

*National Museum of the Pacific War*

*Nimitz Education and Research Center*

*Fredericksburg, Texas*

Interview with

**Mr. Jim Davenport**

Date of Interview: October 14, 2011

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### **Interview with Mr. Jim Davenport**

Interview in progress.

Interviewer: This is Floyd Cox; I'm a volunteer at the National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Texas. Today is October the 14, year 2011. I'm having the pleasure of interviewing Mr. Jim Davenport regarding his experiences during World War II. This interview is taking place at the Riverwalk Holiday Inn, San Antonio, Texas. This interview is in support of the Nimitz Educational and Research Center for the National Museum of the Pacific War; Texas Historical Commission for the preservation of historical information related to this site. Jim, I once again want to thank you for taking the time to sit down and talk to me about your experiences in the military and I'd like to start out by asking you a little bit about your background; when you were born; where you were born; what your parents did; where you went to school, and we'll just take it from there.

Mr. Davenport: Okay, I was born the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March, 1925...a little outside of San Antonio here...a subdivision called Edgewood (unintelligible) and...about a block off of Couples Road...house, brown house...that...that's not there anymore...yeah...not there anymore.

Interviewer: What'd your folks do?

Mr. Davenport: My dad, at that time, the early days...he spent eighteen years as a truck driver for Humble Oil Company...delivering gasoline. And I guess the earliest...some of the earliest memories I had was...at that time...those...those big old trucks had a big spare tires on the...when the pilot...on the driver side...of the fender...front fender...they had a well there and that's where they carried...well, that's where I liked to ride.

Interviewer: Really?!

Mr. Davenport: Liked to ride with my dad; I'd get in that well of that old spare tire...and you know...that's four old spare tires...ride around...and this is...not the earliest things I...I guess the first thing I remember was...I had two brothers; one was seven...the other was nine years older than I was. So they were up and around when I was just a little one. And I guess my oldest...or first memory...I used to watch them drive their...ride their motor...their bicycles down the steps off the front porch, so I tried it on my tri...tricycle! (laughter)

Interviewer: Didn't work, did it?

Mr. Davenport: Face down on the concrete...broken nose...all of that! (laughter). I don't remember any of the pain or anything like that but I remember starting off of the porch...that's the last I remember of that incident. (laughter)  
(unintelligible)

Interviewer: Where'd you go to grade school here in town?

Mr. Davenport: I went...well we moved around about the time I was getting into the...about the time I was ready to start school. My dad was involved in a head-on collision...out on...I guess that's Commerce Street...way out on Commerce

Street. At that time they had...used to have street cars here and he was passing street car and some guy came across...going the wrong way...around that street car...just came around and they hit head-on, and so he...he was in the hospital; got fired...they wouldn't take him back after he recovered... 'cause he had eighteen years and I guess they didn't want to get an old man back in...so he was starting over. And when that was going on we lived in different places in San Antone. I had one...my first year's school was somewhere down on the south side. We lived on Steel...Steel Street...

Interviewer: I know where it's at!

Mr. Davenport: Yeah, and then...about that time they decided...they bought my grandfather's ranch; my dad was raised on a ranch...so was my mother. But my grandfather was getting old so my folks bought the ranch from him, so we moved up to Bandera for a year. I went to school in a little one house...school there...one...yeah...one...one room-school...for one year. And then they sold the ranch and he went in the cab business here. I moved back...then we moved back into Edgewood. And I was there all...from then on until I graduated from high school.

Interviewer: Did you graduate from Edgewood High School?

Mr. Davenport: Edgewood High School, right. The war came along and most of my class...when I was a senior...war came along and most of the boys just up and joined...you know...joined the service and...so my class was whittled down to...I think there were thirteen or fourteen of us was all that was left.

Interviewer: That graduate?

Mr. Davenport: Yeah, graduated, right.

Interviewer: And what year was that?

