anything. That was a little

scary.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever have enemy fighters at any time?

Mr. Oakes

Yes. I think on the third mission we got to the hit with fighters. I had been told the bombardier was supposed to be the ordnance officer. So he should call off where they are coming from and everything. The nose of the B-24 has a little dome for the navigator up front. So I climbed up and looked through the dome and they were coming from the front. They were twin engine Mick's. They had a 30mm canon I think in the nose. All of a sudden little ones blinking and the canon started firing and I got down. We were hit several times but we never had fighter cover until our third to last mission when we bombed Hong Kong. We did have cover on that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did your gunners ever shoot down any enemy planes?

Mr. Oakes

We got a probable. The tail gunner did.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you lose many planes out of your squadron?

Mr. Oakes

Yes. I can't tell you how many but there were several. Not nearly as many as early on. In December of 1943 at New Guinea the squadron sent a lot of planes up to New Guinea and they lost quite a few planes. That was before we got there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Any other missions that stand out?

Mr. Oakes

Not really. We had a pretty good deal. We had a good crew and a good pilot. We got there and back.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you crew stay together the whole time?

Mr. Oakes

I flew one mission without the whole crew. I flew one with the Colonel rather than our

pilot. But the rest of the crew was there. Then I missed a mission for some reason and I flew on the landing at Mindanao with another crew.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you fly the same plane all the time?

Mr. Oakes

Mostly but not altogether.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did it have a name?

Mr. Oakes

Flak Fled Flapper. The B-24 had about an 18 inch flap on the wings that I believe would go up and down. Somebody sent to Earl Carrol's Vanities in L. A. when we were in Riverside and one of the girls on the menu was on our plane.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you all fly the same plane down there that you flew in combat?

Mr. Oakes

The one that we flew overseas went to New Guinea. We got a different plane.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got down near Darwin you got a different plane then?

Mr. Oakes

Yes. I think they may have kept the one we flew over because they were working on the automatic pilot because it was still giving them problems. It ended up in New Guinea.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me what happened next.

Mr. Oakes

We were supposed to move up to Luzon near Clark Field. I finished my missions so I went up to help them work with the Filipinos building tent frames and things. I got to go into Manila for liquor. One of the officers' squadrons were making it one day and selling it the next. (laugh) Very aged. We had a mission where we were bombing across the road from troops at Luzon. We flew over Corregidor and that was quite a sight. Paratroopers had landed there and there were parachutes all over the top of the island. Lots of good and lots of bad; mostly good though.

Mr. Misenhimer

I understand B-24's had what was called a Davis wing which was high load, is that right?

Mr. Oakes

It let us fly faster and carry more.

Mr. Misenhimer

But if you lost an engine they didn't have quite the glide path?

Mr. Oakes

In reading about it down at the library; B-17's were in the Pacific before we got there when the war started. In reading about the B-17's, they had a lot more weather problems than we did with that big wing. Because it affected them more than it did us. They took all of the B-17's out of the Pacific at some point, after the B-24's got there.

Mr. Misenhimer

I think the B-24's could fly further and had a longer range too.

Mr. Oakes

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Of course in the Pacific there were a lot of long ranges.

Mr. Oakes

They turned around a lot more than we did, the B-17's did.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever fly in a B-17?

Mr. Oakes

Just recently. That was the first one.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you had air cover down in the Philippines, what kind of planes did you have?

Mr. Oakes

When we went to Hong Kong we had P-38's and P-51's.

Mr. Misenhimer

They finally got some with a long enough range that they could accompany you?

Mr. Oakes

Yes. Our average mission was probably about 11 or 12 hours. Nothing in between.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any kind of food on the plane?

Mr. Oakes

Usually a roast beef sandwich made out of homemade bread. It dried out a lot.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was the food in Australia?

Mr. Oakes

We had good food while we were in Australia. We would fly down south. They would have us go down and bring milk and fresh vegetables back. So we were probably a little better off than most of them in the Pacific.

Mr. Misenhimer

I've heard a lot of them complain about mutton in Australia. Did you get much mutton?

