

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

The Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview With
Roger G. Anderson
March 16, 2012
Jacksonville, Illinois
19th Bomb Squadron
22nd Bomb Group
Fifth Air Force
Gunner, B-24

My name is Richard Misenhimer: Today is March 16, 2012. I am interviewing Mr. Roger G. Anderson by telephone. His phone number is 217-245-6782. His address is 1316 Goltra, Jacksonville, Illinois 62650. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War, the Nimitz Education and Research Center for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Anderson:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now the first thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the Museum to see if it's OK with you. If this were in person you could read it and sign it, but since this is by phone, let me read this to you. (agreement read) Is that OK with you?

Mr. Anderson:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now the next thing I'd like to do is get an alternative contact. We find out that sometimes several years down the road we try to get in contact with a veteran and he's moved or something so do you have a son or daughter or some one we could contact if we needed to, to find you?

Mr. Anderson:

We don't know the exact date yet or hotel rate. I think it's gonna be, I think we're going to actually meet in Austin I think. This is my daughter's phone number 815-457-2089.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What is her first name?

Mr. Anderson:

Marilyn Maurer.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where does she live?

Mr. Anderson:

Cessna Park which is a small community in eastern Illinois.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's all I need. What is your birthdate?

Mr. Anderson:

My birthdate is July 20, 1925.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you born?

Mr. Anderson:

In Chandler, Minnesota.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Anderson:

Yes, I had one older brother and one older sister.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was your brother in World War II?

Mr. Anderson:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did he do?

Mr. Anderson:

He was in the Marine Corps.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Is he still living?

Mr. Anderson:

No, he was killed on Iwo Jima.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I'm sorry to hear that. How about your sister? Was she involved in any kind of war work?

Mr. Anderson:

No, she worked in the office at Caterpillar Tractor.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Anderson:

You know I guess we were just about like everybody else. We just barely got along. I know my dad was not educated or anything and he was a mechanic in an all-night garage.

He worked from six in the evening til six in the morning and he also ran the wrecker for the garage.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was he able to keep employed throughout the Depression?

Mr. Anderson:

Yes, he was employed most of the time and he worked every day. In fact, he got every other Wednesday off. He worked thirteen of fourteen days. I don't guess he was much different than most.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you all live in town?

Mr. Anderson:

Yes, we lived in Kewanee, Illinois.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have a garden?

Mr. Anderson:

A garden, oh yes. In fact we had one in our yard and one in a vacant lot down the street and across the street.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about chickens or anything like that?

Mr. Anderson:

No, no.

Mr. Misenhimer:

But you had a garden to get your vegetables and things then?

Mr. Anderson:

Yes, right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your mother's and father's first names?

Mr. Anderson:

My dad was George and he served in World War I. My mother was Gladys.

Mr. Misenhimer:

On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. Anderson:

Oh, yeah. I remember visiting...

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where were you when you heard?

Mr. Anderson:

I was in Kewanee, still in high school and I know in our community, bowling had been...

Ladies and kids didn't know what bowling was because they were always in some tavern basement or something like that and they had just opened a new bowling alley, I think

about Friday night. It would have been, you know, the fifth of December and a bunch of

us boys had gone to church and Sunday school and we said, "Hey, let's go down and see what this new bowling alley is." We were there in Kewanee, Illinois, and we were in this

bowling alley and they had a public address system in there, you know, for people when

they were assigned to take alley number whatever. They finally got the place quieted

down and they made the announcement that Pearl Harbor had been attacked.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was your reaction when you heard that?

Mr. Anderson:

Well then us guys said (we lived on the main line of the CB&E Railroad going into Chicago from Galesburg and points west in Illinois), so we said let's go down to the station. We went down a few blocks away to the railroad station and we could see all the servicemen of course pouring in there to go back to their bases. Actually they had been notified that if anything happened to report back to their bases. Of course, at that time several were probably at home on furloughs just prior to Christmas and so on.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you heard that, how did you think that would affect you?

Mr. Anderson:

Well, we didn't know for sure but anyway we were too young and still in school. So we felt what's the deal because I remember we had just talked about it in history that the Japanese envoys and the Americans were talking you know about things in the Pacific. I remember a neighbor man, our next door neighbor man, couldn't get it in his head and he was talking to my dad and I was tuned in on it of course and for about a day he couldn't get in his mind that it had been the Japanese, must have been the Germans. We were talking with him you know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That was quite a shock to everybody.

Mr. Anderson:

Right. You know like I said for about a day this Mr. Pray couldn't get it in his head that it

was the Japanese that attacked Pearl Harbor. I was a junior in high school. I graduated from high school in June of 1943.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When did you go into the service?

Mr. Anderson:

The following July.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That same year, July of 1943?

Mr. Anderson:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK. Which branch did you go into?

Mr. Anderson:

The Army. I had taken some tests for pilot. I was still, like I said, until that July I was too young and so I had some taken some tests and was going into the Army Air Corps into the pilot training program.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you went into the Air Corps then?

Mr. Anderson:

Right, the Army Air Corps.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you choose the Air Corps?

Mr. Anderson:

I just, I don't know, like I said, I had taken that test and my draft number come up so there I was and when I told them I'd taken the test they looked it up on their records and saw that I had taken those previous tests to join the Air Corps program so that's where they sent me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you drafted or did you volunteer?