Mr. Davenport: In 1942. So that's when I met my wife; she had been...she was school...had been hired in as a school secretary and so we met when I was a senior and when I graduated we went together for awhile...and then I went in the service...was married after I got my commission, yeah.

Interviewer: Now...were you drafted or did you enlist?

Mr. Davenport: Well I would have been drafted and I knew that, so...and there was a couple of other boys in my class...we decided we'd just go ahead and enlist...try to get into the cadet program. And so we went out and took our physicals at Lackland and I had to go back for rechecks but I finally got in. And that was...from then on...you know...it was all wartime and...yeah.

Interviewer: Where'd you take your basic training and how did you get to be...?

Mr. Davenport: Well we were called in...I think I went in September, 1943 and they shipped us to Amarillo, Texas for boot camp. And we were there for...oh I don't know what it was...five or six weeks...I think. At that time...I guess they were having trouble with a lot the...enlistees coming...or the people coming into the cadet program that didn't have a very good background in mathematics or any of that...kind of like today...nobody wants to...turns out I was...luckily I was pretty good at that. But anyway they had inserted...instead of going to pre-flight...they had these college training detachments set up, so they sent you for three years to...I mean three months...to a...a college...some college to give you...some basic...basic math is what we had...

Interviewer: ...on the college level?

Mr. Davenport: Science, a little of this and a little of that. But the whole idea was math and a little bit of science...get everybody up...kind of up to speed...so that they could accept and go into the cadet program and...you know.

Interviewer: Where'd you go? Where did you take (unintelligible)?

Mr. Davenport: So then from there we went to Santa Ana; I went to pre-flight Santa Ana.

Interviewer: Well where'd you take your college?

Mr. Davenport: Oh, that was Cedar Falls, Iowa; Iowa State Teachers College.

Interviewer: Okay.

Mr. Davenport: Went up there during the winter (laughter)...all the snow and ice, so then we were glad...glad to head for California to Santa Ana, California for pre-flight I tell you! (laughter) And we went to Santa Ana and...went through all the (unintelligible) tasks and all of that so they decide whether you going to be a pilot; navigator; bombardier...see how you got...I scored 8 on it. I didn't score 9 on any of them; I scored 8 on all of them. So...and of course I wanted to be a fighter pilot...'cause when I was this...when...during my senior year the war had already started...'42, so, and while I was there a guy came through from Alaska, and Army guy...uh Air...that's Army again...Army Air Corps guy and he'd been flying P-40s and he gave us a speech; showed us pictures and man, I wanted to...I wanted to fly that P-40! So anyway I wanted to be a fighter pilot but they didn't need...at the time I finished the pre-flight...the pilot training program was kind of back logged...the pipeline had just stacked up...closed up, so what I did was...well they...they stated

that if I would accept a navigation school or bombardier school...I could go right away, but if I wanted to be a pilot, I was going to have to wait eight or nine months. Well there's not much...you know...that's a no-brainer right there! (laughter) So I went to Ellington Field...got my navigation...went through navigation school there.

Interviewer: How did you find that...was that very difficult or...?

Mr. Davenport: No, not...well it was...it was a challenge...you know...(unintelligible)...

Interviewer: Because you (unintelligible) your math, right?

Mr. Davenport: (unintelligible)...because you're learning new things. No it wasn't so much math...it was just the new things that you were learning...you know...celestial work...was a little complex because in those days airplanes weren't all that stable and so when you trying to shoot stars...you know...and things like that...why there's a lot of errors creep in. But we got all kinds of dead...dead wreckoning. Basically dead wreckoning...the big thing was dead wreckoning and celestial...because in those days they didn't have a lot of radios. Radio...radio beacon was a real pleasure...you know. (laughter) And that was...not much of that. Celestial got a little complicated. So I graduated there anyway.

Interviewer: When was your class...you remember?