Mr. Oakes

(laugh) Well we ate whatever we had. We were in the outback in Darwin there. They went out and shot a steer; there were a lot of cattle. The flight surgeon would inspect it and then we would have a barbeque. One of the crews would go out and pick up wood. The mess hall would fix a salad and they would have drinks and that. We would barbeque the steer or whatever. So it was a little different.

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned an officer's club; did you have an officer's club there in Australia?

Mr. Oakes

We had one that they had built. It was the Herkies Hangout. The 528th Mascot was supposed to be Herkie.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all did you have in your officer's club?

Mr. Oakes

We were flying under Australian command so they got a beer ration and they got a liquor ration from the Australians. It must have been once a month. There were two quarts of beer. I didn't drink at the time. So I traded it for cigarettes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get a chance to meet many of the Australian people?

Mr. Oakes

We had Australians flying with us; B-24 people and when we had a reunion up until a couple of years ago, we would have 8 or 10 from Australia that would come to our reunion.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about the Australian civilians? Did you get a chance to mingle with them much?

Mr. Oakes

We went to Adelaide on leave and they were very friendly. The Australians liked the Americans.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were some other things that happened?

Mr. Oakes

I remember it rained for six months and then it was dry for six months. The first time I went on leave I went to a barber to get my hair washed and cut and I think it took about three or four washings before he ever got the red dirt of it.

Mr. Misenhimer

If there were any particular missions that you thought were interesting, tell me about them.

Mr. Oakes

We went on sea searches looking for shipping. Usually that was just flying from Point A to Point B and so on. I did make one where we sighted one small ship. I made three bomb runs on it. I did splash water on it but he watched the bombs drop and he could turn it underneath before the bombs got there. He could make it slide out. I never did sink a ship. We had a nickel mine that I think we bombed that had a smoke stack, a tall smoke stack. We must have bombed it four or five times while I was there. I don't think anybody ever hit the stack.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you under the 5th Air Force?

Mr. Oakes

The 5th.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you lose any engines on any missions?

Mr. Oakes

We did lose an engine a time or so but no problem. Or at least I can't remember which one it was but I know we lost an engine. But it would hold up on three engines with no problem. If you were a long ways out you were in trouble but I don't think we ever lost one like that.

Mr. Misenhimer

One engine was the most you lost?

Mr. Oakes

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me some other things that happened.

Mr. Oakes

I guess I'm running out. I had a good time. I made First Lieutenant overseas. I was probably one of the younger Second Lieutenants when I graduated. I don't have any idea where I ranked but I was still three months from being 19. Coming to Corpus after I graduated, we were on a bus and it was raining and the bus driver stopped for something. He turned around and said, "Lieutenant will you hand me this?" I was looking around to see where the Lieutenant was. (laugh)

Mr. Misenhimer

(laugh) You had forgotten you were one, huh?

Mr. Oakes

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me ask you a couple of other questions. Did you ever see any USO shows anywhere?

Mr. Oakes

I don't think we saw any. There had been some before I got there. They had Bob Hope there. We were left out.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get home with any souvenirs?

Mr. Oakes

I brought a Spitfire that had been made by one of the Australians. I traded cigarettes for it. It was a scale model. My kids finally tore it up.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was the only souvenir you got back with?

Mr. Oakes

I have some little pieces that I got at Clark Field when I was working up there after I finished my missions from a Japanese plane. They are just little pieces that had Japanese writing on it.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you leave the Pacific to come back?

Mr. Oakes

I left in, I don't have that down, but I finished in April so it would have probably been around the first of June of 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you come back to?

Mr. Oakes

I came back on a boat from Tacloban. I got over there a lot quicker than we got back.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of a ship was it, do you recall?

Mr. Oakes

It was from General Electric. I guess it was classified as a troop ship.

Mr. Misenhimer

An APA or whatever they called them. Where did you come back to?

Mr. Oakes

To San Francisco.

Mr. Misenhimer

About how long did that trip take?

Mr. Oakes

If I remember right, about 21 days because of the weather.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were the accommodations like on the ship?

Mr. Oakes

As an officer it was fine. I think there were four of us in a stateroom.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you hit a typhoon did you say?

Mr. Oakes

No. One of the men had been in the Infantry and he had two pistols that he was bringing back. He got cold feet on the way and decided that he could get away with one but if he had two he might get caught. He offered it to everybody and nobody took it and nobody inspected it when we got off.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were these Japanese pistols or American?

