

**THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR**

**Nimitz Education and Research Center**

**Fredericksburg, Texas**

**An Interview with**

**Edward J. Saylor, Lt. Colonel (Retired) USAF  
Puyallup, Washington  
January 24, 2012**

**Doolittle Raider**

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is January 24, 2012. I am interviewing Lieutenant Colonel Edward J. Saylor, Retired by telephone. His phone number is 253-848-4808. His address is 14010 99th Ave E., Puyallup, Washington 98373. This interview is in support of the National Museum of Pacific War, Nimitz Education and Research Center, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Col. Saylor

I appreciate that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now the first thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the Museum. "Agreement read."

Is that okay with you?

Col. Saylor

Yes, that's fine.

Mr. Misenhimer

What is your birth date?

Col. Saylor

March 15, 1920.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you born?

Col. Saylor

In Brusett, Montana in a ranch house, way out in the hills.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Col. Saylor

Yes, there were seven of us all together.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many were boys?

Col. Saylor

Five.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were any of your brothers in World War II?

Col. Saylor

Two of us.

Mr. Misenhimer

Are any of them still living?

Col. Saylor

No, I'm the only one.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you the oldest or youngest; where did you fit in?

Col. Saylor

I was in the middle. My older brother was killed in Italy during the war. My younger brother died from Parkinson's years ago.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Col. Saylor

It was real hard. We had a bad drought. We were on a cattle ranch and we needed to raise hay to feed the cattle during the winter. Because of the drought we didn't have a good hay crop for seven years so we had sell cattle to buy feed for the other cattle. It was hard. That year was cold country in Montana. We saw 58 degrees below zero in January 1936. Everywhere it was cold with deep snow. It's not like that anymore. We did okay. We grew our own meat and stuff. We had a garden but we had to pack water a quarter mile to water the vegetables. But we were able to can a lot of stuff and we ate good all through that drought. It was hard but we survived it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to high school?

Col. Saylor

A little town called Jordan. I was 25 miles from the ranch on dirt roads. Jordan was the only town in Garfield, County with a population of 300. That's where I went to high school. That was about the only time I got off the ranch. I had not been outside of Garfield County at the time I joined the Air Force at age 19. I never got off the ranch except to go to high school.

Mr. Misenhimer

You went to high school in Jordan. What year did you graduate from there?

Col. Saylor

1937.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do when you graduated?

Col. Saylor

Worked on the ranch. In 1939 I joined the Army Air Corps.

Mr. Misenhimer

In 1939 you joined the Air Corps?

Col. Saylor

Yes. I was looking for a job. There were five boys at home and the ranch wouldn't support five more families, so most of us had to go find something else. I wound up in the Army Air Corps.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you choose the Air Corps?

Col. Saylor

Looking for a job. I saw a poster in the post office that said that the Army Air Corps was paying \$72 a month for airplane mechanics. I thought sounded real good. That was a livable wage in 1939. I signed up and soon after I signed up I found out that it was not \$72 it was \$21. It took a few years to work up to \$72. I was a little bit naïve. But it worked out.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you choose the Air Corps instead of the Army or Navy?

Col. Saylor

I liked the idea of airplanes. I didn't like the idea of boats or being a foot soldier or any of that stuff. I knew that working on airplanes sounded pretty good, so that's what I did.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go for your basic training?

Col. Saylor

March Field in Riverside, California.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all did you do during basic?

Col. Saylor

Pretty much the old Army basic. We were part of the Army then. Just regular basic training of marching, shooting guns, and stuff like that.

Mr. Misenhimer

The same as infantry training?

Col. Saylor

Similar to it. We didn't do a lot of marching. We didn't get the full Army treatment. It was run by the Army regulations but we didn't do the long hard marches they did.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have some weapons training there?

Col. Saylor

Yes. We trained on the automatic revolver; the old .45 automatic. And on a 30 caliber carbine. We had to qualify on those two weapons.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long was that basic training?

Col. Saylor

I don't remember. Several months.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you finished that, where did you go?

Col. Saylor

I went off to aircraft mechanic school, which is what I had in mind when I enlisted. I went to mechanic school at Chanute Field, Illinois. I got my training there on being a mechanic.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where in Illinois?

Col. Saylor

Chanute Air Base in Rantoul, Illinois.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all did you do there?

Col. Saylor

I had about eight months of schooling on training to be a mechanic. We took courses on pretty much everything on an airplane. We were taught about engines, and the airframe and the electric system and stuff like that. We were taught about everything on the airplane except our school didn't include the radio or the armament. That was another school. Other than that, I was trained on everything.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of planes did you work on?

Col. Saylor

After the school I went to McChord Field Washington and we had B-18s.

Mr. Misenhimer

And this was after you finished at Rantoul, right?

Col. Saylor

From Rantoul we went to McChord Field Washington near Tacoma and worked on B18 airplanes.

Mr. Misenhimer

You repaired everything on the plane? You repaired the engine also?

Col. Saylor

Yes. We did everything except tear into the engine but we did change the engines out. We soon got off the B-18 and got a B-23, which is a twin engine bomber; a newer model than the B-18. The B-23 was a temporary thing. It never saw combat. We weren't on the B-23s too long before we were on the B-25s. I think we were about the first unit to get the B-25 bomber. That was in early 1941, I suppose.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you think of the B-25?

Col. Saylor

That was a good airplane. It was beautiful. It was a good airplane. We didn't have any bad trouble with it; hardly any trouble in the air. It was a good airplane.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you do any flying or were you always on the ground?

Col. Saylor

I was a Crew Chief. I was responsible for all the maintenance on the airplane. At that time I was also the Flight Engineer, so I went with the airplane everywhere it went and did all the maintenance on it. That was a pretty good job.