Mr. Davenport: Uh, 44...45. The navigators were 44 - they'd use numbers...40...the year and the week. Pilot school used...A, B, C - the year plus a letter; but Navigation school used a year and the week, so I was in 4445...45<sup>th</sup> week. So when we graduated, I was selected to a instructor there; went on leave; I went back and

reported...we were...we fooled around we didn't have anything to do for a couple of weeks and suddenly I get orders to go to Lincoln, Nebraska; I'm assigned to a B-24 crew. Well I didn't know what I was assigned to, but...but I had to...I knew I was assigned to Lincoln, Nebraska  
(laughter)...(unintelligible)...north.

Interviewer: (unintelligible)

Mr. Davenport: Huh?

Interviewer: Getting farther north?

Mr. Davenport: Further north. And there...there was...they just...they just...made up crews...you know. And I think there was a few tests to take...things like that. And I ended up as a navigator on a B-24. The pilot was...guy by the name of Cook (spelling ?)...Tom Cook; the co-pilot was a guy by the name of Smith (spelling ?)...first name was Clyde Smith. And then we had engineer; gunners; all of that.

Interviewer: Ten-man crew, right?

Mr. Davenport: Huh?

Interviewer: Ten?

Mr. Davenport: Uh-hum.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Davenport: So from there...they formed a crew and they shipped us to Mountain Home, Idaho and there's where we started our...our training...started flying the B-24. First (laughter)...you know the damn B-24 (laughter)...you had gas leaks...lot of...lot of gas leaks.



Interviewer: I didn't know that.

Mr. Davenport: Oh yeah...bomb bay...leaks in bomb bay. Well if you get a leak in the bomb bay...first thing they tell you is...don't open the bomb bay doors...you know. Well you couldn't do that because...you might get a spark...and you blow the damned airplane up! (laughter) So, anyway...our first mission we take off...we flew off some place...basically a navigation mission...and we came back oh, two or three or four hours later and we were landing. Everybody is coming back about the same time...we're in this pattern...and several B-24s are landing...all in trail...and the airplane in front of us...spun in right in front of us...goes in; blows up...you know...and we come in had to fly through...go over his smoke...you know...smoke (laughter)...that's why...that's the kind of the experience why they call the B-24 the *Flying Coffin*...you know. So...they did...on our first flight...that was an experience! (laughter)

Interviewer: I guess it was an eye opener, wasn't it?

Mr. Davenport: It was...had to talk to that pilot real good – “you know what you're doing up there?!” (laughter) But he was a good pilot...he...his blood...I think his blood...about 90% alcohol...about 90 proof! (laughter) I'm serious because we could go up to...25...30...25...28,000 feet...cold, my god, it was cold and he'd sit up there smoking a cigarette with...no...no gloves on...I don't know how he did it! (laughter) So that's why I always said – “your blood must be about 90%! (laughter).

Interviewer: So you had...flight crew training...there?

Mr. Davenport: Yeah, that was our flight crew training. Out of there...they...when we finished all...all of our missions there...the...they selected ten crew and I guess my crew was one of the tops because we were selected. And I noticed all my missions...when we had big missions...our crew was always in the lead. So I guess we were doing well. We weren't...you know...nobody said, you know...“You're lead or behind...or nothing.” Noth...nothing that was said...every said, but when we had big missions where there's several...fly in formation...my crew was always in front...the leader of the...the formation. I remember we had...when we were there...one of the things that a navigator had to do in case the bombardier was...in case the bombardier was injured...you had to do the...you had to drop the bomb. So we had to know how to operate the bomb sight. So we had one training mission where...where I had to operate the bomb sight (laughter)...so we...we take off on this bomb run and we leading the formation (laughter)...about...only three airplanes and then another three...you know...about six or...oh, I don't know...about six or nine airplanes in this formation...and we were in the lead and so I was...the idea was...I was to operate the bomb sight and drop the bomb...and when they saw my bombs go...they would trigger theirs. So when they saw our bomb bay open...they'd open theirs and sit there and wait and when mine goes...they all go. Well we come in and...I got it...there's two little arms in the bomb sight and when they crossed that's when I would put the signal in...you know...