Mr. Oakes

Japanese.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now you were assigned a .45 when you were flying, right?

Mr. Oakes

Right.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get home with it?

Mr. Oakes

No. I turned it in. I did get a blanket. They gave us a blanket and nobody would take it. I figured if I was going to pay for it I would bring it on home.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got back to San Francisco, what did you do then?

Mr. Oakes

We had a great meal. They were really prepared. We spent the night. While we were spending the night they were making the troop train up and the next morning we got on the train and headed for the East Coast. The first car was El Paso. They dropped the car off and we kept on going. I got off in San Antonio. At that time, if you wanted out about

all you had to do was say that you wanted out but I stayed in.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long were you there in San Antonio?

Mr. Oakes

Just momentarily really. I don't recall doing anything more than probably signing out.

Mr. Misenhimer

You had leave then, right?

Mr. Oakes

Yes. I had leave and then I was assigned to Miami Beach for reassignment. I got down there and I did take a test all day while I was there. I got college credit. Then I was assigned to Midland again as an Instructor Bombardier. I went through Instructor School and there were about 500 of us going through school. VJ Day came along while we were there. We were at the Scarborough Hotel when VJ Day happened. Out of the 500 there were about 50 that continued on through Instructor's School. The others elected to get out.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do?

Mr. Oakes

I stayed there at Midland and went through Instructor's School. They were about to close the base. My wife was pregnant at the time. They knew they were going to close the base and she was told that she should stay somewhere so that if they closed the base while she was still pregnant she wouldn't have to move. So she came back to Corpus and stayed here. I came down on weekends. That was in 1946. I stayed in Midland until they almost closed it. I became Publications Officer due to everybody being released and everything. I ended up being transferred to Sacramento to Baker Field. I was in a plane crash there in September of 1946 and decided that I didn't want to stay in anymore.

Mr. Misenhimer

What happened in that crash? Tell me about that.

Mr. Oakes

We were getting hours in and they had two pilots that had not been checked out at night. They had an instructor pilot checking them out for night landings. They had had a

problem from what I understand and one engine wasn't holding right. But instead of getting another plane, we continued to fly and they either blew a stack or the engine caught on fire. It was the other engine. So we flew into the top of a hill. They had called for a cross runway to be lit up. We actually skidded about 1,500 yards. I walked out of it along with the three pilots but there were two men in the back that were just along for the ride and both of them were badly injured. They were standing up when we hit. One of them died. The other one had a lot of burns. I probably had second degree burns that turned into an ulcer. They released me from the hospital and I got out and came home. I still had a scab going around my leg. I turned it in after I was on leave to Brooks and they fixed it in about two weeks. It amazed me they only had two First Lieutenants that were operating at the hospital as doctors.

Mr. Misenhimer

When were you discharged?

Mr. Oakes

I was discharged as a Captain.

Mr. Misenhimer

When was that?

Mr. Oakes

It was in February of 1947 that I got released. I did volunteer to go back in 1952 I guess. They did call me back for Korea but after I had changed jobs they said, "If we don't hear from you we'll figure you are no longer interested." So I didn't send anything back in. The next thing I got was a telegram, "Where is your physical?" So I did get recalled and was sent back to Maxwell Field in Montgomery. I ended up running a bookstore there. The day I checked in they were looking for two bodies to go to Squadron Officer's School. That was good for me. It gave me two months to get used to the new uniform.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes right, it was Air Force by then.

Mr. Oakes

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you make a career of it then?

Mr. Oakes

No. I stayed 18 months. They were having RIFs, Reductions In Force, and I decided that they still wanted me where I had been working so I had better get out while I can.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me go back. You mentioned VJ Day. What kind of celebration did you have?

Mr. Oakes

I think there were two couples of us that were in the bombing department that I had originally gone to bombing school with. So we celebrated together with him and his wife. He decided to get out after VJ Day and I stayed in. I remember we watched the celebrations from the Scarborough Hotel. We had a corner room. Everything was going on down below so we had a ringside seat.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Oakes

I'm sure we did but I don't really recall. It was a shame but I don't know anymore.

Mr. Misenhimer

No big reaction to it or anything?