Mr. Anderson:

I was drafted.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go for your basic training?

Mr. Anderson:

I went to Florida. Miami Beach, Florida.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you travel down there?

Mr. Anderson:

By train.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that train trip?

Mr. Anderson:

It wasn't bad. There weren't many of us. We came out, of course being from central Illinois, we reported to Chicago and then all boarded a train and started south.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Had you been that far from home before?

Mr. Anderson:

No, only to Minnesota basically. Not out anywhere other than I remember out of Illinois.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Back in those days people hadn't traveled very far.

Mr. Anderson:

Right. Most of my relatives were in Minnesota and I had been there a few times.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about your basic training. What all did you do in basic training?

Mr. Anderson:

The normal stuff, learned to drill and this and that, you know. Of course we were the ocean type beach boys because we lived in those fancy hotels that they had taken over.

So our living quarters were great.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About how long was your basic training?

Mr. Anderson:

Let's see, it was from July and into November. From the tail end of July until November.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About three months then?

Mr. Anderson:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What all did you do in basic training? Did you have a lot of marching?

Mr. Anderson:

Oh, yes. You know constantly drilling and so on and a little bit of tactics, so-called and mostly had physical training.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Any kind of weapons training?

Mr. Anderson:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You didn't fire a rifle or anything like that?

Mr. Anderson:

Just a few times down on the beach.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you take any kind of Air Corps training?

Mr. Anderson:

Later on.

Mr. Misenhimer:

No, I mean in basic training.

Mr. Anderson:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when you finished basic training where did you go?

Mr. Anderson:

In the meantime I found out they didn't need all the pilots. They didn't lose as many in Europe as they thought so they gave us some more tests and part of us guys were sent... I

know two buddies that I had were sent to the infantry. Of course at that time there was strictly the Army, you know. In other words wherever they sent you whether it was Air Corps or whatever but they ended up in the infantry. Some of us guys that had passed the test evidently they said we're going to send you to gunnery school. So they sent me to Laredo, Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you travel to Laredo? By train again?

Mr. Anderson:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about gunnery school at Laredo. What all did you do there?

Mr. Anderson:

I was there about three months or so. Of course it was typical gunnery school there.

That's all. They trained us in gunnery, learned the weapons, learned to operate the turrets and all that cleaning the guns and so on.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you shoot shotguns there also?

Mr. Anderson:

Oh, yeah. I never will forget that. I had an uncle that shot skeet and trap. Of course I remember that when we were there they would give us eight boxes of shells every day and you had to go down on the range and shoot them. Keep your eye in and everything. Of course it was quite a deal to get in a turret and shoot skeet and trap out of the turrets. Martin turret. They had 12 gauge shot guns, a number of consolidated turrets.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I've heard people talk about riding in the back of a pickup truck and shooting at targets.

Did you do that?

Mr. Anderson:

We did that, too. They had a track that was in the back of a truck and would go around and the clay pigeons would come at any angle or anything and you had to try to pick them off. We thought, boy, if we were doing this... I know my uncle later on questioned me, the one that shot skeet and trap, he said, boy what that would cost them, all those guys down there and all the people in the little trap house. We were riding around and getting to shoot. Like anything it was really fun in one sense but like anything when you go there day after day, it got kind of tiring.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that happened there in gunnery school?

Mr. Anderson:

They had us shoot and then I guess some guys that weren't a good enough shot or something, they washed a few of them out. I wonder where Joe or Bill is, you know.

They washed him out, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you do any flying and shooting from a plane?

Mr. Anderson:

Yes. That's when we went to use 30 calibers out of an AT-6.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You would sit in the back seat of the AT-6 and shoot the 30 caliber?

Mr. Anderson:

That's right. Of course we shot at the sleeve targets.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Would more than one plane be shooting at a time at it?

Mr. Anderson:

No, no. You'd take your turn and go around again and they'd drop the chute over near the strip some way, depend on the wind direction of course, and you'd go in and somebody else would come back in.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So did they have your bullets painted different colors so you could know who hit the thing?

Mr. Anderson:

Yeah, right. They knew that you had, usually mine was green markings and they had the sleeves numbered so that they could know which guy was shooting at which sleeve.

Naturally there were several of us up at a time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you do pretty good at that?

Mr. Anderson:

Yeah, I guess so. We enjoyed it. Of course we didn't count the holes; they had some one else doing that. We didn't know whether we were hitting them half the time, all the time or none of the time.

Mr. Misenhimer:

They didn't report to you?

Mr. Anderson:

No. They just kept track of us evidently because they knew when we were up and when we were shooting and so on. We didn't have to score anything.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else happened in gunnery school?