Interviewer: (unintelligible)

Mr. Davenport: No...the signal automatically went...okay? So I was sitting there and I had it...everything was tracking; the target was standing...cross hairs and everything...and everything moving real nice...weather was nice and smooth...so I thought, "Boy we got this dead on!"...you get...all of a sudden those things crossed...the bombs didn't go! (laughter)

Interviewer: Uh-oh!

Mr. Davenport: And when...when those bombs hit...the bomber gets a signal...that's bombs away so he turns immediately...you know...well the bombs didn't go. I thought, "Holy smoke!" And I looked around...I forgot to hit the arm switch; so I hit the arm switch and the bombs went...so everybody's dropping (laughter)...dropping his bombs during his turn. Next morning at briefing they said, "Okay, there's a farmer in the dale (laughter)...somehow or another he lost half a mile of (laughter)...half a mile (laughter)...of his fence! (laughter)...of his fence! (laughter).

Interviewer: Oops!

Mr. Davenport: But they never said anything; "who did it? (unintelligible)...but I knew who did it! (laughter)

Interviewer: Just a matter of a little switch, wasn't it?

Mr. Davenport: That's right! They didn't...they didn't vol...they didn't say anything but he was suing the government. So they said, "You know...we want you to know what happened."

Interviewer: At least he didn't lose a barn!

Mr. Davenport: Right. (laughter) Well anyway we got...we got through. We were still lead crew...at least in the top ten because they sent us to...Langley Field, Virginia. And there we picked up a new kind of bombardier; he was...I don't know if we lost our regular bombardier or not...I think we may have lost our regular bomba...well maybe not...maybe we became an eleven-man crew because they had a radar bomb sight. And I think that was in...I think it was in addition to the regular bomb sight. So we had a regular bombardier and we had to train with him; we had to fly so many missions with him and you practice bombs and...we dropping bombs and he learned how to do his...a little Jewish fellow...real nice guy.

Interviewer: He learned how to take out any fences?

Mr. Davenport: Huh?

Interviewer: Did he learn how to take out...?

Mr. Davenport: No...he never learned the fence business (laughter)...we kept blowing up the river over there...next to Langley Field. And...but anyway we went through that training and then they gave us leave...and they said...gave us our orders to go to Saipan. Well that was...those were...we called them...Black something. The airplane was painted black and the mission was...when we got to where we were going...what our mission would be was take off an hour before sunset; fly all night; land an hour after daybreak, and we would fly a pattern. Several airplanes out...each had their pattern and then they would fly...what they were doing...searching for enemy shipping. If you find

enemy shipping, why, then you...that...that's why the radar bombardier...because you couldn't see them.

Interviewer: Black Cat.

Mr. Davenport: Huh?

Interviewer: Black Cats.

Mr. Davenport: Yeah, Black Cat squadron. And so...we...went home on leave; we had the orders, so they gave us at that time...there's a policy to give you two weeks leave before you went overseas. So I went home on two weeks leave and on our way back...I was on the airplane going back and landed at Atlanta. From San Antone to Atlanta and then down to...to Langley was the flight. When we landed at Atlanta, they said that they had just dropped dead on bomb...in our...they were recalling everybody to go back to their home base.

Interviewer: Really?!

Mr. Davenport: Uh-huh, and so we went back. And then next...next or so they said, "Okay, it's all over; everybody's going home." I didn't know if I was going home or not, so...since I...since I was a new guy...had not been overseas...my release date was pretty low priority. So they sent me to...Urbana...Urbana, Illinois.

Interviewer: (Unintelligible), oh yeah.

Mr. Davenport: What's that base there? It's a base just north of Urbana.

Interviewer: Yeah, I can't...