Mr. Misenhimer

What rank did you have as Crew Chief?

Col. Saylor

I was a Corporal. The job called for a Tech Sergeant but I had the job when I was still a Corporal. I was a really good mechanic and I went ahead pretty fast. I studied my airplane night and day and got really knowledgeable on everything so I got promoted pretty fast. I started as a Corporal Crew Chief and went up from there.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your pay as a Corporal?

Col. Saylor

They had a procedure in the Air Corps at that time where once a year they would give written exams to all the mechanics and they would award one Staff Sergeant pay to a mechanic each year. I aced out the test and got the Staff Sergeant pay and was drawing \$72 right away then. Out of all the mechanics on the base I scored the highest so I got the higher pay. I was a Corporal but I was getting better paid. That was nice.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you on December 7, 1941?

Col. Saylor

We were on maneuvers in Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, and the Carolinas. We got back to Townsend on the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup>, I can't remember which, I think it was probably the 8<sup>th</sup> because I think Pearl Harbor happened while we were en route.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you hear about it?

Col. Saylor

I don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you feel that would affect you when you heard it?

Col. Saylor

I thought we would be going into the war then. That was about all I thought. "I guess we are in the war now." We had been thinking that we would be in that war before too long so it didn't surprise us too much.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about these maneuvers. What all did you do on those maneuvers?

Col. Saylor

We were flying B-25s against the Army. That was the nucleus of the maneuvers. We would fly over the Army and pretend to bomb it. We were practicing flying and navigating and all that kind of stuff.

We would drop little four pound bags of flour on the tanks to make sure we were hitting them. We would throw them out the side of the airplane at the tank. That was state of the art in 1941.

Mr. Misenhimer

About how long did those maneuvers last?

Col. Saylor

About three months; pretty much all summer.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is there anything in particular that you remember about that time?

Col. Saylor

No. It was the early days of the war and we had to ship our ground equipment by train. The only cargo airplane of any kind that we had in those days was the C-47 and we had very few of them and there were none available to us. So we shipped our stuff by train to the next base and then flew on our maneuvers and then shipped that stuff to another base. That was the way it was.

Mr. Misenhimer

What happened after we got into the war? What happened then?

Col. Saylor

We got involved pretty soon. We were transferred from Pendleton, Oregon to Columbia, South Carolina. I think it was probably in early January. That is when General Doolittle put together his crew to bomb Japan. He came to our base and made up his crew and we went from there to Florida and started training.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have to volunteer for that?

Col. Saylor

Yes we did, but we didn't volunteer for anything in detail. The General wanted 16 airplanes with crews to go on a mission. That was all he would say about it. I thought, guys are going somewhere, so I thought I would go on this one with the airplane and that was the way it was done.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where you on a crew before that?

Col. Saylor

We never were a crew as such before that. Anybody could have flown my airplane. So we didn't make up into regular crews until we got started on the Doolittle Raid. They picked us all out to go, and then we became the crew on each airplane. There were five men on each airplane.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about that training?

Col. Saylor

It entailed quite a lot of stuff. The General was the brain behind everything. He figured out what he had to do to make it work, to operate a bomber off a carrier, and to go the distance we had to go. We had a special bomb bay tank that only left room for four bombs because you needed the extra gas. We took the lower turret out and put a gas tank in there, 55 gallons. It was going to be a low-level mission, 1500 feet or less so we didn't need a bottom turret anyway. We didn't really need the top turret because we didn't carry a gunner so we were pretty unprotected.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you first find out you would be flying off a carrier?

Col. Saylor

When we taxied up beside the carrier.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were practicing out in Florida, you didn't know that was a carrier deck you were practicing on, huh?

Col. Saylor

No. It was just a short field runway and we assumed we were going somewhere and operate in maybe an island in the Pacific. We were never told anything. We were practicing getting airborne at 500 feet. We would do cruise control on an airplane to see how much gas we were burning and if we could do any engine tune up to help the mileage. That was it for training. Then we went out to

California and taxied out beside the aircraft carrier and that is when I found out I was going on an aircraft carrier. I don't know if anybody else knew it or not. Nobody on my crew knew. So they hoisted the aircraft up on the carrier and away we went.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many were in your crew there?

Col. Saylor

Five.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you remember their names?

Col. Saylor

Our pilot was Donald Smith. Our copilot was G. P. Williams. The bombardier was Howard Sessler.

We didn't have a gunner. We had a doctor on our ship, T. R. White, M.D. and myself.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you were the flight engineer, right?

Col. Saylor

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were in what plane?

Col. Saylor

Number 15. The next to the last one off.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about getting on the carrier.

Col. Saylor

They had a big crane on there that lifted the airplanes and set them on the carrier, on the flight deck.

The 16 airplanes took up the whole deck. I thought, I guess most guys thought, that we were being transported somewhere that was too far to fly and that was the way they chose to get us there. That sounded okay because the airplanes took up the whole flight deck. So later we started shuffling

airplanes around and that exposed half of the flight deck and that was the runway. So we had 400 feet of runway. We had to move the airplane up past the tower because you couldn't make a takeoff run past that tower; the wing tip clearance was too critical. So everybody took off from the same spot. We were fortunate being the next to the last airplane we had the whole runway and then we moved up to the same spot. The airplanes got off real well, full power on the engines. The carrier speed was around 25 knots and there was a head wind of around 30 knots. So you add that to the airplane's acceleration and we had quite a lot of lift and we didn't have any trouble getting off. It was a lot easier off the carrier than it was in training because the speed and the wind helped us.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you had about 50 mph between those two.

Col. Saylor

Yes, that was a freebie. I remember the takeoff speed was around 70 mph.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you were almost airborne from just the other.

