

Major Franklin Stewart Oral History Interview

MIKE ZAMBRANO: All right, today is March 7th, 2015. This is Mike Zambrano. Today I'm interviewing Mr. Major Franklin Stewart at Sagebrook Health here in Cedar Park, Texas. This interview is in support of the Nimitz Education and Research Center archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War Texas Historical Commission for the Preservation of Historical Information related to this site. Good morning.

MAJOR FRANKLIN STEWART: Morning.

MZ: Can you please tell me when and where you were born?

MFS: I was born in the state of Oklahoma, nine miles east of Muskogee, Oklahoma. And it's in a county, Muskogee County. Population of that town was, at that time, about 40,000. And my dad was, of course, I'll wait until you ask me something else. That's where I was born.

MZ: Oh, well when were you born? What year? What's your birthday?

MFS: What year? Nineteen twenty-three. I was born in 1923.

MZ: What month?

MFS: Now, wait just a minute. Let me get straight on this.

Nineteen twenty-three -- OK, yes. Yes. Nineteen twenty-three.

MZ: What were your parents' names?

MFS: My dad's name was Landow, L-A-N-D-O-W, Loman, L-O-M-A-N, Stewart, S-T-E-W-A-R-T. My mother's name was Ethel May Simmons, that's her maiden name. Of course her married name was Stewart. She passed away with a childbirth problem when I was about five and a half years old. And as far as brothers and sisters, I have none, but the Simmons that my wife was and Stewarts, in a way, that probably benefitted me to a certain extent, because I had a lot of cousins, the Simmonses, and they had more boys and offsprings than they did girls, the Stewarts had more -- well, I think there were seven brothers in my Stewart side, a lot of uncles. And sometime I spent time with nearly every one of them there. Dairies, breeders of horses this side and the other, and I had one, of course I should stop and let you ask questions instead of -- (inaudible) sometime.

MZ: OK. So it was a large family, then, or you had lots of relatives?

MFS: Oh, yeah.

MZ: What did your father do for a living?

MFS: He was a farmer. He farmed about 20 miles south of Tulsa, Oklahoma. And my mother was, of course, a housewife.

MZ: What did your father farm? What did he grow?

MFS: Cotton, watermelon. The -- and he had a few cattle, you know, livestock. And he was near some of the older ranches, old 101 ranch and what have you. Very near Tulsa. A couple of small villages between his farm and the center of Tulsa. And he originated -- he told me a story about driving a team of horses and pulling a wagon loaded with merchandise from Arkansas, which is, as you know, they're doing his (inaudible). Then they farmed in Webbers Falls location for some time. And that's where he met my mother, I think. I know the first time I saw a picture of my mother and a boyfriend, she had written her mother, and on the back she had written my name. That Major, of course, is not a rank. She made a slight error in that, I think; M-A-G-E-R, I think, is the way she wrote it. And then over the years, they -- somebody says M-A-J-O-R. And people around here, they got it. But --

MZ: Right. Well, just to be clear to the listener, Mr. Stewart's first name is Major, it's not his rank. Although it was at one point, it's his first name. M-A-J-O-R.

MFS: Yeah. Right.

MZ: OK. You know, being born in 1923, you grew up during The Depression. Can you tell me a little bit about what that was like for your family?

MFS: Well my dad, of course, the cotton, he was fairly successful in his farming. And when I mentioned watermelons, that was kind of a cash crop. And I had a couple of cousins, Stewarts, that were about my age. And we helped harvest watermelons. Pick them up, drop them, and get the hearts -- and no, actually it was at the end of the season, when it's everything -- we'd just bring in the business people and they'd haul them off for the most part. And that was a little money crop to a certain extent. And we got to -- we didn't work too much with chemicals on the watermelons. We were just kids at that time, and we'd bug them, just go on the hills, you know, the hills with watermelons and just bug 'em, and dispose of them in the fire or something.

MZ: The ones that had bugs on them, you mean?

MFS: Oh yeah, watermelons, that was part of it. You had quite a few bugs in watermelons. And you -- now, that time we -- Ted was one of the boys that did that in Easton, E-A-S-T-O-N. They were sons of my uncle Voystus. Now

Voystus, V-O-Y-S-T-U-S. I don't know whether that's from Greeks, or the names, and you may want to know some of the other names as we go along. So I'll wait for a snap of the fingers, or...