Mr. Oakes

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then in May of 1945 when Germany surrendered did you have any kind of celebration then?

Mr. Oakes

We figured we were going to get more planes, more troops and that was it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Oakes

The Red Cross had a Canteen there on the base. They had lemonade and whatever they were passing out.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did they charge you for it, or was it free?

Mr. Oakes

It was free.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever hear Tokyo Rose?

Mr. Oakes

Oh yes. She played good music. (laugh) After I got there she said that she was going to send a plane. They were going to come visit the Darwin Playboys. The Assistant CO of the group took a B-24 with a crew and all the ammunition that he could and flew around. It was on the 4th of July but they were supposed to be there. He made a P-24 out of it but they never did show up. They had bombed the area earlier before I got there. In fact, not long after I got there, there was a raid warning supposedly that came down from Darwin that there were planes in the air. We went to the slit trenches. They put an alert out. There was a windmill that made a squeaky sound and everybody would be talking and then all of a sudden somebody would say, "listen." And you would hear that whirr of the windmill and everything would get quiet. A little bit later somebody would say, "Oh, it's the windmill." (laugh) But they never did show up.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes they bombed Darwin several times during the war.

Mr. Oakes

Yes Darwin. The same group that bombed Pearl Harbor bombed Darwin. Darwin was evacuated. The only thing there was military people. It would have been October or November I guess that we moved to Darwin to Fenton Field. It was really just off the highway. About 100 miles inland from Darwin.

Mr. Misenhimer

What ribbons and medals did you get?

Mr. Oakes

I got four Air Medals for 100 hours combat each. That is really the only one. There were some service ribbons for the area.

Mr. Misenhimer

What would you consider your most frightening time?

Mr. Oakes

Probably when we went into the clouds and Joe turned and the first thing I saw was the island coming at us; not knowing what was going on.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Oakes

I joined the 52 / 20 club up in Missouri. I didn't know what I wanted to do. Since I had graduated up there, all our friends were up there. There wasn't much going on up there. I ended up in a sawmill making barrel staves.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you use your GI Bill for anything?

Mr. Oakes

I did for a year.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you go to college, or what?

Mr. Oakes

Yes. I also bought this house with the GI Bill.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you move to Corpus?

Mr. Oakes

We moved back to Corpus; well I was here in 1949. I went back in the service, to Maxwell and then I came back after 18 months; I came back to Corpus until 1962. Then I got transferred to Oklahoma City, then Wichita and then out to California until 1984. Then I came back to Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer

Who were you working for?

Mr. Oakes

Originally it was Curtis Publishing. I was with the circulation of the Saturday Evening Post. I ended up working for New American Library / Signet Books. I sold paperbacks.

Stephen King, Mickey Spillane.

Mr. Misenhimer

Have you had any reunions?

Mr. Oakes

Oh yes. I started about 1987 when I found out they were having reunions.

Mr. Misenhimer

Which group was this?

Mr. Oakes

380th Bomb Group.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have quite a few people attend those?

Mr. Oakes

At one time yes. We are down to about 40 or 50 now of the regular crew. We have a lot of younger children and grandchildren that come. We had about 400 or 500 when I first started going.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is there anything else that you recall?

Mr. Oakes

I'm trying to rack my brain but it's kind of hard. There was a riding stable and there was a fellow that owned it only he was short one horse. He had his horse but he didn't want to let anybody ride it. All of the other guys said, "He's from Texas." So I got to ride it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Loyd, I've enjoyed very much this conversation.

Mr. Oakes

I've enjoyed it and if you get back over here, look me up at the library. I'm there all day Sunday normally and Monday and Friday.

Mr. Misenhimer

If you think of anything new you can add it later on.