Col. Saylor

(laugh) Yes. It took that 400 feet to get airborne but we were in the air by the time we got to it. One guy forgot to put his wing flaps down and he kind of went off the end of the runway and went down. We thought maybe he went in, but he kept flying and came on around. He was alright; he had just forgotten to put his wing flaps down. He was lucky he got away with that but he did.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that trip on the carrier going out there?

Col. Saylor

It was so-so. Not very comfortable but okay for war time. We slept on cots in the mess hall. At 2:00 every morning they would make us get up and fold up our cots and get out of there so they could run the mess hall. Those were folding cots we slept on. It was okay.

Mr. Misenhimer

The ship you were on was the *Hornet*, is that right?

Col. Saylor

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Who was the Admiral on the *Hornet*? Was it Halsey?

Col. Saylor

Nimitz or Halsey. I get them mixed up now.

Mr. Misenhimer

I think it was Halsey.

Col. Saylor

Nimitz I think was in charge of the whole task force. He was on the carrier *Enterprise* as I remember.

And Halsey was on the *Hornet*. I've forgotten a lot of the details.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did they first tell you where you were going? That you were going to bomb Tokyo.

Col. Saylor

I think we were four or five days out to sea before they told us. We all got off the carrier okay and headed for Japan. We had to take off about 400 miles too soon because we were spotted by a picket ship about 700 to 800 miles, or something like that, out of Tokyo. They intercepted a radio message where the picket ship told Tokyo where he saw us. We had to get off early and get out of there. We had twelve ships in our little task force there. We had already lost so many at Pearl Harbor that the Navy wasn't going to go any closer to Tokyo than they had to. They couldn't afford to lose any more ships. We took off and the General (Doolittle) said, "Find your targets, drop your bombs, and get out any way you can." We had a plan to go within 400 miles of Tokyo and take off at dusk, bomb at night, land at dawn and find an airstrip in China where they had some gas for us. That was our plan and it might have worked, but we never got the chance to use it. We had to take off 700 miles or more, which was 300 miles or more earlier than we had intended to take off. We didn't have enough gas to make it to China so that was the problem at that point. My ship bombed Kobe. We bombed five cities in Japan on the Raid and Kobe was the one we bombed. It was an industrial area along the

water. We made it across the China Sea to get out of there. When we were approaching the China coast we were running out of gas. The gauges were down on empty and it was somewhere around 9:00 in the evening, cloudy and hazy and rain. We were flying at about 1,000 feet altitude under the clouds so we had to decide when the engines started trying to quit what to do. If we had pulled up into the soup and bailed out, which a lot of them did, we couldn't be sure that we were over land. We might have been over water; we might be landing in a Japanese army camp. Most of them did bail out. We were a little later. We were the next to the last airplane and were probably about an hour behind the first one. We were able to set down in the water beside an island. If we had tried to pull up in the clouds and ran out of gas, we would have had to bail out over water and wouldn't have known where we were landing. The airplane made a good water landing. It skipped along the waves. The waves were a little choppy; not much swell. It was kind of calm right there at the time. We made a good water landing. The airplane floated for about ten minutes. The fuel tanks all being empty were good flotation gear. We were able to get out of the airplane and get into a life raft and push off towards the island. We were about a half mile or so from an island. We all got in the life raft and pushed off from the wing of the airplane. The airplane started to sink at that time. We went down off the wing. The aileron on the wing tore a hole in the life raft so we lost half of the inflation. So the raft wasn't much good to us later on. We had our life jackets. We put the life jackets on and a rope went around the life raft and it made a loop and hung on to that rope. I hung on to it all the way to the shore. I couldn't swim so I was glad to have something to hang on to get me to shore. Between that and the life jacket, we all made it to shore.

It was an island that we were on. It was raining. Sometime during the night we saw a light ahead of us. We walked along and saw some fisherman's houses. This island was inhabited by fisherman for the most part. That was the only industry. Several of the guys around there took us into a house and we started trying to communicate. Finally somebody showed up with a book that had the flags of the world in it. We picked out our flag and they finally understood we were Americans. They were really excited about us being there. Some of the fishermen on the island rowed us to another island. There was a gunboat going around these islands at night. The Japs would come on the islands

during the daytime and harass and take all their food and supplies. At night they would go back out on their gunboat and go around and around the island. We timed our trip out of there so that we could make our escape while the gunboat was on the other side of the island. We got to the second island okay and there we were walking. We walked up a hill and there was a Chinese Pagoda up on top of the hill. We went in there and there was an old guy. I guess he was the priest. We tried to talk to him about what to do. He didn't speak English. He had a tin can full of sticks, and he shook the can until two of those sticks fell out. There was writing on the sticks. He read the writing and from that made his decision about what to do with us. He indicated that we should stay there. He took us into a room and there was a wall. We crawled through a hole in the wall into a cave. The cave was big enough size that we were all comfortable sitting around in there, 10 or 12 feet square. A Chinese guerilla came along to see if he could help. We sat in that cave for a number of hours. The Jap Army came to that temple and searched for us for at least two hours. They gave up and went away. We came out of the cave and the next day we were on our trip. The way the Japanese Army found us, we were the only people on that island that had shoes with heels on them. All the natives wore flat sole shoes. They were tracking us with our heel prints in the soft dirt and mud and stuff. That is how they found us but they gave up after a few hours when they weren't able to locate us. They knew we were in there somewhere. They searched that building inside and out but they never did find that cave. There was a crack in the roof of that cave. We could look up through that crack and see the Japanese Army's feet going by and we heard some yelling. So we knew they were out there. From there we got to the mainland and the doctor for our gang was on my ship. He replaced the navigator. We didn't have a navigator. We had one doctor for all 16 airplane crews, all 80 of us. He happened to be on my ship. The other ship that took off, the one without his wing flaps down, had landed on another island close by where we did. Their plane flipped upside down in the water and all their crew got out. The crew chief was the only guy that didn't get hurt. He was in the back where you are supposed to be for a crash. The doctor and I were in the back end of the airplane where it crashed. (I skip around a little trying to tell this story, my mind just does that.) When we got the mainland, as it happened, the pilot Ted Lawson had crashed on the beach and he was the guy that had to have his leg amputated

