

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Center for Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

Garfield Crawford

Lynwood, Washington

January 29, 2008

424th Bomb Squadron, 307th Bomb Group, 13th Air Force

Aircraft Commander B-24

10/14/1944 First Mission to Balikpapan, Lost 14 of 24 Planes

**On 10th Mission Enemy Planes Dropped Phosphorous Bombs & Iron Rails on Them
5 Battle Stars, Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal w/ 4 Oak Leaf Clusters**

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is January 29, 2008. I am interviewing Mr. Garfield R. Crawford by telephone. His telephone number is area code 425-743-5465. His address is 6303 177th Place SW, Lynwood, Washington 98037. 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

Gar, 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. Do you have a middle initial?

Mr. Crawford

R for Robert.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now the next thing I would like to do is get an alternative contact, a son or daughter or someone who would know where you are. We have found out that sometimes in two or three years we try to contact a Veteran and he has moved or something has happened. Do you have a son or daughter or someone that you might give us a name and phone number in case we can't reach you?

Mr. Crawford

My son lives in the area here. His name is William Crawford. His phone number is 425-330-6710.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now 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. "Agreement Read." Is that okay?

Mr. Crawford

That's fine. I'll try to be as accurate as I can reading from my orders and all of that. When it comes to actual incidents of combat, none of that is recorded to my knowledge, unless Al Gill recorded it. It would all have to come from memory. Thinking about that, and I've talked to other friends about this, I only remember the most scary things. When it comes to routine missions, I don't remember those. I can look at my records and remember that we were there, but unless something serious, like a friend of mine got shot down or something like that, I wouldn't remember.

Mr. Misenhimer

Sure, I understand that. Now tell me your birth date again.

Mr. Crawford

June 13, 1922.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you born?

Mr. Crawford

Edgar, Wisconsin.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Crawford

They are all dead now but I had two brothers and one sister.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were any of them in World War II?

My brother Jerry was in the CBI Theater and my brother Marvin was a Line Chief on an

engine repair squadron in Townsville, Australia. He was fixing the engines on the B-24's and P-38's and all that kind of stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did both of them come home from the war?

Mr. Crawford

Yes they both came home and they both died natural deaths, cancer.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Crawford

I was a young kid during the Depression and everybody was in the same boat so it really didn't impress me. We always had something to eat. Our family had a big garden. We had plenty to eat always. Dad was a newspaper editor. He owned the newspaper in the little town of Stratford. I don't remember much from Edgar other than that I was born there. We left when I was three years old and moved to Stratford. That's where most of my memory is from three years on up.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's also in Wisconsin, is that correct?

Mr. Crawford

Yes. I met Wendel McHenry in junior high and Bill Thompson in Green Bay where we went to high school.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was my next question, where did you go to high school?

Mr. Crawford

In Green Bay, Wisconsin. I was in West High. The Fox River divided the town in half. I lived on the west side and I went to West High.

Mr. Misenhimer

What year did you finish there?

Mr. Crawford

1940. The same year as Bill Thompson.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do when you finished high school?

Mr. Crawford

I worked in a cheese factory in Green Bay for one year. Then I went to Wheaton College for my freshman year of college.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is Wheaton in Illinois?

Mr. Crawford

Yes. Then the war broke out. I signed up. This is a funny thing. I went into Green Bay and went in the old malt shop to see if any of the old guys that I used to know were still hanging out there. There was only a girl there in a booth so I talked to her. She wanted to know what I was doing and I told her I was in college and all that. I asked her what she did and she told me that she was on the draft board. So guess what, a few days later my card showed up. So anyhow, I signed up in 1942 and they called me up in March of 1943. When I got called up I went to basic in Texas, preflight and then on up to Muskogee, Oklahoma for my primary flying on the PT-19. Then I went from there to Coffeyville,

Kansas for basic in a BT-13. They asked us, when we were enlisting, what kind of plane do you want to fly in combat. I told them that I wanted to fly a P-38. They said that I had to go to twin engine advanced. Then they sent me down to Texas for that. We were half way through that when they said they didn't need anymore P-38 pilots. They said that I would be reassigned to something. I wound up being assigned to a B-24 transition in Liberal, Kansas. I came out of that as an Aircraft Commander in B-24's. From there I went to Walla Walla, Washington and learned my overseas flying techniques and formation and air to ground and air to air firing and stuff. Then I went overseas and this is where my navigator came in. He navigated us to Hawaii first. There was a ship halfway between the States and Hawaii giving off a signal to help guide planes. We went right over the top of that ship. He navigated us right over it, smack on course. Then we were there for a day and we headed for Canton Island. Canton Island is like a dot on the ocean on a map. That's the place where Amelia Earhart was heading for when she disappeared. The navigator got lost and they never did hear from them. Then a two-star Admiral was coming from the Far East to the States and they were navigating towards Canton and their navigator screwed up and they missed and they went down in the ocean and floated around on a raft for about a month. So knowing that and that we were heading for Canton Island my navigator said, okay, we can start letting down. I said, "This is not a seaplane and I don't see any land. I've got to have dirt to land on." He said, "Right under that cloud, right in front of us (all the clouds, they were puffy, scattered clouds, would cast shadows on the ocean). Right underneath that cloud right in front of us is Canton." I kept letting down, letting down and the first thing you know that shadow got a little darker and sure enough there was an airstrip sitting under there. We went from

there to Tarawa and then to Guadalcanal and then to Townsville where my brother was. As soon as we landed there in Townsville I asked the guy that parked us where his particular engine repair shop was. He said it was the buildings right next to the runway. So I went over and saw my brother. We had dinner together. Then about 3:00 in the morning they got me up and all my crew and they flew us in a transport up to the island of Wakde. From there the unit was in the process of moving to Noemfoor. We went there and that's where I actually started flying my missions.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me go back and ask you some questions about your training. When you went in, you were drafted, is that right?

Mr. Crawford

Not really, no. When the draft letter showed up I ran down to the Army Air Corps Aviation Cadet Recruiting office and I passed all the tests and they said, "Okay, give us your draft card and we'll take care of this. You're in the Air Corps."

Mr. Misenhimer

Why did you choose the Air Corps?

Mr. Crawford

When I was a kid I was just fascinated with airplanes. In Stratford, these barnstormers used to come around and land their plane in some farmer's field giving rides for a price, of course. Then they would allow me to jump up on the wings and look into the cockpit. What a thrill that was. I would get to meet the pilot and I was always building model airplanes. The little planes that you glued together and were made out of balsa wood. I just wanted to fly. I couldn't volunteer without my mother's permission because I wasn't

old enough. I wasn't quite 21 when I finally convinced her that I would rather fly my mission and come home and spend the night in a warm tent instead of laying in the mud in the Infantry. She bought it. (Laugh) She let me go down and I got her signature and signed up with the Air Corps. That's how I got in there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you sign up at?

Mr. Crawford

In Green Bay, Wisconsin.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where was the first place that you went to?

Mr. Crawford

I think it was San Antonio, Texas. That was for our basic training where you learned to march and salute and all that. Then across the road we went into what was called pre-flight where we learned navigation and code and all that.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you travel from Wisconsin to Texas?

Mr. Crawford

By train.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that train trip?

Mr. Crawford

It was okay except that the car we were in had flat wheels. It bounced us all over and we couldn't get the windows closed, so the smoke from the engine was getting in the car.

Soot was on our clothes and so on and so forth. But we made it alive.

Mr. Misenhimer

About how long did that trip take?

Mr. Crawford

I don't remember, probably overnight or something.

Mr. Misenhimer

Had you been out of Wisconsin before?

Mr. Crawford

I don't think so.

Mr. Misenhimer

So this was your first big trip then?

Mr. Crawford

That was my first big trip.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long was your basic training, where you did the marching and that?

Mr. Crawford

I think most of that lasted a month or two.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any kind of weapons training during that?

Mr. Crawford

Yes they probably taught us how to shoot a .45 and a machine gun. Just the usual training stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was that at Lackland Air Force Base or do you know?

Mr. Crawford

It was probably Lackland, I'm pretty sure it was.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's where a lot of this first training was. Do you recall what your pay was when you first went in?

Mr. Crawford

Not really. I don't have any record of that. All I remember is that when we were leaving the post we had to wear a Class A uniform. They let us go into San Antonio. We were all so exhausted from the training that we found this little gully there in San Antonio, with some trees and about three or four of us went in there and we just laid down on the bank to rest. I fell asleep and so did the other guys. When I woke up there were buzzards sitting up in the trees. They were probably looking down at us, licking their chops, thinking they would get the eyeballs first. We were sleeping so hard the buzzards probably thought we were dead. Then we would catch the base bus and go back to base.

Mr. Misenhimer

San Antonio wasn't a very big town then, was it?

Mr. Crawford

No, but we didn't do much sightseeing. We went in there and got something to eat and kind of rested.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then you went across the street for your first training?

Mr. Crawford

For the pre-flight?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes.

Mr. Crawford

I think that might have all been part of the pre-flight training. I don't remember when we got our open post, whether that was in pre-flight or basic. It was hot in San Antonio.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do in pre-flight?

Mr. Crawford

Pre-flight was navigation training, code and radio, CW codes training. We had to learn how to take a radio apart and fix it up, that kind of stuff. And we had simulation flying equipment we would go into and it would be a light situation and you had the stick and the instructor would tell you to keep that light on a certain spot. If you used your rudder the light would move one way or the other. I guess this was kind of getting us ready for instrument flying. I've forgotten all the details. When they were giving us the eye test, there was a long chamber and they had two ropes and there were two poles at the other end. The instructors at the other end would put the poles right next to each other and then move them separately. Then he would say manipulate the ropes until you get the poles next to each other. I kind of knew what was going to happen. So I had a pretty firm grip on the rope and I put my thumbs together and he jiggled it back and forth. I just moved it around until my thumbs were back together and that put the poles back together. I often wondered as I was going through Cadets if that cheating would have an effect on me.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now you mentioned code, was that Morse Code?