MZ: Oh, OK. I have a question. I have a question. But what was it like during The Depression? I mean --

MFS: Oh, we had it fairly good, you know, the Stewarts and the Simmons. The Simmons were also my granddad, mother's father. He was a Texan, but he did farm some in that area up around Muskogee, in that area. And they bred --

MZ: Was there always enough food for the Stewarts and Simmonses? Since there was a farm?

MFS: Was it always what?

MZ: Did you always have enough food?

MFS: Oh yeah, yeah. We had enough food. But there's plenty of people that were poor, and that 50-cent-a-day deal was a Godsend to some of them. And the Simmonses always told me about the Stewarts, and the Stewarts told me about the Simmonses because they were in the same area, and both of them were farmers. My granddad, he dealt more in cattle than they did. And haying, and you did -- back in Texas, he's back and forth. He's a railroader, and he retired as a railroader, but almost on the tracks in Denison, Texas.

He was kind of a rugged individual, and when he retired, he bought a little five-acre plot in Oklahoma, took (inaudible) mules, a Brahma bull and his second wife. He and his first wife separated when their kids were teenagers, had two girls and two boys at the time. And Floyd, my Uncle Floyd, he -- oh, I have a picture somewhere sitting in a car, four of them. My mother was the youngest -- of course, not the youngest, the youngest girl. And P. H., the one that ended up raising mules and training them, he was in the car now. But anyway, they -- my granddad, he's kind of rough and ready. He says, "Well, I'll take these kids," and Floyd, he was about 16 at the time, I think. He says, "No. No one's going to take these kids."

MZ: Right.

MFS: So he's kind of overseeing this bed and raised them up. My Aunt Anna, when my mother died, my dad paid -- they didn't just get me, but my dad went ahead and paid my board. And my Aunt Anna was -- she and her husband had a dairy of 55 milk cows, and I spent three years with them. I started staying with them and you can learn to milk when you're about eight years old.

MZ: Did you stay with them -- how long did you stay with them?

MFS: I stayed with them actually about five years. Close to, well, about four years. And the situation, I'll throw it in and it might amuse you -- their babysitter was a Broadway theater in Muskogee, Oklahoma. They partied on Saturday nights, had friends in Muskogee. They live out -- the dairy was about nine miles from Muskogee. They put me in there and I'd see everything twice. They'd pick me up about -- they must have had some arrangement with the management of that theater. And I'd see Pathé News and all that stuff, and the serials. And Ken Maynard, Tim McCoy, and Buck Jones and the whole works.

MZ: So she would drop you off at this movie theater, and you'd see all this --

MFS: Yeah. They just dropped me off after the evening milking, and picked me up at 11:30, I think is about time they'd pick me up. So --

MZ: Kind of a nice treat after working all day.

MFS: Yeah. Yeah, it was. And they did fairly well. We had a -- if I start telling you too much garbage here, why, just let me know.

MZ: No, no. Well, I --

MFS: Anyway, we had an individual that lived with us, Lloyd Conway. And he was a milk hand that we used. And

smart man. He ended up in the auto parts business in Muskogee before -- when Robert Duncan there, my aunt's husband, when he sold the dairy.

MZ: Well actually --

MFS: And he taught me a few little songs, "Where Have You Been Billy Boy," you know, you probably heard that. "Where have you been, charming Billy? Oh, I've been to seek a wife, she's the jolly of my life, she's a young thing and cannot leave her mother. How old is she, Billy Boy, Billy Boy? Oh she's six times seven, twenty-eight and eleven. She's a young thing and cannot leave her mother." You know, that sort of thing. Then Strawberry Roan. But --

MZ: Well, before we go into those songs, let me just ask, did you live in this general area up until you were about 18? Or did you move at all?