Mr. Davenport: It's still there. But they set up a separation center there and they would process people in. And so I was there a few weeks and...I had this job of...as they troops came in...a group...they divided them in groups of about twenty-

five...process them at a time. So they come in and my job was to brief them on how...what the procedures were and how they were...thought was going to happen in the next two days. It'd take two days to get them out. In...you know...they had to take physicals; they had to do this; they had to get...you know...sign release papers, I guess...I don't know what it was. I remember...I knew at the time what it was...so I...I was the release center. And I went to work one morning; I'd only been there about two or three weeks and somebody said that they had gotten in a...teletype asking for volunteers to form an experimental pilot's class to go to pilots school. Boy I signed up for that in a hurry you know! So that's how I became a pilot then. We...they sent us down to Keesler. Then we could take all the Stay Nine (spelling ?) tests over and all of that and I had to leave my wife...I was married at the time. I had to leave my wife up there and I...a friend of mine...we were real close and we went together down there; both of us signed up...and our wives were still there but they didn't know if we were coming back or we going...didn't know anything! So we said, "Well, we'll let you know...just stay here." One of them had a car so that wife had a car and we went to Keesler; took our tests and I passed it...thank God! And so there was...said, "Okay, we'll send you to Randolph Field, Texas." We called...I called up there. "Ya'll...okay...ya'll can come." He passed, too, the other guy...both of us passed...both of us went out to Randolph. And so his wife and my wife drove down together. And they had to pack up and move and all of that stuff all by themselves. (laughter)

Interviewer: What year was this?

Mr. Davenport: That was...19...well, let's see...'45. Seemed like it was 19...yeah, it would be 19...late 1945, yeah. Probably in the fall of '45...maybe winter. So then we ended up at Randolph; went through pilot school there.

Interviewer: What...what did you train on out here?

Mr. Davenport: They had PT-13s...Stearman...primary...T-6s for basic. And the basic...they finished basic...that just surprised me. I told the...I told my instructor...you know..., "I want to fly fighters...that's all I want to fly is fighters." And we called down after we'd finished and they were having...deciding who goes where...you know...out of the class. It was a pretty big class. Well he said, "The only...that class...was...we went into training with something like 565 students. We were delayed because they put a bunch of Bolivian people ahead of us...foreign students ahead of us...so we didn't get any training for awhile. But there were 535 started. And I think we had the highest washout rate in history! (laughter) I've said it was experimental pilot's class...experimental class for pilots. The requirement to be in there...you had to have a set of wings of something...navigator; bombardier; observer; they had wings for glider pilots; they had wings for liaison pilots; any kind of wings. You had to have a set of wings because the idea was to find out with a person already had an aeronautical rating. And then...goes...how would he do in pilot's school?...well we showed them! (laughter) So, we had a reason for it of course. Oh and we had ranks from second lieutenant to full colonel. There were all ranks. You know...what a...what a bunch! We had

experience...one guy had been on the death march of Bataan and had escaped; been eighteen months leading a guerilla outfit there before MacArthur went back in. We had...all kinds of experience...different experiences. Well with that kind of a group...they don't take a lot of bullshit off of...anybody!

(laughter)

Interviewer: (unintelligible)

Mr. Davenport: Yeah, it just fought a war. (laughter)

Interviewer: It...(unintelligible)...in a bar.

Mr. Davenport: Yeah, in a...in a...cadet environment...you know...and that's the way we were treated...kind of like cadets...you know. You had to watch the class; you had to do this; yeah, very military...it's just like they treated a cadet...although we lived of base...you know...stuff like that, but there were a few privileges but it...it was still...things would come up and these guys who'd just get disgusted and they'd say, "I'll quit!" And some of them just weren't very good at it. They quit...they got washed out! (laughter)

Interviewer: But you hung in there!

Mr. Davenport: Yeah I hung in there! So I went to Advanced at Williams...took Primary Basic at Randolph. You know...I'm started to tell you about the assignment. I really wanted to get to fighters...and so my instructor came back to the (unintelligible)...they'd been gone...gone a couple of hours in there and we were sitting there and wondering what was going on and he came out and he called me aside and he said, "You know...if...to get you in fighters...you know...I've got to make it look like you have no leadership ability; you can't



do this; you don't get along with anybody too much...(laughter)...just not a very pretty picture!