Mr. Crawford

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you had to learn Morse Code?

Mr. Crawford

Yes. We had to do 25 words a minute or something like that as well as the blinkers. On both sides of the parade ground we used to split up the group. The guys on one side would receive from us. We would blink messages to them and then they would blink back. When we got into combat our radios went out. So I told my radio operator, use your blinker and get the attention of the radio operator on the next plane, which he did, but they couldn't understand each other. So that's how much the guys learned from this blinker training.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is primary the first flying training that you had?

Mr. Crawford

Yes, the first flying was in primary.

Mr. Misenhimer

And what plane did you fly there?

Mr. Crawford

The PT-19. I went into there in April of 1943.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is that the Stearman?

Mr. Crawford

No, this was a single wing, 250 hp. That was in Muskogee, Oklahoma.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you fly anything there in San Antonio?

Mr. Crawford

No I didn't do any flying San Antonio. The first flying was in Muskogee in primary.

Mr. Misenhimer

And that was the PT-19?

Mr. Crawford

Yes. The instructor's name was McLaughlin.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you solo?

Mr. Crawford

Probably after about 6 or 7 hours. My mom and dad came down there to Muskogee to see me. I saw them standing by a fence right next to the runway. I knew they were in town. As I was going around with my instructor I said, "There's my mom and dad over there." He said, "Okay, land and taxi over there." He got out and I got out and introduced him to my mom and dad. Then he said, "Get back in the plane and go around again." That was my solo flight. He told my mom and dad that he was going to make a good pilot out of me. That made my folks feel good. In fact there were five of us in his class. One guy was a transfer from the Canadian Air Force. Another guy had civilian flying to his credit

before he got into the Cadets. There was another guy who hadn't had any flying. One day my instructor took me aside and said, "Crawford, why are you so down? You're just down." I said, "What chance do I have to keep from getting washed out with all these guys with all of this flying experience?" He said, "I'll tell you something. They have learned some bad mistakes and they are not learning how to fly the Army way and they are going to get washed out. I'm going to make a pilot out of you. You are learning everything that I'm teaching you the way the Army wants you to fly." That made me feel good. I got out of that okay.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was he military or civilian?

Mr. Crawford

He was a civilian. He was a real good pilot. He would do silly things to show me. We had to learn all the maneuvers that you learned as a fighter pilot in order to be in combat. He would get down, take me down over a nice big flat field, and keep the wheels about a foot off the ground. He would say, "Now you take it and you hold this thing off the ground." I had my hand on the throttle and I could see him pulling the throttle back. We just lost flying speed and landed. He said, "See that. How easy that was? You just made your first landing." That's the way he taught me. When it came time to solo. Going back to Stratford, my dad being a newspaper editor, when anything happened he would take me out. If there was a tornado that ripped up a farm he would take me out and show me it. When a plane crashed at the airfield he took me down there and the plane's nose was in the ground and the pilot had been killed but he was in the plane. That memory stuck in my head so when I went up alone to practice spins, see that plane had gotten into a spin

and the pilot couldn't get it out. So anyhow, me and the flying instructor would be up at about 1,000 feet and he would say, "Okay, give me a 1 ½ turn and come out on that road over there." I felt comfortable because he was there in case I goofed up. When I was alone the first time I wanted to do some spins I would look at the ground and think, "This isn't high enough" then I would climb up another 1,000 feet. I was up to 6,000 feet before I had guts enough to go into a spin, by myself. Once I got used to that, then I gained confidence and it didn't bother me anymore.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was it like to solo?

Mr. Crawford

It was fun. I didn't try to do any fancy work. I just focused on flying the flight pattern. I would just fly around and come back and land and then go up. It was just kind of touch and go kind of stuff. Some of that bad weather that came across in Oklahoma, there was a big storm coming with low clouds. He said, "Okay, now you get up there and you stay between that storm and the airbase." As the storm advanced, I was being pushed closer and closer to the field. I got too close and the updraft in that low cloud was sucking me up into it. I put the nose down, put power on and dove out and broke away from that draft and I went in and landed. The instructor didn't chew me out. It was okay. They had a habit in primary if you didn't use your throttle properly, when your flight was over, they would wrap a red rag around your left hand to let everybody know that you didn't use your throttle. If you weren't using your rudders properly they would put one around your ankle. This one kid, I won't give you his name, he was a little bit on the stupid side, my instructor and this kid's instructor and I were standing in the shade of the shed where we

were working near this big auxiliary field and this kid was coming in for a landing and he said, "Now watch this kid. He never looks outside of the cockpit when he is coming in for a landing. He just looks at his airspeed and his heading." We had a crosswind. He said, "Watch this." The crosswind was blowing this guy sideways and he landed right in a farmer's cornfield across the road. Big corn stalks were flying up in the air. The prop was cutting his way through. They washed him out of cadets. It was a stupid thing. But before they washed him out, they got him out of the cockpit and brought the plane in and took all of his red rags off of his ankles and his arms and they put one around his head and made him stand on top of the outhouse for an hour. It's degrading but they felt in those days that was the way they were going to make us think. These were all little incidents that I remember. They had a rule that you had to land on the first third of the airfield. One day one guy drifted a little bit too long and he was past the half way mark when he landed. He was able to stop before he got to the end of the runway. He broke that rule. The next time we saw him we were all getting ready to march to the bus to go back to our bus. Here he was, down, digging a hole. They made him dig his own grave for breaking the rule. If you broke that rule, you had to dig your own grave because you were going to be dead. It wasn't too long after that in basic he got killed in a mid-air collision. I can still see his face when he looked up at us. He looked so lonely like, "Come on, get down here and help me." I remember that one vividly. In twin-engine advanced we had twin engine Beechcraft and various other types of twin-engine craft. We would do cross-countries night and day and buddy rides, where other cadets would ride. Two cadets would ride together. One cadet would be in the left seat for a while and the other guy would be his lookout if you were practicing instruments, and then we

would swap seats and this kind of stuff. When we graduated from that I went to Liberal, Kansas to B-24's.

That was a whole new experience. My first flight was at night in a B-24. My big worry was that I had been told that this instructor that I had, had a habit of cutting engines on takeoff to see what you would do. That was my big worry. At night and the first time in the plane and not knowing where all of the instruments and controls were. I felt sort of stupid. But it didn't happen. Usually you are afraid of things that didn't happen and usually would never happen. But that's the way I guess that you prepare yourself.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let's go back to primary. When you finished primary then you went to basic?

Mr. Crawford

Yes. I went to basic to BT-13's in Coffeyville, Kansas.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now the BT-13, is that the Vultee Vibrator?

Mr. Crawford

Yes. We called it the Vultee Vibrator.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was that a pretty good airplane?

Mr. Crawford

I never lost an engine or anything. We were flying blitz landings. They would have the runway lights down so low that the only way that you could see them was to get down low at a certain angle, 45 degrees, and then you could see them. You would land a touch

and go and then go up and circle around and come back in. On one of my go arounds, all of a sudden I have oil all over the windshield and all over the canopy. I couldn't see out. I pulled canopy back and being the smart 21 year old, I unbuckled by seatbelt and my parachute and stood up and was using my handkerchief to wipe the oil off the windshield. If we would have hit a downdraft I would have been 20 feet above that plane with my arm wiping something, but not a windshield. Anyhow, I got back into the plane, buckled the belt and went down and landed. The minute I poured the coal to it, there was oil all over again. I went around without wiping off the oil again, just looking out. I got landed and taxied in and called the tower and told them that I needed another airplane. They came down real quick like thinking I was some chicken cadet afraid to fly. When they saw that oil all over, then they understood and gave me another airplane. It was the slinger ring on the prop. The seal broke and that was throwing oil all over. These were just some little things that happened to us.

Mr. Misenhimer

About how long was your basic there?

Mr. Crawford

I think that was a two month stretch.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then when you finished basic, then where did you go?

Mr. Crawford

I went from basic to advanced, to twin engine advanced in Texas. I think it was in Pampa, Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was the advanced?

Mr. Crawford

It was fine. It was a nice airplane. A lot of work on codes, CW and that kind of stuff. Lose an engine on take off and there were a lot mid-air collisions at night and some guys would get vertigo. We had one guy on a wing. I think the lead plane was pulling away from him and he advanced his throttle and wound up plowing right into it. The one guy that survived it was the co-pilot in the plane that hit the other plane. It killed the lead instructor and the cadet and it killed the cadet in the one that did the colliding. The other guy bailed out and the antenna slashed his face as the plane was spinning. He got to the ground okay in a parachute. When he went to B-24's he wanted to go A-26's instead of B-24's. He was killed his first day in there. His wife was about to kill me, thinking I had assigned him to that school. I told her, "No. That was his choice. He wanted to fly the A-26's. That was his choice."

Mr. Misenhimer

The B-26 or the A-26?

Mr. Crawford

I think it was the A-26.

Mr. Misenhimer

The B-26, they had a lot of problems with it.

Mr. Crawford

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you get your wings?

Mr. Crawford

I graduated in the Class of 44A and that was in January of 1944.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you got your commission then, right?

Mr. Crawford

That's when I was commissioned, right.

Mr. Misenhimer

As a Second Lieutenant?

Mr. Crawford

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

And that was where?

Mr. Crawford

That was in advanced in Pampa, Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get a leave to go home anytime?