Mr. Anderson:

I remember a kid that I was trained with but never saw him again afterwards. Of course you ran a gunners' strap through your parachute, the legs of your parachute harness, and of course these pilots were bored with their job and as soon as you got done firing, you'd wave your hand that your guns were empty and he'd peel out to go back in. This Bob, I can't think of his last name now, but anyway he had kind of reached up and waved his hand about that time when a pilot, he just flipped the ship over and this Bob fell out and there he was, flapping beside the plane. He had, naturally, I think a back chute on and he thought my golly if that thing had come open, it'd tear him in half. But the pilot saw him and laid the plane back over. He crawled back in and he says I was pressed to the floor of that rear cockpit like you wouldn't believe. I never will forget. I was up at the same time with him and preceded him down and our pilot said he'd heard on the radio that somebody had flipped out and so when I saw Bob come back in but the commanding officer of the line said to this Bob, he says, the next plane and they changed things around in a hurry and he said, "You get back there in that plane and go right back up." He says, "I don't want to go" and he says, "That's an order. Get in there and go." After it was all said and done, this Bob says the line officer told him that he knew that if he didn't get back right in and go again that he'd probably be scared to ever get in an airplane again.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's right.

Mr. Anderson:

That's one thing that I remembered.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that happened?

Mr. Anderson:

We were based there and of course we could just get off the base. As I understand it now the Laredo base has now become the commercial airport. Of course then we were right next to town and we'd go into town and walk across the Rio Grande River which I remember was one thing that impressed me being from central Illinois that the Mississippi and the Illinois river was big but when we were there it was awful dry. If you'd waded across the Rio Grande and even of course being there we thought it was the river, new country and we found out you wouldn't even get your knees wet trying to walk across. Like I said being from around two great rivers that was what we expected, or at least I did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else you recall from that time?

Mr. Anderson:

Not so much from gunnery school. Of course then they sent us home for a furlough, a little furlough. In fact they sent us back, maybe I shouldn't say us, I can't speak for anybody else. After that I was never with anyone that I was in gunnery school with.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to from gunnery school?

Mr. Anderson:

Went home on furlough and got back to near Muroc Dry Lake to be assigned to a crew.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That was in California?

Mr. Anderson:

Yes. I've heard but I don't know what they call it now. It was Muroc Dry Lake then.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were assigned to a crew there?

Mr. Anderson:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Is that where you got to the B-24?

Mr. Anderson:

Yes. We trained in 24s. They were using the old D models.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Tell me about that training there.

Mr. Anderson:

Well, we were assigned to a crew and we trained and we flew missions every day. We flew up and down the coast and wherever and simulated mostly photograph bombing of different facilities and so on.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any gunnery training there?

Mr. Anderson:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

But you would fly on all those missions, right?

Mr. Anderson:

Yeah, right. I remember one time to give us an idea of a long mission we flew from there up to Seattle and so on and bombed a power plant, you know photograph bombed, a generating plant.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else there you recall?

Mr. Anderson:

No, like I said we were up at Muroc Dry Lake and it was out in the middle of nowhere.

There were no facilities there and of course to do anything if you had time off, you had to hitchhike into L.A.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you live in there?

Mr. Anderson:

Lived in a, it was a plywood shack.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How many people to a shack?

Mr. Anderson:

Six.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was the food there?

Mr. Anderson:

So-so. Average, you know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when you finished there, where did you go?

Mr. Anderson:

They sent us to Hamilton Field and we picked up a new B-24 and they sent us, we had two days of fuel consumption tests and then they sent us to Hickam Field in Hawaii.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where is Hamilton Field?

Mr. Anderson:

Right near San Francisco.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then you flew across to Hawaii?

Mr. Anderson:

Actually we picked up our plane at Hamilton Field and then they sent us out to Fairfield Sussain which was north and east of San Francisco. That's where we were actually based for a few days. We flew those fuel consumption tests.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you flew to Hawaii, did they have to put extra tanks in your plane/

Mr. Anderson:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You could fly that far on the tanks in the plane then?

Mr. Anderson:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About how long did it take to fly over there?

Mr. Anderson:

Golly, I don't remember. Of course we in a sense lost so much time because we were flying with the sun so therefore you know you lose, it doesn't near as long, because you're flying with the sun.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Doesn't take as long on the clock anyway.

Mr. Anderson:

We left in the morning and I would guess it was probably ten or eleven hours and we got there in early afternoon but of course like I said we'd gained about three hours with the sun.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the cruise speed on the B-24?

Mr. Anderson:

Cruise about 170-180 mph.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what was your position on the plane?

Mr. Anderson:

Ball turret.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Ball turret on the bottom, OK.

Mr. Anderson:

Yeah, that was for most of my missions. I think about thirty-six of the forty-eight that I had. Then later on when the Japanese air force was about diminished other than the kamikazes we took the ball turrets out because they weighed so much, too much wind resistance and I flew the right waist gun.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you flew a total of forty-eight missions?

Mr. Anderson:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's a lot. What all did you do there in Hawaii?

Mr. Anderson:

We were just there two days. Overnight more or less. Part of the next day and then we took off and island-hopped to Garbutt Field in Townsville, Australia.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where are some places you stopped along the way?

Mr. Anderson:

Oh, Baker Island, Canton Island, Guadalcanal.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were on Guadalcanal then. About when did you leave to go down there?

Mr. Anderson:

Probably was the middle of July.

Mr. Misenhimer:

1944?

Mr. Anderson:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything happen on the trip down?

Mr. Anderson:

It was a brand new ship we was on so we didn't have any problems whatsoever; no weather or anything.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you remember the names of your crew?

Mr. Anderson:

Oh, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the pilot's name?

Mr. Anderson:

Harvey, Lieutenant. His name was Maurice Harvey.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about the rest of the crew?