Interviewer: (Unintelligible)

Mr. Davenport: I don't care what kind of picture you paint...just get me in fighters! "Well okay!" he said. So that's the way I got into fighters. And there weren't...there weren't too many...we only had...we had a total...I think...I think we had about...I think eighty of us...256 graduated from Basic...remember I said it started at 585...256 out of Basic...I think there were 87 of us with fighters. What they wanted...they wanted people to crew...crews and you know...bombers...you know...so they wanted people who had good leadership and all of this...all of the book stuff...you know.

Interviewer: Where'd you take your advanced fighter training?

Mr. Davenport: Williams Field...Arizona. It flew 51...

Interviewer: P-51 Mustang?

Mr. Davenport: P-51 Mustang.

Interviewer: How'd you like the Mustang?

Mr. Davenport: Oh I loved that airplane...I tell you!

Interviewer: You guys were spoiled in those P-51s.

Mr. Davenport: Oh man, that's right! God what an airplane!

Interviewer: Well after you finished the P-51 flight...you got your...you qualified and were getting close to the Korean War, aren't we?

Mr. Davenport: Pretty...very close; this was 1947 and I was...signed out of the 51...I went into a P-51 squadron...it was the 307<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron at...Albany,

Georgia...Turner Field I think's the name of it...yeah Turner Field. And there we did...we did a lot of training. The Pattillo twins were in that squadron. The Patillo twins...you know...formed the Thunderbirds...in Europe when they got over there.

Interviewer: I've heard of them.

Mr. Davenport: Yeah, we were trying to fly Thunderbirds at...I mean trying to fly formless acrobatics squadron in '51 but they really wanted to fly acrobatic...you know...fly with an acrobatic team. And so they were asking for volunteers; nobody seemed to have wanted to do it but there was two guys who wanted to and finally I said, "Yeah, hey...I...I'll try that." Well I was pretty junior pilot...you know...I wasn't too sharp I guess...well compared to those guys. Of course we had some guys...my flag commander was a World War II...fighter...P-51 pilot; he had lots of hours...you know...Foots McClure (spelling ?) was his name...had feet about that long (laughter).

Interviewer: So you're saying a size 15 shoe.

Mr. Davenport: Yeah. (laughter)...oh Foots McClure! We tried to form a fighter squadron...I mean a...acrobatic fly...and we would practice and I was the fifth guy...and so...I had to be able to fly any wing; any position... 'cause anybody fell out I had to take his place...the only time I got into an inverted spin in a P-51 and that was the hairiest thing that ever happened to me. And what had happened...you know...that bombshell...you know...that they go...where they go up and then they split...they're going vertical and then they split...well that was a famous maneuver be...even before jets. But that 51

was a little more touchy because you didn't have the speed...you know...that you have in a jet so it wasn't quite as spectacular. It was spectacular enough (laughter) if you were doing...if you were doing it! So they were doing this...and I was sitting off flying around the...and...finally they...whoever was leader...Pattillo twins didn't lead...they didn't...never wanted to lead; one...they wanted to fly one on each wing and...and they wanted somebody else to lead. So they were flying there and the leader...whoever it was, I forget his name now...called says, "Okay, Red,"...I was always known by Red then...I had red hair at the time...you wouldn't believe it now but I did...nobody knew what my name was...it was just Red...not important...he said, "Hey Red, get on the right wing and do a couple of more,"...you know...so I got on the right wing and you know when you go up you have to turn...everybody...this guy turned; this guy turns this way; that guy rolls here and then...he said, "Now!" (laughter) When I was sitting there we did two or three of them...you know...he come...and he say roll...I'd count ten thousand one; ten thousand two; ten thousand three...(unintelligible)...ready! I figure about three seconds...nice and...had it down pat. And then finally he called and said, Hey Jim...or Red...how about taking the slot on this next one...you know...so they reformed and...(unintelligible)...and slot driver he gets out and I pull into the slot and...do the same thing...you know. Pull it up...we start the roll...and I'm going two thou...one...two...three...well hell...those guys went and I was only half way around! (laughter)...so I still had to keep going! I'd get over about like that...about...