Mr. Crawford

Yes. I think we got 30 days after that. We had a guy from Florida in our class who had never seen snow in his life. We had a big blizzard. Boy, I tell you, it was cold. We couldn't fly. The tires of the plane were frozen and there was ice on the runway and on the ramp. We would have to put on our overcoats and boots to get from our barracks to

the washroom to shave and all that. We had this big snowdrift and this crazy nut put his swimming suit on and was running and diving into those snowdrifts with just his swimming trunks on. He was thrashing around in there like he was swimming. Needless to say he had pneumonia within a couple of days. So he missed graduating. He had his fun in the snow but that's about all I can say.

Mr. Misenhimer

This snow storm was there at Pampa, then?

Mr. Crawford

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

After your leave you went to where?

Mr. Crawford

From there I went B-24 transition in Liberal, Kansas.

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned the one that went to the A-26 and his wife thought that you had assigned him. Did you have some kind of position at that point?

Mr. Crawford

That was when I got recalled when I was in Walla Walla, Washington. My job was in the training of pilots, retraining all of the recalled pilots. We had them get their ground work up and then gave them enough flying time to get them qualified again. Then he wanted to go to A-26's or whatever it was.

Mr. Misenhimer

So this was after World War II, then?

Mr. Crawford

Yes, it was after. It was at the beginning of the Korean War in 1951.

Mr. Misenhimer

You had me a little confused because they didn't have A-26's in World War II but they did have them later.

Mr. Crawford

While I was waiting between World War II afterwards, there was something from the Pentagon that you had to get some flying in or you would lose your rating. I didn't want to lose my rating, so I went down to San Diego or wherever it was that they had an A-26 unit and I signed up. They said, "We don't need you right now. We're full up. Go home and we'll call you." It wasn't more than two weeks later that the Korean war broke out so forget that A-26 thing. I was assigned to come to Great Falls, Montana and from there I was assigned to MATS and I got kind of sick of kind of just tooling around in a transport. I got an Air Force training manual out and there was an intelligence school in Ayer, Massachusetts. Boy, that's what I wanted. I sent them a letter, or a telegram or something. They fired a wire right back and said, "Be here in 10 days." I went through the intelligence training there at Ayer, Massachusetts and then from there over to Japan in Communications Intelligence. I had pretty interesting duty.

Mr. Misenhimer

I want to cover more of that later. Now when you got to B-24 training there at Liberal, tell me more about that.

Mr. Crawford

As I told you, I was worried about having an engine cut on me on take off. It was hard

work. Lots of flying time. I could handle the plane okay and I learned all about it. When I graduated the final poop sheet on my training said that it was satisfactory and that I had a superior knowledge of the aircraft. Of course, as a pilot, it is necessary to have a knowledge of your aircraft. From there I went to Fresno, California. Then we went from there up to Walla Walla where we joined an overseas training unit. We did a lot of B-24 formation flying and air to ground and air to air gunnery stuff and cross countries. In fact, when we finished that we were heading for Hawaii, they confined us to the barracks. They wouldn't let us make phone calls or anything. They gave us leather fur lined jackets like we were going to go to Europe. That night the officer's club was having a big party and Oh Man! Whenever they had these parties at the officer's club they had ham, turkey and just all kinds of food. We knew we were heading for Hawaii the next morning. We thought, "Man are we going to have nice flight lunches." When we got out to the plane, they had a big cardboard box on the flight deck for the flight crew and in another cardboard box in the back, there was a guy in the back for their flight lunch. I talked it over with my navigator and copilot and bombardier and said, "Let's not touch this food until we get past the point of no-return between here and Hawaii." So that point came and we opened the box up and we had a loaf of bread, no knife, a jar of uncooked baked beans and a jar of peanut butter and that was our flight lunch. And a can of grapefruit juice, which was like drinking battery acid. I said, "Al, are we so far away that we can't fly back to San Francisco? I'm going to drop this whole bunch of crap right on the officer's club and let them know what we think of their flight lunches." Of course he thought it was a big joke and so did I but we ate what we had and went to Hawaii.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did your crew get together?

Mr. Crawford

That was before we went to Walla Walla. That's where I met my bombardier and copilot and the whole crew. Where we did our flying. There were times when we had to go up and there was no need for all of the gunners to be onboard. It would be dark out before we went up and I would tell them that I needed two observers in the back and I would tell the rest of them they could go on home. One guy had a wife in town and I would tell him, "Go on into town and be with your wife. You don't have to be with us, you would just be sitting back there drawing flight pay." Little things like that between the crew and me. If we had an accident all hell would have broken loose, but we didn't.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you got together in Kansas then?

Mr. Crawford

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then you got to Hawaii.

Mr. Crawford

We got to Hawaii and stayed there one night. I told my engineer, "Find something wrong with this plane so we can stay over night and spend the day here surfing or something." He had to get a few fuses replaced and that kind of stuff, all phony baloney stuff but we were able to spend the day there and have some good fun.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get into Honolulu?

Mr. Crawford

I don't think we did. I think we just stayed on the base and just went down to the beach for surfing and swimming and that's about all.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now the base, what field was that?

Mr. Crawford

Hickam Field.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was there any damage left from the bombing on December 7th?

Mr. Crawford

They had it pretty well cleaned up by the time we got there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Speaking of that, I forgot to ask you. Do you recall where you were when you heard about the bombing in Pearl Harbor?

Mr. Crawford

I was in bed. It was when I was at Wheaton College. I was working for this doctor for my room, shoveling snow and washing windows and scrubbing floors to pay for my room. I had no money when I went to college. I was determined to have an education. I worked in the school laundry ironing shirts for 25 cents an hour for my food and to help pay tuition. *(Tape side ended.)*

Mr. Misenhimer

Okay, so the doctor knocked on your door and did what?

Mr. Crawford

He said, "The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor." I said, "Oh?" Of course, I have to admit I had no idea where Pearl Harbor was at that time but I sure learned later. I finished that time in college. I didn't go back to college there because I knew I was going to be drafted.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you heard about the bombing at Pearl Harbor, how did you think that would affect you?

Mr. Crawford

I probably thought in the back of my head, well here we go. We're in the fight. When I flew over to Hawaii and we went down to the beach, I was kind of standing there and I had a funny feeling looking out over the ocean thinking maybe the Japanese are out there getting ready to come in. That was kind of scary feeling. Another feeling that I had, that may have been the same that everybody else had, was when we were on our missions and would see a fighter get shot down, and if we had fighter cover, and would see these two planes way off above us, fighting, one of them would go down in flames and I would get this funny feeling like of loss, to see somebody dying.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you didn't know whether it was American or Japanese either one did you?

Mr. Crawford

No, we didn't know.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then from Hawaii you went to Canton and then to Tarawa.

Mr. Crawford

And from Tarawa to Guadalcanal and from there to Townsville.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long were you on Guadalcanal?

Mr. Crawford

Just overnight. It was a real swamp. You had to walk on boards to cross the water, swamp to get to a tent. The tent was above the ground for the water to not get into it. That was a mosquito ridden joint. I don't know how our troops survived that. We saw them park the plane. Then I walked down to one of these Japanese machine gun revetments that were right on the edge of the water. It was high tide and there was a coconut log that they apparently rested their guns on and the water was about half way up that log, laying parallel with the water. I looked out there and I thought, "How in the heck were our troops ever able to land with that machine gun fire going across that water?" It was really something. The block house in the middle of that island was steel reinforced concrete. There was a huge hole in the one side where apparently a battleship 5 incher had hit it. That hole narrowed down to about a 3 inch hole and they said that it had squirted liquid metal that had killed everybody inside that compound. We went in the other door and you could still smell the stench of death in there. We were just sightseeing. We got gassed up and fed and got our lunches and went on to the next flight. One of the places that we landed and I think it was Canton, mail bags were piled 10 or 20 feet high about 100 yards long. They put plywood in our bomb bay and threw in as many bags of mail as we could

carry on to our next stop. We asked them how that happened and they said that the ships that carry mail came by but we needed them to carry bombs up to take up north so they offloaded all the mail and put in bombs and put on their way. So they were putting bags of mail into airplanes that came by. That's the way they got the mail delivered. I got my Christmas mail in March.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then when you got to Townsville you visited your brother. What else did you do there?

Mr. Crawford

We were just there for dinner and then they got us up at 3:00 the next morning and we flew out. I didn't get back to spend anytime with my brother until halfway through my missions up north. I had rest leave coming and they had assigned us to Sydney and I got off the plane in Townsville because that was a refueling stop and told my crew that I would catch up with them in Sydney. So I got hold of my brother and got myself into a BOQ and he and I had dinner together and that kind of stuff.

Having ironed shirts when I was in college, his laundry came in and he had me take his shirts and put a crease down the back. I could do that for him, so I was ironing his shirts. (Laugh) He laughed and said, "This is something, a Lieutenant ironing shirts for a Sergeant." But he was my brother. That was all part of life back then.

Mr. Misenhimer

At Townsend, you left your B-24 there, right?

Mr. Crawford

Yes we left it there. What they did is they took the ball turret out. It weighed so much. The Japanese had found out that trying to attack coming straight up underneath it was

like a turkey shoot. Our twin 50's in the ball would just knock them right off. So they decided to not do that anymore. So they put in a plexiglass blister with two slots in it so the guy could stand up inside the plane to do his shooting. But the Japanese thought the ball turret was still up there.

Mr. Misenhimer

I thought you went to Nadzab, New Guinea from there, is that right?

Mr. Crawford

From Townsville they flew us in a transport up to Nadzab and we landed on a metal strip. A little added information. When I was looking for some missionaries once, I was chairman of the missionary committee of our church, and this one name came up. There was a missionary, the guy lived locally here, but when I mentioned Nadzab he said that he was raised there as a missionary kid. I told him about landing on that metal strip and he said that the missionaries still use that metal strip to land.