Mr. Anderson:

The co-pilot who became our pilot later on was Al Dean. They were both from California. Then our bombardier was Gordon Nellis. He was from Michigan. Our navigator who was a young man, a math major out of Rutgers, was top-notch, Dick Kolaszar. He was from New Jersey.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about the flight engineer?

Mr. Anderson:

Luther McChee. He was an Illinois boy from south central Illinois.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How about your two waist gunners? Who were they?

Mr. Anderson:

Our assistant engineer and the top gunner was Rosetti, Dominic Rosetti. He was another Californian. Our nose turret was John King from Texas but he lasted the first mission. He trained with us and everything.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What happened after the first mission to him?

Mr. Anderson:

We got the devil shot out of us and he said, "I'm done. That's it." They told us it was going to be a milk run. They'd been up there the first few days before to the Halmarhara Islands. I remember at briefing, of course we were all eyes and ears, a new crew you

know what's going to happen. The briefing officer said all the crews up there at Wassile Bay and Halmarhara, they just didn't get any resistance or any interception or anything so it's going to be a milk run. That's where they assigned the new crews today. So away we went and one of the new crews never finished their first cruise, they were shot down. We got the devil shot out of us, interception and everything and that's why John King from Texas said, "If that's a milk run, I quit." He was done.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go on that mission?

Mr. Anderson:

Wassile and Halmarhara.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where is that?

Mr. Anderson:

Well, it's west and a little bit north of New Guinea. Just east of the Philippines if that helps you any.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You had to fly way up there, then? That's a long way.

Mr. Anderson:

Yeah, right. Our missions were pretty long over the Pacific with a four-engine bomber.

The left gunner on the waist position was Luke McChee, maybe I gave you that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, you did.

Mr. Anderson:

Engineer. John Vandalan, a Filipino, the radio operator originally had the right waist gun. Our armorer was Stan Diamond and he was from Minnesota and he was our tail gunner and I did the ball turret.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you got shot up so bad on this first mission, was it by enemy aircraft or anti-aircraft guns or what?

Mr. Anderson:

Yeah, we were intercepted and anti-aircraft evidently a couple of days before like I said it was supposed to be a milk run and we got the devil shot out of us.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was anybody hurt on your plane that time?

Mr. Anderson:

No, no. We got holed a little bit but no injuries.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what was your next mission?

Mr. Anderson:

You know I don't remember exactly but we bombed and the Celebes were primary targets. We had already kind of neutralized most of New Guinea. Wewak and Wakde and those places up along the northeast coast.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other missions where you had a lot of trouble?

Mr. Anderson:

Luckily we didn't have any serious trouble. We lost an engine and stuff like that but we never had to fall out of the formation where we would get picked off you know. We would be good target for the enemy.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now you'd lose the engine because of enemy action or just because the engine went bad?

Mr. Anderson:

Either mechanical or sometimes they were hit by anti-aircraft fragments or whatever. Our crew was lucky in that we never lost our baby(?) engine which was the number three engine which ran the generators and the hydraulic pump. So we always had that baby going where normally if you lost that number three engine you lost hydraulics and generating power.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you shoot at many enemy aircraft?

Mr. Anderson:

Oh, yeah, whenever they showed up.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you shoot any down?

Mr. Anderson:

Not that I know of because we stayed in tight formation and if I'm shooting, so are you and everybody else depending on direction and so on, who hit them and who didn't you know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you see many enemy planes shot down?

Mr. Anderson:

Oh, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What were they mostly, Zeroes or what kind?

Mr. Anderson:

Yeah, Zeroes and Zekes and Hamps, you name it, they had it. Of course, once they're shooting at you, you're not worried about what they are but try to get them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, right. Did you all lose many of your planes?

Mr. Anderson:

Oh, yeah. I remember the closest call that I remember was when we were bombing Formosa and so we had been attacked and we were flying lead ship from our squadron and the plane on our right wing, the number three plane in the right element, a kamikazee hit him. We were wingtip to wingtip or closer. We weren't cavaliers. You probably remembered seeing some of the old pictures of World War I where it was almost like a contest you know with the white scarf flying and all. You remember seeing some films like that? Well this wasn't us guys but you know at least we felt that we could defend ourselves if we stayed in formation. But how do you defend yourself if somebody is intent on flying his ship into yours? I remember that was the first one that I saw and he just kept boring in on the plane on our right wing and of course I was our right waist gunner.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What outfit were you in, what bomb squadron and bomb group?

Mr. Anderson:

22nd Bomb Group. And I was in the 19th Squadron.

Mr. Misenhimer:

The 19th?

Mr. Anderson:

Yes. The unit I was assigned to was an old unit. In other words they had brand-new B-26s. Of course I wasn't in it yet but they were based at Langley Field, Virginia and on December 8, 1941 at 7:18 in the morning they took off and went to California, flew coast patrol. Our unit was one of the original coast patrols for a while. Of course right afterwards, you know, hey are they going to be in California right after Pearl Harbor so our unit was old. They originally flew B-26s, the Marauders, and after attrition and so on got most of the 26's, the unit transformed into new B-25s, except our squadron kept all the old 26s from the other three squadrons and we took all the paint off of them and Tokyo Rose named our squadron because were the first planes in World War II that had no paint. Tokyo Rose said, "Well, I see today where the Silver Fleet was over Rabaul or this or that." Our squadron became the Silver Fleet.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what kind of planes were these?