Interviewer: Upside down.

Mr. Davenport: About 135 upside down; nose still at 30...30 degrees off the horizon...running out of air speed, brains and everything! (laughter) Jesus...I didn't know...I'd been on the stick...rudder...stick...rudder...didn't mean a damn thing! It just...and the airplane was just sitting there falling...upside down...just falling down. And I remembered old Foots he told me, he says, "If you're ever in a P-51...you don't know what to do...just take the stick and just slam it against...just slam it forward." Well that's the only thing I knew to do 'cause nothing else was working! (laughter) All (unintelligible)whipped around and now I'm in an inverted spin...going down...and I don't know how to get out of it. (laughter)

Interviewer: Uh-oh!

Mr. Davenport: So I thought, "Well...looking at the altitude..."

Interviewer: Is this a flat spin you're in?

Mr. Davenport: Yeah it's inverted...in...instead of spinning like this...you're on the outside and it's going...but you're on the outside of this...and it's going like that.

Interviewer: Oh, okay!

Mr. Davenport: Yeah, and you...nothing...got...nothing working! And then...inverted spin I didn't...still didn't know and so I...I'm trying to do this...(unintelligible)...and yawed...and I didn't know anything...I looked at the altimeter and it's about 6,000 feet and you're supposed to be out at seven...don't ever get...so I decided how to get out of it. I reached down...you had to duck...your head way down...and reach down...the

release was way down on the right side of the floorboard of the...on the right side of the (unintelligible) cabin. You have to pull that to release the canopy. And the reason you had to get down...because a P-51...if that thing went off...it would take the top of your head off because your head is higher than the front of the canopy. So I was down...down there, and I was getting ready to pull it...and something didn't seem (laughter)...I looked up...it just (laughter)...it pulled itself out! (laughter)

Interviewer: The airplane pulled itself out?!

Mr. Davenport: Yeah, it just...it recovered. I don't know what it did!

Interviewer: The Man upstairs!

Mr. Davenport: Went damn near straight down...real slow...so you sitting there going straight down at 100 miles an hour. Well hell it don't start flying till 135! (laughter) So I had to sweat and sweat and put the power to it...get some speed so I could pull up!

Interviewer: What'd you pull out at, do you remember...how high you were?

Mr. Davenport: Oh about fifteen hundred! (laughter) Hell those guys didn't even miss me...they didn't even know I was gone. (laughter) I went down...I went to old Fouts McClure and I said, "Well you old son of a gun, you told me...told me slam that stick forward...and I didn't know what to do." You always do something that you would recognize. He said, "Well you recognized that you (laughter)...you recognized you was in...an inverted spin...what more can you ask for?!" (laughter) Oh he was a funny guy!

Interviewer: Well that was quite an experience though...weren't...when you got on the ground...I imagine you were pretty well shaken, weren't you?

Mr. Davenport: Naw...you know when you're young you don't...that crap...you just...glad to get out of it! (laughter) (unintelligible) said, "Well I made another one!" No...well I was kind of mad at him but...but then I realized he was probably right...you know. It's really funny that the airplane...coming out by itself. I don't know what I was doing...I guess whatever I was doing I was keeping it (unintelligible). Well...see...everything's reversed when you're on the outside. On the...on the inside...you hit the opposite rudder and that corrects it. I don't know...maybe on the outside...it's...it's the wrong one...I don't know what it is...never...I never figured it.

Interviewer: You didn't try it...?

Mr. Davenport: No, never...and I didn't try it again...I wasn't going to practice! (laughter) So I didn't have...I never liked to spin the air...the P-50...uh, fighter anyway.