At Nadzab we had to fly some practice missions. They trained combat pilots by flying with an experienced pilot. We went to Wewak and some guys went to Rabaul. We had to fly two of those missions and then we went up to join our unit at Wakde.

Mr. Misenhimer

What unit were you in at that point?

Mr. Crawford

I didn't get to the 13th Air Force until I got to Wakde.

Mr. Misenhimer

And what bomb squadron?

Mr. Crawford

307th Bomb Group, 421st Bomb Squadron.

Mr. Misenhimer

About when did you join them on Wakde?

Mr. Crawford

We didn't fly any missions off of Wakde, they were in the process of moving. But we had all our gear piled up on the back of a GI truck. We just slept on top of our stuff to make sure that nobody swiped our stuff. Then they loaded us up on planes the next day and flew us to Noemfoor. That's where we started flying. Incidentally, Colonel Lindbergh was out there. He was teaching our fighter pilots fuel conservation so they could stay in the air longer and go further. They figured out how to get droppable tanks going. He did some training with the B-24's for fuel control. We always took off 12,000 pounds overloaded. Everybody had to learn how to handle that and get off the ground on a short runway. That kind of stuff. The B-24's had a habit of blowing up on takeoff because of the gas fumes in the bomb bay and when you hit the gear handle to raise the gear, the little electric motor in the bomb bay would spark and 'boom', it will kill everybody onboard. So I always had my crew, the crew chief especially, to make sure that the bomb bay doors were cracked at least a foot to a foot and a half on either side of the catwalk to get some fresh air.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you join your unit there, about what date?

Mr. Crawford

September 19, 1944 we had a training mission to Wewak. Then on October 5, 1944 we

flew into Nadzab and flew out of Nadzab a couple of times. Then we went to Balikpapan on October 14, 1944. That was a 1,700 mile mission, 16 hours and 5 minutes. Then we started on Cebu City and Negros and many other others and so on down the line; 48 missions. The crew had to fly 40 missions before they could go home. Having been a squadron leader I had to stay and fly two missions each with four different crews to help decide who was going to be the next squadron leader. On my very last of these four missions, everything was going fine. We were at about 3,000 feet. I was standing between the pilot and copilot, watching their procedures and all of a sudden two engines quit on the left side. I vaguely remember seeing the engineer, over near the open end of the wing where the fuel valves were. You had to shine a flashlight on a mirror and then reach back towards the wall where all the valves were. I remember seeing him over there. So I grabbed him. Everybody was grabbing for parachutes. I grabbed him by the scruff of the neck and said, "You get your flashlight over there and you set those valves right." Which he did and then the engines came on. One thing that I learned in all of my flying was to stay focused, what would happen and not start going through this, this, this and this so this must be the ending here. In the corner of my eye, I saw him over there and it was an instant reflex thing to get him over there with a flashlight and get those valves right. That was almost my very last mission because we were within 10 or 15 seconds of hitting the water.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now your first mission was about 16 hours you said?

Mr. Crawford

16 hours and 5 minutes. It was the one from Noemfoor to Balikpapan. It was 1,700 miles.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you do a good job on that bombing mission?

Mr. Crawford

I guess so. The General briefed us before that mission. He said, "40 to 60% of you guys aren't coming home." That was going to be a bloody battle with fighters in the air and antiaircraft fire. Our outfit lost 14 out of 24.

Mr. Misenhimer

In that one battle?

Mr. Crawford

Yes, in that one battle.

Mr. Misenhimer

Oh my goodness, that's a lot.

Mr. Crawford

It was a bloody battle, no doubt about it. We went out sometimes by ourselves and sometimes we went out with six. Sometimes there would be 50% loss and sometimes only one or two planes down. There was always a loss if we had fighter interception and antiaircraft fire. We always lost somebody.

Mr. Misenhimer

What altitude did you normally bomb from?

Mr. Crawford

It depended on what kind of antiaircraft they had. If they had the big guns it would be 20,000 feet. At Balikpapan they had 60 110mm's that would reach 20,000. The Japanese fighters would parallel us as we were coming in. Then they would radio their gunners to

let them know what our altitude was and our airspeed and direction. Sometimes when we were out alone and not expecting anything, we might fly over an island that we had never flown over before, lo and behold I would look out and I would see these flashes of light down on the ground and here would be 40mm shells banging away, exploding in front of us. That was at 5,000 feet. Shrapnel would be hitting the plane like hail on a tin roof. I would change my direction and altitude and airspeed to try to confuse them a little bit and we all got out of there okay.

Another time we were doing some low level stuff in Borneo and we were coming home and there was a Japanese submarine base that we hadn't looked at. I said, "Okay, we're going in to take a look at this." I was just above the water of a river that kind of went around and make this piece of land, like an island. We were flying over there and I told the gunner to blast away at anything he saw. We did and then we climbed on out. There was no anti-aircraft fire. So we were climbing out and the gunner said, "Hey, we've got a lot of ammunition, let's go back one more time." I said okay and we came back down over the top of that island, heading right straight down towards the submarine base. As I was looking out the window, good grief, we flew right over the top of a 40mm gun emplacement on the side of that hill and he was really blasting away at us but he missed us. When we were down on that water we didn't see it way above us on that hill. We didn't even see it. But we sure found it. We continued to dive, I just changed my altitude and direction and we got away without being hit. It was just that one gun. There were these red lights coming up at us. We got the heck out of there. That was one of those 'oops' missions.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever have fighter escorts?

Mr. Crawford

I think we had fighter escort on about 6 missions out of the 48. When we were going up to Negros Island when I was a rookie, I was on the left wing of the lead plane. Hunter was the lead pilot. We went through a storm front. We were supposed to have fighter coverage. We broke out of that front shortly before we got to Negros and here was this whole pile of fighters. My gunners figured there must have been 60 of them. We thought, "Good, our fighter cover has arrived." Well, yeah, there wasn't one American plane in that batch, it was all Japanese. There were some of them that were way up above us, high above us, and they were dropping these phosphorous bombs that would explode high and then all the tentacles of burning phosphorous, and we had to fly through that. Then once we got beyond that, another batch were way up high and they had bundles that looked like jackstraws. It was metal rods. They would turn those loose and they were tumbling through the air and they were hoping to hit the wings and the engines and all that. We had to get through that. Before we got to that point, Hunter, his number three engine caught fire. He was the lead plane and I was on his left wing. He peeled out of formation and I told my crew to count the parachutes because I knew they were going to go down. I just held my heading and my altitude and airspeed because I was the only one up front and I wanted the rest of the formation to stay on course. Protocol of formation flying, when the leader goes down, the guy on his right wing takes over. He came up and got up there on my right wing and I followed him in. We lost another plane on that mission. The end of that story took about a month. A month later we were coming down from Manila.

We were bombing Corregidor and as we were going down the bottom side of Mindanao I was doing my usual sightseeing. I was dropping down, looking at the palm trees and thinking how pretty the water was. I saw these little blinking lights in the palm trees. I thought, "That must be somebody with little mirrors and they were showing the reflection of the sun." So I asked my navigator to log that in and the next day they sent a PBV over there and sure enough it was the six surviving members of Hunter's crew. They were just down to their shorts. The Filipino guerillas picked them up at Negros. They went back to the plane and buried the dead. They took all the ammunition and guns and whatever they could find. It took them a month to go from island to island at night to get down to the bottom of Mindanao and they gave all of their stuff to the guerillas for helping them and we got them back home. They sent them right back to the States because if they had gone on missions and been shot down, the Japanese would have found out how they were rescued. That was the tail end of that particular incident.

Mr. Misenhimer

I understand that you all were one of the first to bomb Corregidor, is that right?

Mr. Crawford

Yes. We were the wingman. We were flying wing for another squadron leader. It was cloudy. My bombardier said, "Hey, I can see a dock down there." I said, "Okay, lets drop on it." So we did. We turned out to be the first to bomb Corregidor after the Japanese took over. Then we went back many other times and bombed their guns and barracks. In fact one day, it was a beautiful day, we were at 20,000 feet. The battleships were just off the entrance and they were firing their big guns. You could see these red hot shells arcing through the sky and landing on those gun emplacements. Huge gun emplacements on

Corregidor at the entrance to Manila Bay. We didn't get hit by anything. They were shooting at us but we didn't get hit. One plane took a direct hit in the ball turret area, where the ball turret used to be. It killed the gunner and almost killed the two waist gunners. The gunner that was in there that was killed, was cut in half. His strap was hanging on and he was flapping in the breeze. The crew chief took his machete and cut that strap and let the rest of the body fall into Manila Bay. I thought, "Boy, I hope nobody ever writes a book about this, for those parents to find out how their boy died." It wasn't more than about 10 years ago I read a book that was written by a guy that had told that story and he named names. I thought it was a horrible thing to do. But that's the way it works.

Mr. Misenhimer

When they dropped those phosphorous bombs and those metal rods, did they hit any airplanes?

Mr. Crawford

I was away from the formation and was just bouncing up and down and turning and turning sideways and all of that and was turning sideways and all that to avoid what was coming at me. I don't know who got hit or what else happened in the outfit. I know we lost Hunter but I don't know who else went down. Most of us got away.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was that the only time they did that tactic or did they drop that several times?