by the doctor that was on my crew. These two airplanes had landed close together and there happened to be a guy that needed a doctor on one plane and the doctor was on the other plane. That was really a big break for the pilot with the bad leg. He would have died if he hadn't got that leg off. That little hospital where they did the surgery was no more than a small infirmary. So those planes being close together saved that guy's life. The natives on the mainland led us down to where that other crew was. We stayed there for a few days and then we took off heading west. We left the rest of the crew there that was all banged up. The pilot and copilot both had gone up through the top of the canopy. Ted Lawson, his knee got banged up during the crash. The crew chief was the only one that didn't get hurt. He was in the back end where he was supposed to be for that crash landing. For some reason, nobody else went back there. The bombardier was still in the nose when they landed. It had been hours since they had dropped their bombs. I don't know why he stayed up in the nose. The navigator was standing behind the pilot and copilot, leaning on their seat. When they crashed, he hit his shoulder so hard that his shoulder never recovered after that. He never had full use of his shoulder again. The bombardier went straight through the nose. And the airplane turned upside down in the water. The crew chief helped all the other guys get out of the airplane and get over on to the shore. He got a medal for that. The Chinese took them down to that little hospital and we caught up with them there. That is where the doctor amputated his leg. We left that crew there and headed west for Chung King. We walked. There was no transportation in eastern China at that time. The train tracks were all grown up and nobody had a car. There was no transportation. We walked along for days. We came upon a Chinese teenager along the road one day and he turned out to be a real lifesaver. He was about 14 to 15 years old. He spoke a few words of English. His family had been bombed out of Shanghai and he was wandering around the countryside. He came with us and he became our navigator and our food scrounger. That really helped us. We owed him a lot. I've lost track of him over the years. I don't know where he is now. We tried to bring him on the airplane with us but they wouldn't let us. We had to leave him. He was all alone in the world, just walking around. We were never able to find him after that.

We got to an airfield where an airplane could come in and pick us up. I don't know how far we walked. A British missionary had an old station wagon and he hauled us to the end of the road, which was another 100 miles. We walked and traveled by whatever we could scrounge until we got picked up and taken to ChunKing where we met up with some of the other guys. We spent a few days there and then came on home. While we were at ChunKing, Generalissimo was there fighting the war and he came in for a little bit and then left. He couldn't spend much time with us but his wife the Madam Chiang Kai-Shek did. She spoke good English and she was educated somewhere in America. She pinned medals on each of us. We all got a Chinese medal and that turned into a strange situation because my wife never had any idea where I was. I never contacted her or anything. I just disappeared. She was in a movie house watching a movie and in those days they had the Movietone Newsreels between the films and that Movietone Newsreel was on and it was filmed in ChunKing showing us getting medals from Madam Chiang Kai-Shek I was on screen and my wife looked up and saw me and said, "My god, that's Ed." That is how she knew where I was and knew that I was still alive and all that stuff. That was quite a shock for her but it was good because I wasn't able to tell her where I was. I always tell that because it's an interesting story.

We got home from ChunKing by kind of hitchhiking. In those days we didn't have any airlines and the only way to go by aircraft was the Air Force to haul people. People went from the States, except the air crews, the rest of them went by boat overseas. The ground crew and the rest of the men. We managed to get rides. We flew in a C-47 over the hump, the Himalayan hump between China and Calcutta. We had to go to 17,000 feet and above 15,000 feet you are supposed to have oxygen. The only oxygen was for the pilot and copilot. The pilot said, "You will survive. We do this every day." So we went for hours without oxygen and got real sleepy but we survived that alright. We got whatever we could in Calcutta. We scrounged a ride on a little train up to New Delhi; a freight train with open cars on it with the coal smoke coming into the cars. It ran about 25 mph. We got to New Delhi. A C-47 came into New Delhi and picked us up and took us to Dakar on the west coast of Africa. We got a ride on a PBY Navy plane that could fly nonstop across the Atlantic at that point. We finally got back to the States. That's pretty much the story there.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you get back to the States?

Col. Saylor

In late June as I remember.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was it like when you first saw Japan when you were coming in there?

Col. Saylor

When I first saw it on the coast of Japan, there were a lot of naval vessels, battleships and what have you. I saw over a dozen standing around in the water. We were flying right over them and they ignored us. We saw people walking around on the decks of the ships. I didn't expect to survive the mission. I thought we would be shot down. We were sitting ducks. There were no gunners, no escorts, no protection of any kind. We were flying over Japan in the middle of the afternoon on a sunshiny day. I thought we would get shot down but we didn't and I didn't understand why. We just continued unhindered over to Kobe which was the town that we bombed. Over Kobe we had a little anti-aircraft fire but as far as I know we didn't get hit. We saw black puffs of smoke outside the airplane. Within a second or two we realized that it was anti-aircraft fire. A couple of fighter planes tailed us back quite a ways. Then for a few minutes they broke off and went someplace else. So we never got shot at or anything. We got out of there with no problem and headed across towards China.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you know if your bombs did any damage?

Col. Saylor

Yes. We saw the bombs go off. We were bombing from 1500 feet so we could look out the airplane and see the bombs go off. They weren't very far behind us. So we hit the target alright.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you landed in China, did you have anything written that you could give to the Chinese to explain to them who you were or anything like that?