(end of interview)

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MISSION RECORD

SN 44-40434 **NOSE ART** FLAK FLED FLAPPER **MODEL** J-160-CO
SQDN ASSGD 528 **MFR** Consolidated-San Diego **M#** 434

LOCATION: Australia

NOTES: _____

NO.	DATE (M/D/Y)	MISSION #	MISSION TYPE	TARGET	CREW #	ACFT CMDR	SQDN	RESULTS/NOTES
1	06/22/1944	FEN VII-38	Strike	Liang	18	Synar	528	
2	06/27/1944	FEN VII-43	Strike	Babo	18	Synar	528	
3	07/01/1944	FEN VII-49	Strike	Namlea	18	Synar	528	
4	07/10/1944	FEN VIII-17	Recce	Weather, Arafura and Banda Seas	9	Dally	528	
5	07/11/1944	FEN VIII-20	Strike	Amahai	2	Vance	528	
6	07/18/1944	FEN VIII-30	Recce	Shipping, Flores	18	Synar	528	Abort, Fuel Leak, Bomb Bay
7	07/19/1944	FEN VIII-31	Strike	Namlea	18	Synar	528	
8	08/10/1944	FEN IX-24	Strike	Laha	21	Dunne (RAAF)	528	First Mission for this Crew
9	08/17/1944	FEN IX-36	Strike	Namlea	22	Ross (RAAF)	528	

MISSION RECORD

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NO.	DATE (M/D/Y)	MISSION #	MISSION TYPE	TARGET	CREW #	ACFT CMDR	SQDN	RESULTS/NOTES
10	08/26/1944	FEN IX-48	Strike	Liang	18	Synar	528	
11	09/12/1944	FEN X-23	Strike	Haroekoc	18	Synar	528	
12	09/16/1944	FEN X-32	Search H-1	Banda Sea	16	Spencer	528	
13	09/21/1944	FEN XI-3	Strike	Laha	16	Spencer	528	
14	09/24/1944	FEN XI-8	Strike	Haroekoc	9	Tate	528	
15	09/29/1944	FEN XI-23	Strike	Liang	18	Synar	528	
16	10/01/1944	FEN XI-33	Strike	Laha	8	Ricc	528	
17	10/05/1944	DAR I-10	Strike	Macassar	18	Synar	528	
18	10/10/1944	DAR I-25	Search I	Banda Sea	18	Synar	528	
19	10/16/1944	DAR I-41	Strike	Macassar	18	Synar	528	
20	10/19/1944	DAR I-48	Strike	Pare Pare	10	Herbst	528	

MISSION RECORD

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NO.	DATE (M/D/Y)	MISSION #	MISSION TYPE	TARGET	CREW #	ACFT CMDR	SQDN	RESULTS/NOTES
21	10/28/1944	DAR II-30	Strike	Macassar	6	Hartley	528	
22	10/30/1944	DAR 53	Search	Search for Missing B-24	18	Synar	528	Special Missions-Australia
23	11/05/1944	DAR III-1	Strike	Bima	17	Schmitt	528	
24	11/09/1944	DAR III-10	Strike	Shipping, Flores Sea	18	Synar	528	
25	11/14/1944	DAR III-27	Strike	Macassar	18	Synar	528	
26	11/15/1944	DAR III-33	Strike	Pinrang	20	Miller (RAAF)	528	
27	11/22/1944	DAR IV-1	Strike	Maniang Island	18	Synar	528	
28	11/28/1944	DAR IV-19	Strike	Kendari, Harass	18	Henschke	528	Synar Crew
29	12/02/1944	DAR IV-25	Strike	Boro Boro	18	Synar	528	
30	12/06/1944	DAR IV-43	Strike	Kendari and Boro Boro	6	Hartley	528	

MISSION RECORD

SN 44-40434 NOSE ART FLAK FLED FLAPPER MODEL J-160-CO

SQDN ASSGD 528 MFR Consolidated-San Diego M# 434

LOCATION: Australia

NOTES: _____

NO.	DATE (M/D/Y)	MISSION #	MISSION TYPE	TARGET	CREW #	ACFT CMDR	SQDN	RESULTS/NOTES
31	12/12/1944	DAR V-12	Strike	Kendari	6	Hartley	528	
32	12/20/1944	DAR V-25	Strike	Malang A/D, Java	18	Synar	528	
33	12/31/1944	DAR VI-15	Strike	Ambesia	18	Synar	528	
34	01/05/1945	DAR VI-31	Strike	Pomelaa	6	Hartley	528	Abort, #4 Turbo Out
35	01/12/1945	DAR VII-1	Strike	Lembar, Soemba	18	Synar	528	
36	02/02/1945	DAR VII-10	Strike	Malempoeng A/D, Celebes	18	Synar	528	
								Transfer, Mindoro, Philippines