Mr. Crawford

That was the only time that we had the phosphorous fire and metal scrap. It looked like metal fence posts. When they would go by we had a good look at them. If they had hit

any of the props or wings it would have done some serious damage. I don't know if I told you about this mission where the Colonel hit the mountain. It was his last mission so he chose his favorite squadron commander, a Major and his crew to take him up. I think it was on December 10, 1944. We were going to Miri Town, it was going to be a low altitude, delayed action fuses on 250 pound bombs. We would be low level over the top of this tank farm. We would fly over it and the bombardier would toggle the bombs out to hit the side of the tank. Before we took off, during our usual inspection of the airplane, the bombardier had his responsibilities to check his bombs and stuff. He came to me and said, "There is one bomb that feels warm and it's a different kind of bomb than the rest and it has a different kind of fuse." Of course looking back, hindsight is perfect, looking back at it I should have said, "Make sure that bomb does not get out of here armed." Because when they fell that wire would pull and then the propeller would turn and it would arm the bomb. But I didn't say that. I figured that was his responsibility to know. So we were a little late taking off. The Colonel took off ahead and I was all worried. "We're going to be late and the Colonel is going to be mad." We took off. It was about 2:00 in the morning or something like that. It was pitch dark. I usually took off, and when we were going down the runway, there was an island right across the bay with mountains on it. The course to this target was exactly the same course as our runway. I always went out over the water, turned to my right, flew to the edge of that island where it sloped down to the water, turned and went straight out over the water, all the time, between these islands and climbed out. We were over the bay, almost to that corner when I saw this big flash of light on the mountain on that island across the bay. I told my navigator, "A volcano just opened up over there, write that in your log." We flew to the rendezvous

point and circled around, and no Colonel. I thought, "We were late and we're really going to catch hell now." I said, "Give me a course to the target." And he did and we went over to Miri Town and nobody was around, just us. I thought, "Obviously he hasn't been here because nothing is smoking. Maybe he is late or something, but we'll do our thing." So we went down over the tank farm. I was aiming down towards another one of the oil tanks and I was just about to tell them, "Don't fire on that thing." My bombardier said he was just about to say the same thing. He said he was just about to scream at that nose gunner, "Don't fire on that thing" when it exploded right in front of us. I cranked it over the best that I could crank over a B-24 and went around the edge of the flame and then around and came around back and we made another run. All of a sudden there was a huge explosion underneath us. It boosted us up 500 to 1,000 feet. Junk was flying past us and everything. The engineer came down and said, we've got a huge hole in the right wing. You could crawl through it, it was so big and there were about 50 holes in the tail. The bombardier, a big blast of wind came through the floorboard and I called down to the bombardier and said, "Are you okay?" He said, "Yes." It had caved in his bombardier window and he had his parachute and his bombardier kit in back of him on the nose wheel door. It blew the nose wheel doors open and out went his parachute. So I circled around and told my copilot, "You fly this thing. I've got to go back and look for damage in the hydraulic lines and fuel lines." I did that and went back up to the cockpit and we still had a couple of bombs left. We did another job on some more tanks and we came on home. We were on radio silence, as always, until we were 5 minutes from returning to the base. Then my radio operator signaled in and put in his report. When we landed, the General and everybody was there. They knew it was me, instead of the Colonel, that

came back. They told me that the Colonel had crashed. They asked me to get into another airplane right away and fly some observers over to where it hit. They couldn't see anything because it was too late in the day. The next day they went over. There were about 20,000 Japanese on that island and they tried to get some troops in there to retrieve the bodies but they kept shooting them off. They didn't get at that plane until the war was over. It was Colonel Hinton and the crew and they all died. He should have known better than to try to fly over those mountains. It was too short of a distance to that mountain to be able to get up the altitude to get over that mountain. I don't know why he ever thought he could do it. He made that mistake and it cost him his life.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was he flying? Or was somebody else flying?

Mr. Crawford

We assumed that it was the Colonel because he was pretty bullheaded and he was always in command.

Mr. Misenhimer

If it was somebody else, he would have known better.

Mr. Crawford

Yes, otherwise he wouldn't have survived that long, because it was their last mission, as well as the Colonel's last mission. The Colonel didn't have a crew, he had to borrow somebody else's crew. He chose us as his wingman. I'm glad he didn't decide to chose us as his crew or there would've been a battle in the cockpit.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where you blew up this tank farm, what altitude were you at there?

Mr. Crawford

Oh, 50 to 100 feet.

Mr. Misenhimer

Way down there, then?

Mr. Crawford

Right over the top. There were even pieces of wood stuck in the bottom of the plane. Our last run was to a coastal steamer that was docked. At one of the docks, we went over there and threw a couple of bombs into the side of that as well as the warehouse where he was working. That was the last two bombs that we had. We finished it off and we were able to get home. That was the important thing. The General gave me a Distinguished Flying Cross, and gave everybody else in the crew a Oakleaf Cluster for their Air Medal. Normally, we had our own crew. On this particular mission, they sent a photographer along and after it was all over with, we found out that he had been in the laundry as a laundry worker and then they gave him this camera and told him to go fly. He wanted to get home early. He didn't want to stay the full four years. He went right back to the laundry the next morning. He got hit in the foot. I told all of the crew to take their flak suits off and stand on them because all of this gunfire is going to come up, we're going to be close to the ground. You had better protection with your flak suit laying on the deck. He was the only one that didn't listen to me and he got hit in the foot. On this one mission he got an Air Medal and a Purple Heart. My whole crew that flew their 40 missions, not one of them got a Purple Heart. We all got through that without a scratch.

Mr. Misenhimer

What about that bomb that was heating. What was that?

Mr. Crawford

That was the one that exploded underneath us and caused so much damage. It had an instantaneous fuse nearly.

Mr. Misenhimer

Bob Edgar mentioned something about one of the bombs went through the warehouse and came out the other side.

Mr. Crawford

Oh yes, he told me about that. His mother went over there on a trip on a steamer. She took a picture of that warehouse and the bomb did do that. It went through one side and out the other into a bunch of oil cans, 100 gallon drums.

Looking back on all of this, we could have gotten ourselves shot down or destroyed by our own foolishness. Being 21, 22 years old, you're invincible and you're not going to die, so "hey, hey let's do it." We were going to skip bomb this one ship that was beached. We had a couple of bombs left. My navigator was laying on his stomach. I don't know if he told you this, but he watching as the bomb went down and landed and hit a wave just right, parallel to the water and it bounced and almost came back up into the plane over the ship to the other side. You look back on these things and think , "Yee gads, we almost did it to ourselves."

Mr. Misenhimer

In your bomb squadron, how many planes were lost total, in the whole time, do you know?

Mr. Crawford

I have no idea but I have some documents on that, monthly records. I saw one where our

outfit shot down 1200 fighters. Then there is page after page after page of planes that went down. I looked at all of my plane numbers that I flew and I don't think that I flew the same plane twice in those 40 missions.

Mr. Misenhimer

Because they were damaged or something?

Mr. Crawford

Yes or other people were flying them or they got damaged and junked or were shot down or whatever. I didn't really keep track of all of this in my mind. If we lost a plane, we lost a plane.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many planes were in a bomb squadron?

Mr. Crawford

Usually we had 24 in a squadron.

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned that you lost 14 out of 24 one time.

Mr. Crawford

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's a lot. Most of the people did not survive, is that correct?

Mr. Crawford

Yes, most of the people that got shot down, we never saw them again. They had submarines off all of our major targets ready to pick up downed people that couldn't make it home. This one crew, Bob Connell, his crew couldn't make it home and they

bailed out over an island. They couldn't make it any further in the Philippines. The navigator bailed out, too far out and the sharks probably got him. They never saw him again. Connell came down in a tree on a Japanese island. He stayed up in the tree all night. The next morning he looked down and he could see the Japanese troops searching for people. Once those were all gone, they all got down and some of the crew got into a canoe, a native canoe and went out to sea and Bob and the rest of the guys walked to a shore and a submarine showed up and they signaled and they came in picked them up and got them out. The machine gunners on the submarine subdued the Japanese efforts so these guys could get out to the boat. He finished his mission because nobody helped them. They did their own help.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about the guys in the boat, were they rescued too?

Mr. Crawford

They were ambushed. They never made it out. They were ambushed. It was the Chief's son and he was friendly with the Japanese and he squealed on them. He set up an ambush and they killed them all while they were paddling out. About a month or so later, this wasn't very nice, but we flew a mission over that village and we destroyed all of their boats and their gardens. We didn't try to destroy the people but we destroyed their boats and their garden. They dropped leaflets that said, "Don't ever do that again. We're your friends." They probably looked at that and thought, "Yeah, great friends. You destroyed our boats and our gardens." But that's the way things were.

Mr. Misenhimer

What island were you on during most of this flying?

Mr. Crawford

I did most of my combat off of Morotai which is in the Spice Islands. The island was about 40 miles long and we were on the peninsula. The Infantry set up a perimeter at the top of the peninsula to keep the Japanese away from us. All of the Japanese on the other island didn't have any boats anymore. Our B-25's and fighters and the Navy took care of all of that. Before a mission, if there were active fighters around, they bombed us practically every night. We knew they were coming from somewhere. But our fighters and B-25's and stuff would go out and hit these small islands all around to suppress the fighters so that we could get off and get past them and get to our targets, especially if we were going to go Borneo. We flew an awful lot of missions up in the Philippines trying to help suppress the fighters before MacArthur landed. The photography showed absolutely no part of any runway that was usable. They spotted fighter planes parked between buildings in the towns. They were taking off on the country roads and city streets and stuff to get up at us.

Mr. Misenhimer

I think it was Bob that mentioned that some of the planes, you thought they might be German planes, is that right? Or German pilots?