Interviewer: I don't imagine!

Mr. Davenport: Huh?

Interviewer: I don't imagine that you would want to spin anything!

Mr. Davenport: No...I won't even practice it.

Interviewer: Did you stay in the...in that group or...?

Mr. Davenport: Yeah we stayed there...we were there quite awhile. The...half the squadron went to...went out and got checked out in the F-84s...AF-84...I guess it's A or B...(unintelligible)...84, and I wasn't in that group. The more experienced pilots went out first... 'cause they were transitioning into jets. And as a result,

orders came down and they sent a bunch of us overseas. Well the guys that gone in through jets went to Europe and they guys that went to 51 went to...Japan. And I was in the group that was transferred to Japan. That's how I ended up at Intersuki (spelling ?) in the F...80s. So...

Interviewer: And that was...?

Mr. Davenport: That was...I went to Japan in...February of '49...and I was getting a headquarters job for awhile...and my wife then came over and joined me. And then I...I kept...I was in a communications job 'cause I was...I alternated between communication jobs and flying jobs...you know...kind of like that. So I kept raising hell about getting into the squadron. So in December, I think it was, they transferred me down to the squadron. That was, I think, December, 1949. And of course, June 25<sup>th</sup> the Korean War broke out. So I flew 133 missions in that and I came home in March '51.

Interviewer: Now you flew 133 missions, Jim, were they ground support or did you...?

Mr. Davenport: All...yeah...ground support or else recon...kind of stuff. Sometimes they're kind of interdiction sort of things...you know...go way back...try to hit supply lines...you know...whatever they could find up there. Because you couldn't hit your...you didn't hit...you didn't select your targets of Korea. When you hit Pusan (spelling ?) you take off...we take of Meteorzuke (spelling ?) and when we hit Pusan, we was at altitude...we'd check in with them and they'd tell us where to go and what to hit. Yeah, sometimes they'd want you to go up and look at something.

Interviewer: You ever do any...front line support?

Mr. Davenport: Lots of it...lots of that, yeah.

Interviewer: They needed all the support they could get at that time.

Mr. Davenport: Yeah, right...did quite a bit of that. And we did a lot of...our first missions we were flying over Kimpo (spelling ?) trying to...when the...when the war broke out...the first.. first thing that the Air Force had to do was get those mag people (spelling ?) and the State Department people Seoul. So they were...they were just leaving everything ahead...just get out to the airport and we...get...they were sending in every...everything in that would carry people out of there. They were sending transports in there to pick them up. And our job was to fly top cover to make sure the North Korean planes weren't going to strike those troop carriers. So we'd go up there and fly...take about fifteen or twenty minutes...and...or a half hour...or whatever it was and then you'd be relieved by the next...next flight. You always had a flight over there...all during daylight hours. And if you had any fuel left...depending on how...your fuel state...any fuel left...why then you could go out shoot what...just find targets of opportunity...so we would that...go out and try to find some...something moving on the road...tank; or guns; or troops or whatever you could find.

Interviewer: That was kind of enjoyable, wasn't it?

Mr. Davenport: Oh yeah, never had so much fun in my life! (laughter) Well you train, train, train...you know...that's what you're trained to do. And...you're full of vinegar, so you just go out and do it. (unintelligible)...like happened to you. Anything happens is going to be somebody else. (laughter)



Interviewer: That's the way it is.

Mr. Davenport: Feel sorry for those guys. (laughter)

Interviewer: Well if we have nothing else to talk about World War II, Jim, I think we'll conclude this...

Mr. Davenport: Yeah, that was about it. I got out of World War II. World War II was over when they dropped the bomb. My...my flight orders were cancelled.

Interviewer: Well you saw enough...(unintelligible) though, didn't you?

Mr. Davenport: Yeah, I had some good times in Korea.

Interviewer: Thanks again, Jim.

Mr. Davenport: You're welcome.

(end of interview)

**FINAL** copy  
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