Col. Saylor

No just the clothes we had on. We lost everything in the airplane.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you didn't have anything, a script or anything you could give them to read?

Col. Saylor

No. We weren't that prepared. There was no survival training or anything like that in those days. It was just another mission. We were lucky to get everything organized that we did. It would have been nice if we would have had something we could have given them to introduce ourselves, but we didn't. We had been told how to say, "I am an American," in Chinese but I don't know what dialect it was but it didn't work.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes that was part of the problem. They have too many dialects over there.

Col. Saylor

Yes (laugh), I don't know which one it was, but it was the wrong one.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was anybody in your plane wounded?

Col. Saylor

No. Our crew put in for a Purple Heart. When I was crawling out of the airplane through that hatch, I snagged the bottom of my leg and made a little scratch. So I was wounded in action. I had forgotten all about it. After the war we heard all these stories where people got the Medal of Honor. I thought mine was about the same but I never thought anymore about it.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were taking that long walk in China, were you escorted by anybody before you met this teenager?

Col. Saylor

We had some Chinese that were kind of with us. We hoped that they were leading us in the right direction. I guess they were probably soldiers. We never saw any Chinese Army they were all off

fighting. These were some kind of National Guard or something along that line. A couple of them led along the trail. So we were headed in the right direction but we couldn't talk to those guys. When we were that cave, one of those guerillas was in there with us and he had a rifle. He had his ammunition belt wrapped around him several times, fifteen feet long I suppose. I was looking at that and he had every caliber of ammunition you could imagine from .22 to shotgun on that belt. So I didn't know if any of those bullets would fit his gun. But he was there to do what he could. His gun was rusty and dilapidated so I don't think he could have done much but he was trying his best.

We landed in Brazil off that PBY and a C-47 plane picked us up and took us to Washington.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did the Japanese do anything to the people that helped you all?

Col. Saylor

Oh yes. They slaughtered the civilians; over 200,000, as reprisal against the Chinese for their part in it. I didn't find that out until after war. That made me wonder if the Raid was really worthwhile; for those guys to have to die. They weren't part of the war or anything. They were civilians and they just shot them at will.

Mr. Misenhimer

That is just the way the Japanese were.

Col. Saylor

They captured eight of us. Two guys died, one drowned and one guy's chute didn't open when he bailed out of the airplane. Eight were captured and spent the rest of the war in a Japanese prison camp. Three of them, the Japanese gave them a trial in the Japanese language so the guys never knew what went on there. After the trial, they took three of them out to a firing squad and executed them. Of the other five, one guy died of a disease in prison. So there were four left. They were each in separate cells. They never saw each other all those years in prison. They communicated by tapping on the walls. They were treated very badly. One of the guys wrote a book, C. J. Nielson. He was a navigator, I think. He wrote a book called "Four Came Home" that described their life in the prison camp. That was quite a story. It was really bad there. He survived and got home after the war.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got back to the States what happened then?

Col. Saylor

We were debriefed in Washington D. C. for a week or a little more. Then we got leave to go home. My wife was at the ranch at that point so I went straight to the ranch and spent some time there. Then another story, the nearest airport was Miles City and that was 120 miles from the ranch. One day my wife told everybody that Ed was coming in on an airplane at Miles City tomorrow. She didn't really know that. Nobody knew that. They didn't know what to make of that. But they humored her and they said, "Okay, we will go down there." So when I got to Miles City and got off the airplane there they were, my wife and my family to greet me. We never figured out how she knew that was going to happen. In fact if she had known, she would have been wrong because we stopped overnight in North Dakota and got in to Miles City a day early. But there she was. Maybe it was some kind of a premonition. I don't know. I have never figured that one out but it was sure something for the books.

The story goes on, when she found out where I was, she got on a train to Montana to visit my folks. They had never met her. She sent them a telegram and when she got into Miles City by the railroad, nobody was there to meet her. A policeman there took her to a hotel and said, "You can stay here tonight and in the morning you can ride out to Jordan, that is 87 miles, and you can catch a ride on the mail truck." There was no transportation anywhere. So she got on that mail truck the next day and went to Jordan. There was still nobody to meet her. Jordan was a town of about 300 people. One of our neighbors was in town and saw her and he brought her to the ranch and while she was explaining to my family who she was, the mail bag came. Her telegram that she sent was in that mail bag. (Laugh) She beat it there by two hours. That is why nobody had met her. She sure got an eye opener on that trip. She beat the telegram there.

Mr. Misenhimer

When had you gotten married?

Col. Saylor

That is another story. We were going to get married as soon as I got back from maneuvers. We were at Townsend, Oregon. She and a wife of a friend of ours came down to Townsend, where we were, and we had a motel there. My friend and I stayed in one motel room and the girls stayed in another room. My friend asked me, "I thought you two were going to get married. I want to sleep with my wife." (Laugh) I said, "Well okay, we will go get married." So in Oregon, not knowing where to go or what to do, we got in the car and drove to Walla Walla, Washington, which was about 40 miles from Pendleton and we got there at probably 11:00 at night. Not knowing what to do, except that we knew we wanted to get married, we drove by the courthouse and it was open. We went into the courthouse and I saw a Judge's name on the door. I got hold of a phone book and got his home phone number and called him at home. The babysitter said he was at a party. I asked her to give me his phone number at the party and she did. I called over there and the judge was at the party, the one we were trying to find. He came on down to the courthouse and married us in the middle of the night.

Mr. Misenhimer

(Laugh) Good.

Col. Saylor

What a guy that was. He didn't stand on ceremony. He didn't ask for any proof of age or anything else. He just talked to us a little bit and kind of liked us couple of kids and went ahead and married us. He dug around somewhere and found a marriage license and that was that. I had to lie about being married to get off the base to go get married. (Laugh) That was another story. World War II was full of those kinds of stories.