Mr. Crawford

The Filipinos thought when they rescued Hunter's crew, they said they thought they were Germans. Apparently there were German pilots flying the Japanese planes. They were coming at us four abreast towards the last, which is unusual. I understand that the Germans did that over in Europe. We didn't know that. We just thought it was unusual. They would be coming at us four abreast and you could see the blinkers of the guns in

their nose and wings, blinking away at us. The only thing we could do is, when you see these flares coming at you, I would raise up and down, fly up and down, everything to keep from getting hit. On this run where the tank exploded underneath us and the one where it exploded in front of us, when we got home, they found a hole in the cowling of the number three engine. When the engineer of the ground crew took that off, there was a big piece of oil tank with rivets in it with Shell Oil company on it, just brushing across the top cylinders of that engine. It would have ripped the whole engine out, had it had enough energy. You collected stuff as you flew through that junk, especially the one that exploded in front of us. That's where that one came from. If we had been either higher or lower that would have come into the cockpit and probably taken my copilot's head off because it was on his side of the plane.

We had another one. When Hunter went down, I read an article that was written about his navigator. He survived. He said that he and his pilot were on the catwalk getting ready to bail out and the pilot and went back and said he was going to try to get the copilot out. He had been hit between the legs with an exploding 20mm shell. He was in shock and bleeding to death. Hunter was going to go back and help him out. The navigator bailed out and shortly after that the wing broke off and the plane went into a spiral and nobody else got out. I had my crew count the parachutes and there were six. We know that the pilot and copilot and two other guys didn't make it. We figured it was the nose gunner and probably the bombardier that got killed.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were some other memorable missions?

Mr. Crawford

Some of it was just foolishness. There were so few missions where we had terrible, terrible combat except in Balikpapan. That was like the Ploesti of the Pacific. They had tremendous antiaircraft fire and about 100 fighters hanging out around there. I read an article years afterward that when the Japanese saw us coming there at Balikpapan, they locked the gates and would not let the Indonesians who were running the refineries to come out. So I'm sure a lot of them got killed. In Palawan we used to bomb Palawan. That was a staging base for the Japanese coming up from Borneo going up to the Philippines and then from the Philippines back down, there was a big airfield. We bombed that thing, I don't know how many times. We used 1,000 pounders and then the next time we would go back they were all repaired, so they started giving us delayed action fuses 24 hour delayed action fuses on those thousand pounders. If they moved the fuse 100th of an inch it would explode. There were some American prisoners there and we got these stories from one of them that escaped. He said that about 30 Japanese were hanging all around this hole watching this guy down there trying to defuse it. Needless to say when it went off it took all of them out. The powers to be decided that we should fly some missions and drop our bombs alongside the runway because we couldn't figure out where all of these planes were coming from. When the Dutch troops went in there and invaded we landed there and refueled. My crew and I walked through the jungle and here were all of these Betties and fighters, all chewed to pieces because we had dropped frag bombs. It just chewed them all up and that suppressed them and they couldn't come after us on Mindanao.

(Tape side ended.)

Mr. Misenhimer

So with those frag bombs you had torn up all those planes then?

Mr. Crawford

Yes. The frag bombs were about 250 pounds. They had a front part that stuck out so that it would go off above ground when it hit. They were frag bombs. It was like a big huge hand grenade and it tore the daylights out of everything there. This one prisoner of war from Palawa that got back. He said that the Japanese took them all out of their hideouts and were running them into the caves. He was one that got away and into the jungle. He dove into the water and swam across the bay to the next island and some missionaries kept him alive. He said that the Japanese poured gasoline down into those caves and then threw in hand grenades and shot anybody that tried to get out. They killed all of the prisoners that way. That was terrible.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, I've heard that story before.

Mr. Crawford

Yes I've got some writeups that show pictures and writeups on it. Incidentally, when Colonel Lindbergh was over there we heard that he shot down two Japanese fighters and he was a civilian at that time. He shouldn't have been there but he was.

Mr. Misenhimer

He wanted to fly a combat mission and he did.

Mr. Crawford

In fact, in our Sunday school class a couple of Sundays ago this new couple showed up. He is an old-timer and somebody told me, "You've got to go talk to this guy, he was a fly

boy during World War II.” So last Sunday I cornered him and I told him, “I understand that you were a flyer.” He said, “Yes.” I asked him what he flew. He said, “P-38's and P-47's.” My next time I get to talk to him I'm going to try to figure out whether he flew any fighter cover for me. That would be interesting. We had another guy in our Sunday school class that when we were talking about the war we were telling him about the war and telling war stories. He said, “I used to see the planes taking off.” He was in the Infantry. I said, “What were you doing there?” He said, “We were guarding your fuel tanks.” There were Japanese in the jungle still that were trying to sneak out and destroy our fuel supply. He showed up in the Sunday School class same as me. Small world.

Mr. Misenhimer

During World War II, what would you consider your most frightening time?

Mr. Crawford

That was probably over Balikpapan on that first mission. We had bad weather too. We had weather penetration exercises where we could come to a cloud bank with a full formation and the guy on either side of the lead plane would go out 45 degrees for so many seconds. Then go back on course. The guy from the lower back squadron would drop down 1,000 feet and do the same thing. Hopefully, everybody would hold their heading. But occasionally planes would collide so we would lose a few that way. That was my big prayer when I was going in for that, that nobody would collide with us. Of course, I had a famous three word prayer that I would use, “God help us.” When we would get into these tight situations. Whenever there was antiaircraft fire or fighters, it was scary. Towards the end, our job in the 307th was to destroy the fuel supply for the Japanese Navy and the Air Force by destroying that refinery in Borneo at Balikpapan.

We destroyed virtually every refinery that they had in Borneo. Borneo sits over a huge oil field or lake or whatever you want to call it. Once we did that, they had no more fuel for their ships or their planes. So we would go out sometimes, even as a squadron, and here would be one single fighter up and he would be circling around out in front of us. A little higher and out in front. I told my gunners, "Don't shoot at him and scare him away. Let him commit himself and then we'll shoot him down." Sure enough, we would curve and he would come right at us. They always aimed for the lead plane. I would let them come so far and then I would tell everybody, "Okay, open up on him." They would open up on him and his plane would shudder and kind of wobble a little bit and then he would dive down a little bit. I would tell them to keep track of him. He was headed back towards land. He had gotten pretty well shot up and changed his mind about staying and fighting. It was very seldom that we found any fighters after about 19 or 20 missions.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you come home from over there?

Mr. Crawford

I came home, I think it was in August of 1945. We went up to Manila and landed. The war ended when I was in Manila. All of the antiaircraft guns were going off and we thought, "What the heck has happened?" Then they said the war was over, so that was it. Then we were going to go wait for a plane to take us home and MacArthur grounded all aircraft so they could fly the troops from the islands and get them back up to Manila to where they could get onboard ship and go home. So we waited until the next ship was ready and they put us onboard ship and we came home on ship. We landed in San Diego or some place on the West Coast. I think it was down in San Diego and then they took us

to Riverside. From there they put us on a train back to Chicago. I lived in Wisconsin. I was the troop commander on the train and every time the train would stop, we would lose a few. Guys would go into town and buy some booze or they had a friend or something or got acquainted with a little girl and decided to not stay with the train. We had quite a list of missing in action.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you stay in and make a career of it?

Mr. Crawford

No. After the war, I had enough. I got out. I stayed in the Reserves however and that's why I got recalled into the Korean War. I stayed in the Reserves. I kept my rating. When I went to the Intelligence school they offered us, they said, "They are just forming a B-47 squadron. Why don't you guys go down there and you will probably be a full Colonel in nothing flat." I said, "No thanks. I'll stay with the Intelligence." I wasn't interested in joining the B-47's because I had heard about all the accidents they were having. I didn't want to fly that kind of plane.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got back in 1945, when were you released from active duty?

Mr. Crawford

It was probably in August or September or something like that. Then I went to college.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your highest rank during World War II?

Mr. Crawford

Captain. Once I became a squadron leader I had to have the rank of Captain to become a

squadron leader. We were expected to lead the group in combat too. Each squadron took turns leading the group. If I was flying the day that our squadron was leading the group I was expected to be able to lead the group. That's the way it went.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever hear Tokyo Rose?

Mr. Crawford

I think we did. Back in the tent we would have the radio on, listening to music and stuff. It was a big laugh as far as we were concerned.

Mr. Misenhimer

I think Bob Edgar said you all bought a short wave radio down in Australia?

Mr. Crawford

We had a radio in our tent but I don't know where it came from. We even had a monkey. I don't even know where that came from. I think one crew had him and they passed him on to us. We put a box, nailed a box against a palm tree for him to hang out in. We had a big leash on him. We would stick him inside the tent sometimes at night. These little lizards, about 6 to 8 inches long, would come into the tent and they would go up the flagpole and of course the monkey would go after them. They would go around and around and around the pole and the finally the monkey would grab them and the lizard would grab his finger in his mouth and bite and the monkey would scream and let go and they would both come crashing down and the lizard would take off and the monkey would be getting some TLC from us. We would check his finger and all that. We used to watch him eat, to see what he ate and all that. We had the usual entertainment. And we had a little dog. I've forgotten. We called him Buster or something like that. I've got

photographs in my album of this stuff. We had half of an oil drum that we cut it in half and used it for our laundry. We would build a fire and put it up on the rocks and boil water and soap and we would do our own laundry. We had a frying pan and we got hold of some GI butter and we would put a slab of that in the frying pan and the frying pan would be practically red hot and the butter wouldn't melt. (Laugh) I don't know what they were giving us, whether it was cosmoline or what. It was supposed to be butter. We would go over to the supply tent. They had chicken wire with a big circle of wire and we would reach in there and grab a potato and onion and stuff and go back to our tent and chop it up and have fried potatoes. We would get sick of the bully-beef and turkey that they fed us. The bully-beef was not bad. I enjoyed that. This General flew through and the word got out that he had a bunch of ice cream mix in his plane, so a few of the crew chiefs snuck down there and got into the plane and grabbed a whole case of it and made off with it. Then we split it up amongst everybody. We had some that we buried underneath our tent in the ground. The General wasn't going to take off until he found his ice cream mix, but he never did find it. Another little story, when we were flying over to the Pacific we landed on Canton. When we landed we asked them where we could get a tent. They said there are some empty ones because the other crews have take off, so there are some empty ones. We found this one tent that was right on the beach, right next to the water with a nice cool breeze. So we put all our stuff in there and we went swimming. When we got back all of our stuff was moved. We found that it was moved inland about four rows, hotter than hades. A General had landed and his Captain or whoever his aide was, had decided that our tent should be for the General. The next morning we heard all of this loud noise and it turned out to be the highest tide of the year and the General's

luggage was floating all around inside that tent. Now that's retribution if I've ever heard it. These are things that you laugh about. They were tragic for the guy that it happened to, but to us it was funny.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever see any USO shows?