Mr. Anderson:

B-26s, Marauders.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you fly those at all?

Mr. Anderson:

No, I just took a couple of supply runs.

Mr. Misenhimer:

But you were always in B-24s.

Mr. Anderson:

Yes, right. Like I said our squadron kept the rest of the B-26s. The other three squadrons had new B-25s. But our unit and our squadron commander had enough punch that they allowed him to keep them and he later on became the group commander as the original commander was killed on Samar. So he became the group commander. That's part of the history of our unit.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK, good. How long did you stay at Townsville, Australia?

Mr. Anderson:

At Townsville, about three days and then they transferred us up to Port Moresby, New Guinea. I'm not sure really and naturally the commanding officers didn't commute with me as far as communications and I'm not sure whether we were assigned to the 22nd, the 19th Squadron at Townsville or at Port Moresby. Our unit, my first base overseas was at Nadzab, New Guinea which was about forty miles west of Lae.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Is that where you flew your first mission from, from Nadzab?

Mr. Anderson:

I just took one training mission and then they moved us and I was in the advance echelon

to Owi Island in the Schoeueten Islands which were just north of New Guinea, north and west.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now on your first mission, where did you fly that from?

Mr. Anderson:

My first combat mission was to Wassill Bay and Halmarhara.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK, I see, that was your first combat mission, that's when you got shot up so bad.

Mr. Anderson:

Yeah, right. Supposed to be a milk run.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So that's just off of New Guinea.

Mr. Anderson:

Yeah, right. Actually where we were, Owi Island, which was a little island about five miles from Biak. You know where that is.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, right.

Mr. Anderson:

Like I said we were the new guys, not only our crew but a couple of others. They dropped us off at this island and they took us in an LCI over there. They gave us supplies and stuff and said start clearing the land. It was a coral island. Of course it had snakes and stuff on it. To clear an area and the officers would say where your living quarters will be.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you were clearing it off and this is where your living quarters would be?

Mr. Anderson:

Yeah, on this island you know near Biak. Of course on this island, we hadn't been there that long and anything especially going to some new place now to set up a base to operate out of. We went from Biak over there in an LCI and they let about thirty of us off. We got our supplies off and this and that. I remember this First Lieutenant, I don't know what kind of unit or whatever he was from, but anyway he says, "You just came from Biak" and he says there are still about 30,000 Japanese on there and he says "We don't think there's any on this island. We'll see you in a few days with some more supplies." Oh, baby, we don't think there's any on this island. Of course we were not trained like ground troops. Fortunately there was none.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long did you stay on that island then?

Mr. Anderson:

We stayed there from about August to November, I think and then to Tacloban in the Philippines. Then a number of our missions were out of Owi. That's when we were bombing the Celebres and the Philippines.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How do you spell the name of that island?

Mr. Anderson:

O-w-i.

Mr. Misenhimer:

All right, OK.

Mr. Anderson:

The Schoeuetens, they were real small and they were just off the northwest tip of New Guinea.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, not too far from Biak, right?

Mr. Anderson:

Then like I said, again I was on an advance echelon, tried to set up camp and so on at Tacloban in the Philippines. It was so muddy and wet, the soil and they couldn't, the steel mats wouldn't support our planes, so we never could fly out of there. So they sent us to Anguar in the Palau Islands which was east of there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anguar, just off of Peleliu, right?

Mr. Anderson:

Right, we were just off Peleliu. Of course it was about 250-275 miles east of the Philippines and of course it added that much more to our missions. We were about half-done, at least our crew about half-done, with our missions. Our ships went there and did a few days of the advance echelon and came and got some of us guys. We got a furlough to go to Sydney. So big deal. You know that's another funny thing when you think of it. There was a war on naturally and ok you guys go to Sydney if you can find a way down there. It wasn't like a walk down to the train station or the airport. Anyway we got down there and had our furlough and we came back up to Townsville again ready to come back

and we couldn't get back and couldn't get back and finally we got out of there and we were at Hollandia in northern New Guinea and we were trying to get a ride back and we were talking to this C-47 pilot and he says "Where you going?" We said, "We're going to the Philippines." "What outfit you with?" "The 22nd." He says, "You don't want to go there. They've moved to Anguar in the Palau Islands." We didn't even know where we were going and of course naturally they didn't communicate with us. So he says, "You better head for another direction." So we got up there and were flying out of there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when did they get rid of the turrets on the B24s?

Mr. Anderson:

We went from Anguar, and later on they invaded Samar which was north of Leyte and by that time the forces had pretty well neutralized the Japanese air force and you know with the Navy and us guys and so on. So we decided, I didn't naturally decide, but they had decided that the wind resistance and the weight and so on and we weren't being attacked that much by you know Japanese forces, so take them out. So that's when I moved to the right waist gunner.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That was about what mission?

Mr. Anderson:

That was probably about my 35th or 36th mission. Shortly after that, we hadn't been at Samar long and of course they had neutralized Luzon which was the same island as Manila and Clark Field was on. We moved up to Clark Field.

Mr. Misenhimer:

About when did you move to Clark Field?