Mr. Misenhimer

We like to hear those stories.

Col. Saylor

(Laugh). Oh yes. We moved around a little. During the war there were no airplanes. You went everywhere by train. It was so crowded on trains that you stood up most of the way. When we got somewhere to wait we had our footlockers with us. I learned to sleep on my footlocker and my duffel

bag. That was the way travel was for the GIs during the war, on a real crowded train and trying to get something to eat and all that. Then when you went overseas, all our ground echelon, everybody except our airplanes and flight crew, went by boat. The Queen Mary was hauling troops over to Europe. The guys rode over on them and they were so crowded they spent most of their time in the chow line. When you got something to eat, you just went right back to the end of the chow line. It would take you four hours or more to get back up to the food, so you just went through that chow line several times that way. It was kind of rough.

Mr. Misenhimer

After you got debriefed in Washington, D.C. what happened then?

Col. Saylor

That is when I went home on leave and got back with my family and wife. There was this man; I think his name was Marshall. I don't remember for sure, but anyway, this man in Great Falls that was the head of the State War Savings Bonds, he got hold of the Army Air Corps and borrowed me for about three weeks. We went around the state making speeches and selling bonds. We sold over \$1 million in bonds. People just flocked to where I was and everybody bought savings bonds. I was the first guy back from the war in my neighborhood, maybe in the state; the first guy back from any kind of combat. So everybody was interested to hear what I had to say. We sold a lot of bonds those three weeks.

Then I went back to McGill Field, Florida and wound up going on a B-26 bomb group to Europe and spent the rest of the war there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where was that?

Col. Saylor

I went to McGill Field, Florida where they were making a bomb group of B-26 airplanes. We had sixteen airplanes in each squadron; four squadrons per group. We went over to England and then France and Belgium and spent the rest of the war over there.

Mr. Misenhimer

About when did you get to England?

Col. Saylor

We flew our B-26's over. Early in April of 1943. We spent the winter getting ready to go. So it was probably April of 1943 when we got there.

Mr. Misenhimer

What bomb group were you in there?

Col. Saylor

Bomb Group 386. We had the Martin B-26.

Mr. Misenhimer

What bomb squadron?

Col. Saylor

555<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you still a crew chief?

Col. Saylor

No, I was a line chief by then. I had gotten promoted to Master Sergeant in Florida. I became the top NCO in the Maintenance Organization. During the course of the war in Europe I got a commission as Second Lieutenant. It was called a battlefield commission in those days. That is how I got commissioned and I retired as a Lieutenant Colonel.

Mr. Misenhimer

About what date did you get your battlefield commission?

Col. Saylor

I think March 4, 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got to England in 1943 did you fly any combat missions?

Col. Saylor

No. I went on one mission. The squadron commander kind of tricked me into it. He came out one day and said, "I know you have been wanting to go on one of these missions, so I want you to go on one of these today." That was news to me that I wanted to go. (Laugh) He pulled my leg but I went. He said, "This is a milk run. We won't have any trouble, so I went on that one mission. That was it for the rest of the war. I became the maintenance officer of the same squadron when I got commissioned. They moved the maintenance officer somewhere else. The maintenance officers in those days, we didn't have any that were really qualified in maintenance. We had one just out of officer training school and they gave him an aircraft maintenance job specialty number. He came to our squadron but he didn't know anything about maintenance. He was a nice guy and did what he could, but he didn't know anything about the paperwork on the airplane. A lot of those guys had a hard time doing a good job because they didn't have any training. The job of maintenance officer should not be taken that lightly. You need to have a really well-trained guy because it's not a job that just anyone can do.

Mr. Misenhimer

What airfield were you at in England?

Col. Saylor

The first night we landed at a base in England, something-Heath and spent the night there. The Germans bombed us during the night and of course we didn't know what to do with the sirens going off. I lay down beside a big tree. I thought that might protect me from something. The bomb went off. I don't know what size but it was a big one pretty close to me. I was covered with sand and gravel. It took me about a half hour to get out of that. Somebody knew that I had been covered up and they were digging me out. Then we went on. We just spent that one night there. That was my first experience. The sound of that bomb going off is the basis of my disability today. I can't tolerate loud noise. It has stayed me all these years. Now they call it PTSD. We went to Colchester next and stayed there until D-Day. After D-Day we went to France, to a town about 40 miles outside of Paris. We stayed there for a while and then we went up to Belgium. We were kind of following the Army. We were in Belgium when the Battle of Bulge started. Those guys were pinned down and the

weather was bad. We sat around there for a week with our airplanes loaded with bombs, ready to go help them but we couldn't. There was too much fog. So they were on their own for that period of time and a lot of them got killed and shot by the Germans. Finally our airplanes were able to fly after about a week. That is where we were in Belgium.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you squadron lose many airplanes?

Col. Saylor

We lost a bunch. We lost quite a few but I never counted them. They got shot down, we had some people taken prisoner, we had airplanes crash, crash landings back in England that were totally destroyed. We suffered the usual war time stuff.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were in England, did you have much contact with the English people?

Col. Saylor

No. We would go down to a pub every once in a while but had very little contact. We worked every day.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have the buzz bombs when you were there?

Col. Saylor

Yes. We were right in the flight path. We heard them every night going over. The sound would wake us up and then we would wait for the engine to quit, because that is when it was going to land. You could hear that little sound. It sounded sort of like a truck going up a hill. You had to learn the difference between noises so we knew when it was and wasn't a buzz bomb. We were right in the flight path but they never hit our base. We were bombed by air raids. The Germans dropped anti-personnel bombs on our base. They were a lot like over-sized hand grenades. They had at least two different stages in them that would set them off. You never knew what was going to set the bombs off. It was either they would hit land and go off or if you picked it up, it would go off or if it landed close to them they would go off. Or they had timers on them and they would go off according to a

timer. You couldn't walk around because you didn't know when a bomb was going to go off. There were a bunch of them. One day there was a guy up on a plane putting fuel in and they dropped some antipersonnel mines all around the airplane. He had to stay up there all day waiting for the bomb squad to get over there and pick up those bombs. (Laugh) Another one landed right on his airplane while he was up there putting gas in the wing. It would have blown up, but it didn't happen.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you think of the B-26 as compared to the B-25?