Mr. Crawford

They had a couple of them that came to Noemfoor but we had been flying and we got back around 10:00 and the show was practically over by the time we got back. Then antiaircraft guns went off so that meant the Japanese were coming to bomb, so we just went back to our tent. We didn't see anything. What we did see wasn't worth talking about. They had Red Cross girls making donuts down at the flight line. They were about less than half an inch thick, very greasy. They would come by the planes before takeoff to give us donuts and coffee. I would usually run them off because we were on a schedule. We had to take off at a certain time and they were out there trying to peddle donuts. I usually ran them off and the boys didn't like them anyway. The donuts weren't very good.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were they selling them or giving them away?

Mr. Crawford

They were giving them away. And they used to come tearing through the quarters where we had our tents. Most of us were standing around taking a shower naked, we figured they were just out shopping. (Laugh) It was kind of funny watching them.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get home with any souvenirs?

Mr. Crawford

No, not a thing. In fact, when we were getting ready to get off the ship, they had an inspection. They wouldn't let us keep anything except the shirt and pants we had on and shoes. They took away any .45's or any GI stuff that did not belong to us. Souvenirs and everything, they took everything away and threw it overboard. So we got home with just a shirt and pants and shoes. That's all we got.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were overseas, could you get your mail with any regularity?

Mr. Crawford

Yes. It was late, but we got it. When we got it, we got it. One night, just before Christmas, the Japanese raided us. One bomb hit our mail room and just blew stuff all over the area. It blew sand in my face. I don't know whether we had anything in there or not. Some of the stuff that came in March was smashed down to about ½ inch and any cake or cookies or any goodies stuff, was smashed with ants all over the place. I wrote home and told them that anytime they are going to send any of that kind of stuff to put it in a coffee can and seal it so that we would be able to use it when it gets here. I got letters occasionally but I don't remember anything about delays. I was just so happy to get a letter that I didn't pay any attention to the delay. I never got any bad news.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you crossed the equator, you didn't have any kind of ceremony did you?

Mr. Crawford

No. We were flying. We were stationed ½ degree below the equator on Noemfoor. So everyday we crossed the equator twice so it didn't mean anything to us.

Mr. Misenhimer

On April 12, 1945, President Roosevelt died. Did you hear about that?

Mr. Crawford

Yes. We were on Morotai when we heard about that. We were just discussing it in the tent area. I don't remember any comments being made by any crew members that were memorable. It was just that he died and we had a new president.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then on May 8, 1945 Germany surrendered, did you hear about that?

Mr. Crawford

Yes, we heard about that and of course, we were wondering when the Japanese were going to surrender, which happened when I was up in Manila waiting to get home. The war was winding down, pretty much. They didn't have much to offer except they had a few night fighters up and a few bombers up trying to hit the ships in the harbor. We had got to the point where we just laid in the sack and if we couldn't see them in the spotlight we would just go out and stand around and watch them. They were after our airstrips. The Allies got wind of the fact that they were planning a massive attack on Morotai. Whoever was available and that hadn't flown the day before, they assigned a plane to them, they flew them out and landed them at other bases to get them out of the way. One night we lost about 40 planes on the fighter strip, and the B-25 strip. One fighter, I was standing by this gun pit overlooking the bay and of course, nobody could shoot towards

the water on a low level plane because there were ships out there. This fighter went by, zoom, just like that and I bet he wasn't more than 10 yards out over the water by the beach and he was heading for the airstrip. I used to hang around that 40mm gun pit because I could hear the radar talking, letting them know where the planes were, where the Japanese were and where to aim. That 40mm was usually our wakeup call when the Japanese were coming. They would fire that off several times. It was close enough to our tent that it woke us up at night with no problem.

We got a new squadron commander when our first squadron commander went home. This guy was a Captain that had flown his missions in Europe and transferred to the Pacific hoping he could get promoted to Major. He was an alcoholic. I don't know why they let this guy stick around. He got hold of a motorcycle and he was up at the theater when the guns went off, he jumped on his motorcycle and headed back for his tent and his trench. We had put coconut logs across some of these roads to keep jeeps and stuff from flying through the personnel area. He hit one of those with a motorcycle and of course wrecked it and broke his arm. So we didn't have to deal with him for long. Before that happened he decided that he was going to fly a mission with me as the squadron leader and him being the new commander he took the left seat and I took the right seat. He was drunk when he got to the plane. We did all the checks and everything and we got the engine started and we taxied out and made the control check then. The Crew Chief sat up in the hatch in the roof to tell us where the controls are, up or down or so forth. Then he came down and I noticed that the Captain had not rotated the wheel right. He had it upside down. I got that straightened out and I said, "You can't do a slow roll on takeoff, let's straighten this out." Then I got a firm grip on the wheel and I got a firm grip with

my feet on the rudders and I watched it very carefully as we were taking off. We got off the ground okay and over the bay and out on course. He said, "Man, I'm tired, I'm going to go back and go to sleep." He got out of his seat and went back on the half-deck and laid up there and I got into the left seat and flew the whole mission by myself, with nobody else up there but me. We were within about 10 minutes of landing when he came to and came down and we told him, "There's the airbase that we are landing on." So he sat in the right seat and I would never let him come down and fly with me again. I didn't want to have to go through that. It was really a waste of time as far as I was concerned.

Mr. Misenhimer

What had he flown in Europe , B-24's?

Mr. Crawford

B-24's.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever fly any other bombers besides the B-24?

Mr. Crawford

Not me.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you think of the B-24?

Mr. Crawford

I liked it. Once you learned about the plane, and learned to respect it, it is a good plane. We had Pratt and Whitney engines and they were very good engines, never lost an engine. The plane itself was easy to fly once you learned how to fly it. We had a nice autopilot. The autopilot was a GE or something like that. It was a very good autopilot. I

kept that thing on autopilot throughout the mission except over the target because then the bombardier would take over with his bombsight. I had a little dial on the panel that was called a PDI, a pilot directional indicator, and I would fly that. I would keep the altitude and airspeed constant so that he could set that into the bombsight. I would watch that PDI to make sure that I wasn't drifting to the left or right. I would keep that thing centered. We always wound up with an excellent drop, with good results. One time we had 100%. Every bomb landed on the runway. Bob reported 100% and they called him up to headquarters and said, "Don't ever do that again. If one bomb is off target you can be charged with lying. Never report anything better than 80 to 85%. That way if you get more, you're okay. Never say you got 100%." So these were lessons to learn in dealing with the hierarchy.

Mr. Misenhimer

What medals and ribbons did you get?

Mr. Crawford

I got a Distinguished Flying Cross. I had an Air Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters. The Asiatic Pacific Ribbon with five Battle Stars and of course there were the usual American stuff, Philippine Liberation and all of that. The most important one, as far as I was concerned, was the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with all the Oak Leaf Clusters and the Battle Stars on that ribbon.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then in August of 1945 you were released from Active Duty and you went back to college, is that right?

Mr. Crawford

Yes. I went back to college. My bombardier had come home before I did because he flew his 40 missions and I had to fly those extra 8 missions. He lived in Santa Ana and he said, "When you get home, come on down to Santa Ana and stay with me for a while." We would just go down to the beach and hang out and watch the girls and all that sort of stuff. So we did.

His dad knew the registrar at USC and one day he said, "Hey Bob, why don't you and Gar go up there with me?" We did and we registered right then and there at USC. He went into petroleum engineering and I had a major in biological science and a minor in physical science and a major in education. So I could go into teaching and start earning some money.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you graduate from college?

Mr. Crawford

I graduated in 1949. I got married in 1947. My wife and I had our 60th wedding anniversary last month.

Mr. Misenhimer

Congratulations. Then when you graduated from college, what did you do?

Mr. Crawford

I started teaching school.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you teach?

Mr. Crawford

I was aiming for an elementary principalship. So I wound up in the 5th grade physical education program. I kept on going to school to get more credits. I was in Sherman Oaks, California.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you use your GI Bill for college?

Mr. Crawford

Oh yes. That's they only thing that got me through. Some days I went to school with 35 cents in my pocket. I hitchhiked to school and back home but I managed to get though it.

Mr. Misenhimer

When were you recalled for the Korean War?

Mr. Crawford

That was in probably 1951, or something like that, because I got back out in 1955.

Mr. Misenhimer

And that's when you went into intelligence?

Mr. Crawford

Yes during the Korean War I went into MATS first and then I transferred to Ft. Devins, Massachusetts to a intelligence school. I was in communication intelligence.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you were in Japan?

Mr. Crawford

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long were you in Japan?