Mr. Anderson:

Probably tail end of April, first of May, 1945, somewhere right about in there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Anderson:

We were at Clark Field which primarily had been an American base and of course the Japanese had maintained it with a few other short strips and it was a flat plain area so it wasn't like a lot of places where we had been, trying to establish an airport. It could handle four-engine bombers. While we were assigned there and that's when we started when we were bombing Formosa and the China coast and that's where we started getting the kamikazes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How many of your planes were hit by kamikazes?

Mr. Anderson:

Oh, golly, I don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Quite a few?

Mr. Anderson:

There were several and like I said the thing that I guess worried or concerned or whatever was, you know we felt that flying in formation and so on that we were able to defend

ourselves but how do you defend yourself against somebody that is going to intentionally fly into you.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So then what happened?

Mr. Anderson:

Finished the missions and at 48 had enough points. They had a point system. I remember somebody said one of the but I don't remember if it was... Seemed to me like it might have been our squadron commander but he said, "You guys will be sent on detached service." What does that mean? The way he explained it was that you will be sent home and in the mean time of course we had heard about it, it wasn't a big secret but the B-29s we understand that our unit was going to be reassigned to B-29s. So he said you'll probably go home, get a furlough and go back and be trained in B-29s and come back to our unit. So, okay, that explained it as well as we could understand what he was talking about. We went home and it took forever. We were on a little bitty ship and we left Manila harbor heading for the States and one thing I remember I had two birthdays in the same year. Because we crossed the International Date Line. We went from tomorrow to today. I had several hours of my birthday and then went back into my birthday. I was twenty years old in the same year. They took us forever. Like I said the ship was so little and we came back in a small convoy and I had the bunk...the ship was so small and there was four hundred of us on it. I think originally somebody said they had seen some papers in the captain's quarters or whatever it was that it had been a cruise liner out of the Maritime Province of Nova Scotia. Actually it wasn't a great big ship or anything but they had pressed it into service and I had the bunk for twelve hours and he had it for

twelve hours. Luckily my twelve hours in the bunk was at night, six to six. I remember when we got off the California coast, they had a P.A. system on this little ship so they would announce and I was in Section A. "Section A go eat. Section A stay on the deck and exercise. Section B you go eat." They had made announcements and in fact you had to take a shower at a certain time of the day by sections and so on. So like I say, they had a means of communicating and when we came into San Francisco Harbor, August 6, 1945, the pilot came out in a boat and of course we slowed way down and he got on to take us into the harbor. We got into the bay and we could see...there was like we said, a million people, all over. Here we came, this little ship with four hundred of us on and people all over and fire engines and when we got closer we could hear the fire engines going and this and that. What in the world is going on? Is that all these idiots got to do, we're trying to win a war and here they're all seeing this little ship come in with us guys. Come to find out once we got on shore I remember they had two probably college-age gals, good lookers, and they handed each one of us as we got off the ship, handed us a San Francisco Examiner. The headlines was, "U.S. drops A-bomb!" Of course the thing afterwards when we went into the barracks there at Hamilton Field again, we couldn't understand it. Nothing on that ship had been said about you know, hey, the United States, of course to us guys naturally we were then in the official know, what in the world is an A-bomb. We were puzzled later on why nothing had been on the ship, "Hey, the United States had just dropped this special bomb" or whatever, you know. But not a word had been said. It wasn't that they didn't have any means of communicating because they said Section A do this, Section B do that and so on. Right then we got to talking and we heard

some rumors about a point system about your length of service and overseas service and so on, you know. So we got to calculating whether we'd have enough points you know.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what?

Mr. Anderson:

Then of course went there and they checked us over for a couple three days to see that we weren't going to infect the whole United States and we got a furlough to go home. I came home for thirty days. In the meantime of course by that time things had been settled. The Japanese had surrendered and so on and I finally got a telegram stating that I would no longer be on detached service in the 22nd Group and to report to San Antonio, Texas for discharge. So we went down there to get discharged and of course the government wasn't ready for that many people to be released and we'd go down every day and check the list and see if we were on the list to get discharged. And there was a notice on board... I should say, in the meantime I told you our engineer was from Taylorville, Illinois and while he was home on furlough he bought a car, a Plymouth business coupe and he had driven it down to Texas to get discharged and he was going to get around and drive slow coming home, you know. So they had said if you could get to Sioux Falls, South Dakota, you'd probably get discharged quicker. So we signed up and drove to Sioux Falls, South Dakota from San Antonio and got discharged right away. Came home and that ended my career.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So what day were you discharged?

Mr. Anderson:

At Sioux Falls, it was I think October 7 because we had sat there like I said in San Antonio and naturally they didn't have the personnel and so on. I remember earlier they said, "Hey, any of you guys know how to type?" I didn't but anyway somebody said yes. You get in there and they have you do clerical work to get rid of these guys and you wouldn't get discharged so any rate that's why it took so long.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Let me ask you some questions. How come you flew so many missions, 48? In Europe they only had to fly 35.

Mr. Anderson:

I don't know, that's the way they had it set up. You know our missions were long. I think the longest mission I had was nineteen hours and twenty-three minutes. Carry three bombays of fuel and one bombay of bombs. They had four bays for bombs. I don't know, like I said, MacArthur and Nimitz didn't confer with me on it. Of course I don't know that they had any.. They weren't worried about how many missions a guy was going to fly.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What would you consider your worst mission? The first one?