Col. Saylor

It was a little bit better airplane. It could haul a little more. It had bigger engines. It was a better airplane for combat because it had a bigger engine and bomb load and all that stuff. Both it and the B-25 were really good airplanes. They were first quality. I didn't really have a favorite.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were over there, did you hear Axis Sally on the radio?

Col. Saylor

NO. We had Lord Haw Haw. He was the German propaganda guy and he was on the radio. When we were going to England we had bad weather in Iceland and we sat there for a week waiting on the weather. He was on the radio and he knew all of our names and our airplanes. He knew everything about us. He kept calling our names and all and he had everything right. I don't know what his source was, we never did find out. But he sure would say, "I see you guys sitting up there in Iceland. Why don't you go on home. You aren't ever going to get over here." He would go on and on like that. Lord Haw Haw. He had the same line of bull as Tokyo Rose in the Pacific.

Mr. Misenhimer

They also had a gal over there called Axis Sally.

Col. Saylor

I don't think I heard her. I just remember Lord Haw Haw.

Mr. Misenhimer

During the entire war, what would you consider your most frightening time?

Col. Saylor

I don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer

A lot of them?

Col. Saylor

It was a little different. I was pretty nervous over Japan thinking I was going to get shot down and that was pretty traumatic but I didn't worry about it. I just wondered about it. I took everything as it came. Then landing in the water was another experience that you could call frightening. Once we managed to get to shore, where in the world were we at? We were still a long ways from home. It was scary trying to figure out how to get through the Jap lines. We had a few close calls and those were a little bit frightening. We never panicked or anything but we were worried and all that. We thought they would capture us. They were after us all the way through China. We spent a few weeks dodging those guys.

Mr. Misenhimer

In the Doolittle Raiders, how was the morale there?

Col. Saylor

It was pretty good. We survived so our morale was pretty good.

Mr. Misenhimer

And how about in Europe? How was the morale in your outfit there?

Col. Saylor

The morale was always good. It was the same thing. I never ever thought that we might not win the war. It never occurred to me. So my morale was pretty good and everybody's was. We were getting our job done, figuring we were going to win. So we did. Morale was pretty good. I don't know about the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force. They lost so many airplanes. Their morale must have been really bad. They had it a lot worse than we did. We had a medium range bomber and we couldn't go into Germany like the B-17s could. They didn't have any fighter escorts for a long time during the war. Fighter planes that were escorting couldn't go all the way. So the Germans would wait until the escorts turned back and

then we were fair game. Near the end of the war, fighter planes with longer range showed up and it helped the B-17s out. But they did have it rough.

I had one crew, Captain Stanford, I think on the first mission he was shot down and he got captured. He spent the war in a prison camp. We all thought that he perished. We thought he was dead. After Germany fell he came walking into our squadron. "Hey, there's Captain Stanford." We had no idea that he was still alive or that he was in a prison camp. But he showed up and that was exciting for all of us.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did your B-26's have fighter escorts?

Col. Saylor

No, not much. We never got deep enough into Germany. There was flak alright but I don't remember any fighters. I don't remember any fighter cover.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get home with any souvenirs from World War II?

Col. Saylor

Yes. I brought home a couple of pistols but I don't have them anymore. I brought home a Luger and a Browning, automatic pistols. I gave one to my brother. I don't know what he did with it. The Luger, I got broke one time and hocked it. I never saw it again.

Mr. Misenhimer

During World War II did you see any USO shows anywhere?

Col. Saylor

(Laugh) A little bit. We had some that weren't very entertaining. We did see Bob Hope once in England and Jerry Colona and somebody, over in England. We had other ones but we didn't bother much to go to them. We were working long hours and you had to go to another base to see them and we just couldn't get it done. We worked all hours, including some dark hours. We put up a mission nearly every morning all through the war. If we had snow and ice we had to get up early and get the airplanes warmed up and get the ice off the wings. It was a lot of work. Then when they came back

we had some battle damage to repair and you can imagine. We had very little time to go and enjoy anything. We worked seven days a week the whole time we were there so having fun wasn't anything like it was in the movies. In the movies, you have guys going to the pub and having a good old time drinking beer and singing songs. (Laugh) That was the movies; that's not what we did.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Col. Saylor

Yes, not great. That is another story. The Red Cross had a donut wagon, kind of a truck with stuff on it to make donuts. They were stationed at our base in Belgium I think it was, but they never came out to the flight line where all the guys were working. They hung around headquarters which was a couple of miles away. One night, myself and a couple of other guys went down there and stole the donut wagon and brought it up to our squadron. It took them two or three days to find it. We kept it hid. We had donuts until we ran out of stuff to make donuts. (Laugh) We figured that we ought to get some donuts too. They stayed around headquarters – one of those deals. So we went and absconded with their truck.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did they do anything to you when they found the truck?

Col. Saylor

No, not a thing. They just found the truck and took it back and nobody said a word about it. The military didn't worry about it. They said, "We're going to watch our truck in case you guys try it again."

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Col. Saylor

Yes we heard about it. That was in early 1945 I think.

Mr. Misenhimer

What reaction did people have?

Col. Saylor

They were pretty shocked. A pretty strong reaction. We wondered how Truman would make out and stuff like that. We felt it, just like everybody did.