Mr. Crawford

I think for about three years.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was your wife over there with you?

Mr. Crawford

Yes, she came over after a while. She was there for about a year to a year and a half with me.

Mr. Misenhimer

How were conditions in Japan?

Mr. Crawford

They were fine. It was a little scary to begin with. I would be alone in the car on a courier run or something like that. We had to carry stuff down to the Dai Ichi hotel for shipment back to the States. I had to cut through these little towns. Sometimes we would carry a courier bag of top secret stuff because I was cleared for top secret code work. I would carry these bags of intelligence stuff. That came from over the area to the Dai Ichi to be shipped to the States. We would have Japanese drivers and we would have a gunner in the front with a machine gun in his lap and then I would be in the back with the bag with a machine gun in my lap. They Communists were getting to the younger people in Japan and we just never knew when they were going to try to attack us and grab what we had, so we had to be prepared.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all did you do over there?

Mr. Crawford

Just go up and do flying. We had a converted B-29 that we flew off of Vladivostok. We would go up to Sakalan, Manchuria and the Kuriles. That way I got my flying time in. The rest of the time I was just at my desk there in the compound. It had barbed wire around it so that nobody could get in or out unless they had a pass. Sometimes we would be up in the club and they would come and get me. John Foster Dulles was the Secretary of State and things were beginning to happen. I would get called back and he would fire questions at us. We would gather the information and answer them back. Sometimes I sat there for 72 hours and they would bring food to me and everything. We called it the FLAP, until the flap was over and we could all go home and relax.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you fly the B-29?

Mr. Crawford

No, I wasn't a regular crew member. I would ride in the back of the plane with my boys. The first plane that the Russians shot down happened shortly after I joined the outfit. When we got this new plane, it took a while to get the new plane outfitted and back over with a new crew, I got to know Herb and McHenry, the pilot and copilot, real well and I would go on missions with them. I would just fly with them. They would let me get some stick time on the way home when we were no longer over dangerous territory. Of course, I didn't really like the B-29 because to me it was sloppy. The wing would start down and I would move the wheel to get the wing back up and it wouldn't come up. I would move

it a little further and all of a sudden it would come up and go too far. Herb kept saying, "Gar, you're over controlling." It took a while for me to get used to that plane. The B-24 was very responsive. You just barely touched it and it would do what you wanted it to do.

Mr. Misenhimer

What you all were doing was monitoring the radio transmissions from Russia, is that right?

Mr. Crawford

Yes. We had a Chinese effort and Captain Lang took care of that, and his boys. I had another 25 airmen and 12 officers listening in 24 hours a day. The guys on the base could get the low frequency stuff. In order for us to get the UHF and the VHF stuff you had to get in the plane and get up high because that is a straight line transmission. We were usually at 35,000 feet and we could pick up quite a bit of stuff. Whatever we got. We were reading their mail. We knew the pilots names and the plane numbers and their flying techniques and their training techniques and all kinds of stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer

How close were you to Russian airspace?

Mr. Crawford

We tried to stay 35 miles offshore. Of course they didn't honor that. They came right out and smacked one of our planes and shot it down. They did the same thing up in the Kuriles. They were not honorable people. The Communist Party, when one plane got shot down, from our communication intelligence, we tracked the call from Moscow to a control center to the pilot to knock down the plane. It wasn't some little pilot that did it. It was word from headquarters.

Mr. Misenhimer

What rank did you get to then?

Mr. Crawford

I was still Captain. I resigned my commission after a while and got out. I heard from one of my buddies and he said, "You're name just appeared in the Air Force Journal and you've been promoted to Major." I said, "That's too bad. I'm out, so it doesn't count." I ended as a Captain.

Mr. Misenhimer

How man total years did you have in the Air Force?

Mr. Crawford

I think it was 13 years including Reserves.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you don't get any kind of retirement then?

Mr. Crawford

No. I didn't retire, I resigned.

Mr. Misenhimer

It takes 20 years?

Mr. Crawford

Yes. I got out. Admiral Thompson stayed in for 30 + years. If you communicate with him you'll have to get his story. I don't want to put words in his mouth. McHenry went through Annapolis and I'm pretty sure he did and he stayed in the full time. He got his star.

Mr. Misenhimer

McHenry went to Annapolis, okay.

Mr. Crawford

Bill Thompson was a pretty laid back guy and he was working for Admiral Zumwalt. Zumwalt was the same way, he was a pretty laid back guy. Bill was his PR man. So whenever Zumwalt got promoted, he would promote Bill. I think Bill was a Captain and then the first thing you know, he was a one-star. Whenever Zumwalt promoted, Bill did too. He never changed. He was still the same old Bill, from Buck Private to a two star Admiral, he was still the same old Bill.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is there anything else that you recall from your time in World War II?

Mr. Crawford

Not really. We had a gas leak in our stove here yesterday. We had the gas man here and I showed him this picture of the B-24. I was telling him about the fuel leak we had in the bomb bay and how the planes would blow up. I was telling him that one time our navigator, we were at about 5,000 feet, and heading for a target, and my navigator said, "We've got a pretty bad gas leak." And I said, "Tell me about it, we've got this on every B-24 we've ever flown." He said this one was different. He pulled up his navigation chart up and it was just dripping with gasoline. His shirt was all wet. I looked back through the little window in the hatch that divided cockpit from the flight deck and it was just like a pond in there. This hose that came down from the top of the bomb bay to a transfer pump on the catwalk was loose. It was swinging in the wind like a garden hose with 110 octane gas spilling around. I told the bombardier, if you throw a match in a can of gasoline it

won't explode, it will burn. I said, "We can't tolerate this. We've got to open those bomb bay doors." I couldn't land with a full load of gas and bombs, I was afraid the gear would break off as we were scraping down the runway, we would be making sparks and it would blow us sky high. So I said, "We've got to get rid of these bombs." I hit the salvo handle and of course nothing happened. The doors opened and the bombs went out and we got a really good ventilation of the gas. Then we came home. I told the crew, I'm going to land with the engines only running slightly because I don't want to backfire. I landed like I was landing on a dozen eggs, very soft. I let the engine pull us forward and then I braked to a stop with the engines running. I said, "Okay, everybody, get out." And they did and they headed for the end of the runway and then I released the brakes and let it pull me around down the runway into a revetment. I shut the engines off and filled out the Form Five and climbed out. The gasoline was still running on the ground.

Mr. Misenhimer

There was no way that you could cut it off from flowing?

Mr. Crawford

No. That was the question the Colonel asked. "Why didn't you go into the bomb bay and hook it up?" Well, there wasn't even a hook to hook it up to. It was like a clamp or a spindle and the hose came down over that spindle. I said, "Nobody could have lived in there, with those fumes. It was just solid gasoline." I said, "I think I made the right decision." Major Vanderpool, my squadron commander at that time, when they called me up before the board, he was with me, and he agreed that I had done the right thing. So it was written off as a broken fuel line and it was an excused return from a mission. Anytime anybody turned back from a mission, they go right after you for fear that you

are goofing off, are being a chicken. But that was not a chicken thing.

Mr. Misenhimer

I've enjoyed our conversation today.

Mr. Crawford

How long have we talked?

Mr. Misenhimer

About 2 ½ hours.

Mr. Crawford

I didn't know I had that much talk in me. (Laugh) I've got my records and books out in front of me for the dates but I've done most of this from memory. There are certain dates that are important to me that you wouldn't be interested in. Everything I've said is accurate. I didn't brag about anything, I don't think.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were very straightforward.

Mr. Crawford

One more thing. When we were on Morotai there were guys digging in the coral. They were digging foxholes. That was like trying to go out in a road with three feet of concrete and try to use a pickaxe to dig yourself a foxhole. We never did dig a foxhole. I read a book written by this one guy called, "From One End to the Other." He told about sharing a foxhole with a boa constrictor. That was crap. There weren't any boas on that island. (Laugh) There were all kinds of stuff that he came up with.

Mr. Misenhimer

A lot of people tell tall tales.

Mr. Crawford

I don't know how they can live with themselves. And he shows up at reunions. I've been to two reunions and he's shown up at both, like he's the King of the Hill, prancing around like an I don't know what and he thinks he's really something. All of us have read his book. This one pilot came to me and claimed that he fought in a different war than we did. Because we were in his same outfit and none of this happened. It was pure bull, but that's the way it does.

Mr. Misenhimer

I've come across a little of that.

Mr. Crawford

That's about it. This has brought back memories.

Mr. Misenhimer

Today is February 2, 2008 and Mr. Crawford called with some other memories.

When they flew into Canton Island, which his navigator found easily, there were planes parked on each side of the runway, so it was almost like landing on a taxi strip. In fact when they came in, the plane that landed behind them hit the nose gun on one of those planes parked there and caused quite an accident. But the next day when he came out to the plane, one of the natives was under the plane looking all around the belly. So he asked one of the ground crew, "What is he doing?" He said, "All these fighter planes, small planes parked on the side, he thinks this is the mother of those and he's looking for the birth canal.

Also, another time, bragging on the navigator, they were in the clouds and they had flown for a long time and after a while the navigator said, "It's time to let down."

Mr. Crawford said, "But there's a big mountain on the side." He said, "That's okay, we're on target, come right on down." So they came down and through the clouds and when they broke out of the clouds at 500 feet, they were right there at the rocks at the end of the island they were looking for. He brought them right in on it.

Another time they were in the center of a typhoon and one of the planes in their right wing got separated, but he did get home. When we talked to him later he said the shear winds turned him upside down, the bombs came loose and fell around the bomb bay and ripped the doors off. The plane went into a spin and the pilot and copilot fought it and came out at 500 feet. They then flew safely back to base.

(End of Interview)

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