Mr. Anderson:

In a sense, yes, because you know the guys thought a milk run you know and we talked to the guys who had been on it. We didn't even get shot at you know. Wow. Like I said the plane flying on our right wing just blown out of the sky. They never completed their first mission. Like I said there was flak all over the sky and there was interception, two different types of planes. We thought, "This is a milk run?"

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was the morale in your outfit?

Mr. Anderson:

I don't know. I guess we just kind of let it go by and that's the way it is.

Mr. Misenhimer:

When you crossed the equator, did you all have any kind of ceremony or anything?

Mr. Anderson:

No, not especially other than they just said... I remember of course we were on our own ship.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, you were flying down, right?

Mr. Anderson:

Yeah, going over alone and I think our navigator who was really a standout navigator he said, "Hey, we're crossing the equator." Okay, big deal. There wasn't a lines on there like on a map. He became our squadron navigator.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Anderson:

Oh, yes, I remember because we wondered immediately what's going to happen now.

Again, we knew there was a vice president but we never heard much about him like most vice presidents. Of course Roosevelt was a pretty demanding person or whatever I should say, colorful and you knew about him during the war when he made a proclamation or something, you heard about it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

On May 8, 1945 when Germany surrendered, did you hear about that?

Mr. Anderson:

Oh, yeah. We, in the Pacific, and I don't know how to say it, the stepchild or whatever but you know we didn't get the supplies and equipment and so on that they did in Europe so pretty soon we started seeing a lot more equipment, food, planes, so on that we were dealing with.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have a celebration when you heard about Germany surrendering?

Mr. Anderson:

Oh, not a big celebration. If I remember right I think I flew the next day. We'd take off anywhere from four or five o'clock in the morning to go on, you didn't stay up all night.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What ribbons and medals did you get?

Mr. Anderson:

I got the Air Medal with five oak leaf clusters on it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else?

Mr. Anderson:

Never injured, never got a scratch.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Never injured, OK.

Mr. Anderson:

I don't remember which mission it was but we got an aircraft shell blow up right beside the plane and the concussion and part of the... Of course the metal deck on our ship I was flying waist gun, and it took my leg belts from underneath me. There was no injury or anything, it just the slick surface, aluminum surface. Scared me more than anything else.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Anderson:

Staff Sergeant.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Anderson:

No, no. That's the one thing I feel about these guys today. I don't agree with a lot of their policies but I'm not going to get into that. Anyway, you know they looked forward to seeing us come home and I was overseas just a little over a year and a half. I didn't have to look over my shoulder or whatever walking down anywhere. Most of the places in New Guinea and so on, like Anguar and Owi and Townsville. Kind of like Owi there was no population other than Americans. There wasn't like these guys today over there in Iraq and Afghanistan what's behind me, what's going on or who are they.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever get malaria or any other disease down there?

Mr. Anderson:

Nope, I took my atabrin and of course I was a fair-skinned guy and I looked like a

pumpkin. I know when I came home I remember my uncle says, "You look like a pumpkin."

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see any USO shows anywhere?

Mr. Anderson:

Yeah, Bob Hope and his troop we saw.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where was that? Do you recall?

Mr. Anderson:

I think it was in Biak.

Mr. Misenhimer:

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

Mr. Anderson:

No, I should have but I didn't. I don't know why, I never even thought of it. I remember when I got home somebody says, "I understand you guys carried a .45. Didn't you bring it home?" No, I turned it in or whatever, hoping I was done with it.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Anderson:

No. We saw them and so on and the USO and so on but I didn't need any help or anything. I got letters and sent home letters and heard from people at home and so on, my sister and I had an aunt that wrote to me a few times. So no, other than I knew they were there and they were available, I didn't need them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you use your G.I. Bill for anything?

Mr. Anderson:

Yes, I did. I went to college, came home and was... Originally when I was out of high school being from Illinois, I went to Caterpillar Tractor and took some tests. The guy says that ran the apprentice school for Caterpillar said that I would be a machine apprentice. Take me four years to get their apprenticeship completed and I would be a machinist. So he says, I never will forget, he says, this would be in June of 1943, "What's your draft status?" I said, "I don't have any. I'm not old enough." So he questioned me about my birth date and this and that and he says, "I'm not going to assign you to school because we don't know what your status is and as far as you know there's nothing wrong with you as far you'll not be classified to serve in the Service." So I took a job there for a short while and I was a machinist's helper and of course I was drafted and then I was gone. So then when I came home again, I went back there. "Oh, yeah, oh, yeah," he says. But of course there were several other guys, people and he says, "We can't start you now." This was in probably October of 1945 because he was getting guys that were like third year apprentices and second year and so on and they're getting them back into their schooling and getting them started again. And he says, "You will start about a year from now." So, okay, he says but you can keep working where you want because I was a machinist's helper in a research machine shop. So then my good buddy from school days was in the Navy, he came home in about March of 1946 and he came down to see me and he says, "Andy, let's go to school." I said, "What are you talking about?" All I had heard a little bit about, like I said, I got out and hadn't heard all about the G.I. Bill and I knew

I'd completed high school and I thought the G.I. Bill was for kids that were in college and going back to college. I had never started college and I thought it didn't apply to me. When he came back of course being in the service he had got a lot more credible information. He says no you can go and this and that, he says, "let's go to college." I thought well I've got a year yet before I'm going to get in my machine apprentice starting classes and it's four years like college. So we went on and went to college. So I used my G.I. Bill and got my bachelor's degree and I went on and got a master's degree.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where did you go to school?