Mr. Misenhimer

On May 8, 1945, Germany surrendered. Did you have a celebration then?

Col. Saylor

No, not particularly. We had a couple of drinks and that was about all. We never went to town. We had a little Officer's Club on the base and it had a couple of bars in there. We had a ration of alcohol every once in a while. I don't remember how it got there. That is where we had our drinks, in that little bar. We would go over there and have a couple of drinks every once in a while; a little rest period. I guess we might have hit it a little harder when the war was over with Germany. We were free to celebrate. There was not much celebrating we were just anxious to get out of there and get back to the States. We were en route to the Pacific to help out over there. While I was on my leave from Germany, the war with Japan got over. They dropped the atom bomb. So I didn't have to go over there. Our whole outfit was going to move out to the Pacific or wherever we were needed as a group or individuals or whatever. We were figuring we would get the job of helping the guys in the Pacific, but it didn't come to that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Since you were a Doolittle Raider, would they have sent you to the Pacific?

Col. Saylor

When I was in Europe, I was the only guy that had been on the raid in the whole outfit.

Mr. Misenhimer

What ribbons and medals did you get from World War II?

Col. Saylor

The Chinese gave us their top Air Force medal. Then we got the Distinguished Flying Cross when we got home. During the war we got some combat medals. I don't remember all the medals I got during my 28 years of service. I can't remember which one came from England or from over there.

They didn't put out very many medals in those days. Guys now; my son has done 28 years in the Air Force and he had more medals than I did and I was in the war. I got quite a few.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you come home from Europe?

Col. Saylor

I came home in July of 1945. The Air Force had two B-26's for some strange reason. So we got the second B-26 in Belgium and it was made by a different factory. I think it was a Douglass and the other was a Glenn L. Martin and they called them both B-26 bombers. I never could figure out any sense to that. That was the airplane we finished up the war with. We came back through Africa. We were going to land on northern coast of Africa but the sandstorms were so bad we couldn't get close. So we went around and landed at Dakar and from there we flew across the Atlantic Ocean. The airplane didn't have that much navigation equipment so they put a radio compass on it and we flew on the radio compass. The radio compass was guided by a picket ship and from there to the next ship. That was our main navigation equipment in World War II, the radio compass. When we went on a raid, we would have a little magnetic compass like you could buy in a dime store and it was unreliable. All of the sophisticated equipment came later.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the difference between the two B-26s?

Col. Saylor

The first one was a much bigger airplane; bigger engines and bomb load and everything. The second B-26 started as the A-26 and had a two man crew. I don't remember anybody else being on board.

Towards the end of my career, I had severe abdominal pain and they said that I had a hernia. My friend said, "I've got one of those. It doesn't hurt." I talked to a lot of people that had a hernia and they all said it wasn't that uncomfortable. So then they couldn't treat it so I retired and went out to Madigan Hospital and they said that my pain was coming from my gallbladder. It had nothing to do with a hiatal hernia. They took the gallbladder out and that ended that. I guess I could have sued the Air Force and went back on active duty but I didn't.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Col. Saylor

Yes. It was a strange feeling. I was in for 28 years and I had a real responsible position. I worked with 25<sup>th</sup> Air Division Headquarters as the Maintenance Staff Officer. I was Chief of Maintenance. In Kansas City I had 75 airplanes and three maintenance type squadrons to supervise. I had a high pressure job all the time. All during the Cold War we were on a 15-minute recall. So I had plenty of stress. So when I got out, I was lost. What could I do with all that information I had in my head about the Air Force and about war and everything. It wasn't needed anymore. What should I do with it? It was a strange feeling and I felt a little bit helpless. Also, I had never been in civilian life. I went from the cattle ranch right into the Air Force.

Mr. Misenhimer

You have had reunions with the Doolittle people, right?

Col. Saylor

Yes we have a reunion every year.

Mr. Misenhimer

I saw a picture in the newspaper and there are just three of you now, is that right?

Col. Saylor

Four. There are five of us alive, but only four made it.

Mr. Misenhimer

I think I told you, I have interviewed Thomas Griffith.

Col. Saylor

You did? He was a POW.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, he was shot down over Sicily and captured.

Col. Saylor

A number of the Doolittle guys that were POWs or got shot down, we didn't know about until after the war.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you use your GI Bill for anything?

Col. Saylor

I never used it for schooling. I did draw some money after I got out. I have forgotten what the basis of it was. I think I may have used it to buy a house one time. I had several houses over the course of my career. That was probably in the early days because it was nothing down and we got a low interest rate.

Mr. Misenhimer

What date did you retire?

Col. Saylor

October 1, 1967.

Mr. Misenhimer

How do I go on the internet to find information on the Doolittle Raiders?

Col. Saylor

Just type in "Doolittle Raiders" in the search engine and half a dozen websites will pop up. You can even put my name in there and it will come up. It is all on the internet; anything you might want to know. The complete documentary, the complete story is there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now the last thing I would like to do is to get an alternative contact. We have found out that sometimes several years down the road, we try to get back in contact with a veteran and he has moved. Do you have a son or a daughter or someone that we could contact if we needed to get back in touch with you?

Col. Saylor

Rodney Saylor. He lives in Enumclaw, Washington. He lives near the guy that is doing the spaceship in Washington. He spent 20 years in the Air Force and is an avionic engineer.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you have a phone number for him?

Col. Saylor

It is a cell phone. 253-229-8663. His work cell phone number is 253-406-2202.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is there anything else that you have thought of from your time during World War II?

Col. Saylor

No, not at the moment. I am about talked out right now.

Mr. Misenhimer

Colonel, thank you again for your time today and I want to thank you for your service to our country during World War II.

Col. Saylor

Thank you.

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