Mr. Anderson:

I went to bachelor's at Western Illinois State College which is now of course, in the meantime changed to Western Illinois University which their primary purpose was training teachers. I did my master's at Bradley University in Peoria.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What did you get your degree in?

Mr. Anderson:

Industrial education.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So you were a schoolteacher then?

Mr. Anderson:

Yeah, right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How many years did you teach?

Mr. Anderson:

I taught 36.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Thirty-six years? OK.

Mr. Anderson:

The last 32 years I taught at the state school for the blind. I really enjoyed that. I looked forward to going every day. I enjoyed it. I had boys and girls in the machine shop and power mechanics.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you had any reunions?

Mr. Anderson:

Our unit, yes. Last year we had our 62nd reunion. This year the 63rd like I was telling you earlier, we are planning on being at Austin and visiting the Nimitz at Fredericksburg.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh, are you, great. Well if you let me know when it is, I'll try to be there and meet you there. How many of those reunions have you been to?

Mr. Anderson:

Probably thirty-some.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Almost all of them then?

Mr. Anderson:

Well, a lot of them. Like I said this will be our 63rd. There's getting so darn few of us.

Last year at New Orleans there was only ten of us that had served in the unit. That's probably out of about five thousand guys.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now this is the 22nd Bomb Group or what is it?

Mr. Anderson:

Yeah, the 22nd Bomb Group, the Red Raiders.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What Air Force were you in?

Mr. Anderson:

Fifth.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Fifth Air Force. General Kinney was in charge of that, right?

Mr. Anderson:

Right, that's right.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Anything else you recall from your time in World War II?

Mr. Anderson:

Well, basically what I related to you was about it. I met a lot of good friends and most of my close acquaintances are no longer around any more. A few of the guys, like John Augustine who was one of our original pilots, of course like I said our unit was old, he celebrated his 95th birthday. Like I said last year he and his wife were still able to come. He was a career. He joined the service in I think 1937 and he came out of a military academy in Virginia and couldn't find a job of course in the 1930s you know, the

Depression. So he and a buddy joined the Army and finally they were in there a while and he said, "Let's try for this Air Corps." So they took some tests and he made it and became a pilot. Then he became a career officer and of course has since retired naturally.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How big a celebration did you have on August 15 when Japan actually surrendered?

Mr. Anderson:

Well, I was, like I said, at home and they had the fireworks and this and that. I thought, I don't know, we just stayed at home and listened to the radio. Of course there was no TV. I thought well, some of these idiots get out on the road we'll never know what they do.

Something I remember: We were in Townsville, Australia, had just got there. We went to this little USO and I never will forget, five of us guys were sitting in this kind of like a booth thing at this little USO in Townsville and there were two Australian gals there that were acting as hostesses and friends and so on and they were sitting with us five guys in this booth and Betty and Chummy and I never heard of it again. Yes, that was her name, Chummy. Anyway we was dancing their legs off and I will never forget this dance. I was sitting there because two other guys had the gals up and the gals came and sat down and this Betty, I jumped up and I said, "Come on Betty, let's dance." And she said, and my nickname was Mouse, that's what she was relating to and she said, "No, Mouse." I said, "Come on, Betty, let's dance." And she says, "No, Mouse, go jazz Chummy." Back then, again this language barrier, back then jazz was dance fast down there. She says, "Go jazz, Chummy." To us this meant knocked up. Of course right away afterwards, us guys had this look on our faces and she realized she had said something wrong. Finally it came out, I don't remember exactly how, but anyway, "What'd I say or what'd I do?" We explained

to her as best we could that meant you're pregnant. Down there at that time being knocked up meant I'm beat, I'm tired, I'm worn out. I never will forget that. Of course also I remember that while we were in Sydney we had to use their money and until you kind of caught on, you'd buy something, a meal or whatever it was, and we'd just kind of stick out our hand with a bunch of money and let them take what they needed.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well, Roger, that's all the questions I have, unless you have anything else.

Mr. Anderson:

Course the trouble was, like I said, I remember the things we were so disgusted at first at the Philippines. I remember we had to wade at Samar, wade through ankle deep water and this was the best living quarters we could find to get to the mess hall. Of course we were there. That was one thing we kind of pooh-poohed MacArthur was that they invaded it and you know he had been a soldier there for several years and their monsoon season was when they went in. Of course we weren't directing the war either, like he was.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you ever in any typhoons down there?

Mr. Anderson:

We flew in some bum weather but then we climbed out of it. Weather was a big hazard and especially there flying but cloud cover. We'd go and of course they hadn't developed fully, until the last part of the war, radar, and so on so you couldn't see what you were bombing. I remember one time we were so disappointed. We couldn't even see where

there was land or whatever below us and we just had to salvo our bombs. Kind of think what good are you doing when you just drop them?

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well, thanks again.

Mr. Anderson:

OK, you take care.

Mr. Misenhimer:

OK, thank you. Good-bye.

End of Interview

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