MFS: No, at 10 years old, 10 years old I spent about four years, as I said a minute ago, with a diary P. H., and I'd know him as P. H. all my life. He had -- oh, he was milking about 26 head of cattle, and he had 14 broodmares, he had a Jack to, of course, service these broodmares. And he'd go ahead and have these mares drop these (inaudible), and then he would let them grow up. And back then he would let them grow up. And back then they were using quite a few mules

in the oil fields, that area was (inaudible) stuff. And I had the job of taking care of the Jack. And we'd service the area around, just before the breeding. Before the breeding.

MZ: Where is this at again?

MFS: Hmm?

MZ: What town or area is this?

MFS: Near Muskogee.

MZ: OK, and how old are you? How old are you about this time?

MFS: Ten. Ten, ten.

MZ: Oh, OK.

MFS: And I started riding a little bit before I was 10, not spirited animals, but riding cow ponies. And P. H., he's the type that did a little riding in rodeos and this, that and the other, roping on Sunday afternoons. We'd ride the little bulls on Sunday afternoon.

MZ: Sounds kind of fun.

MFS: That's the sort of thing.

MZ: Oh, I have a question, just a quick question. But did you mean to say that you moved at some point, or did you stay in this area all the way up to the point where you graduated from high school?

MFS: OK now, I'm going to just burst right through this. At the dairy, about a mile from a country school, Brushy Mountain, walk it back and forth. And first time I went there a young lady named Alice Baldwin came in and was teaching that school. Had about 45 students. Some of them would range from six to twenty-one, that sort of thing.

MZ: Really? That's quite a range.

MFS: Yes. And the 21s are pretty helpful in handling the youngster. I remember choking a little stuff of bean boy, freckled face boy, because he got my girlfriend. I didn't hurt him very much, but -- but anyway, next was Sally Brown when I was in the fourth grade, and that was about four miles from Brushy Mountain. Then these -- then I went to school south of Tulsa when I was staying with some Stewarts that were engaged in a doubtful profession. I mean, they were farmers all right, but I stayed with them for a while. I attended a little school in Midway, which is south of Tulsa. Then, Battle Creek. The Battle Creek was north of that town of Boynton, Boynton, which was half way between Muskogee and Okmulgee, and those are Cherokee towns and creek towns, Indians. Then that was it. That was my high school. I went there in the sixth grade, and I remember one of the students, A. P. Gentry, turned out to be a good

friend. But I had to wrestle that sucker every day for six weeks.

MZ: Why?

MFS: That was his custom. You change towns and --

MZ: Oh, you've got to prove yourself?

MFS: Yeah. And old A. P. Gentry, when I got back, when I went into training for pilot training, he and Carl Casey, Carl Casey was a good boxer, and Bill McLaughlin was a golden glover, and we had a little place to do a little of this.

MZ: A little boxing?

MFS: Yeah. I've done boxing.

MZ: Well, before we get too ahead of ourselves, let me ask you this. It looks like you turned 18 in about 1941. Do you remember where you were when you heard that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor?

MFS: Yeah. Yeah. I was sitting on a bunk at the Luke Field, Arizona. I was in the service. I went in the service August 5th, 1941.

MZ: Did you say, "Luke Field?"

MFS: Yeah, Luke Field.

MZ: Like, L-U-K --

MFS: That's near Phoenix. Just out of town there. It's an advanced flying school. You use North American T6s, and I was working on the flight line, and the 331st Squadron, school squadron, cleaning, keeping the airplanes clean and running them up. I was running them up. I wasn't flying them then, but I was kind of doing minor maintenance. I was sitting on a bunk in a two-story barracks when I heard about Pearl Harbor. I was playing poker. Not any great big game or anything, but I was playing a little poker. And I was a PFC, Private First Class.

MZ: What did you think? What did you think when you heard about it?

MFS: Well, I didn't do too much thinking about that. And our barracks commander was named Falk, older man, Master Sergeant. He kind of thought he was irony, you know, he thought he was kind of the main guy. And then I had a friend, and I can't remember his name. I remembered Falk, F-A-L-K. And Falk would start building machine gun nests, of all thing.

MZ: Really?

MFS: Around Luke Field, just as if it was going to be attacked. And Falk thought he had to get his mouth going one day, and I can't resist telling it. And this Staff Sergeant, a

young Staff Sergeant friend of mine -- I say a friend, he was an acquaintance, we weren't buddies, I was just a PFC. But he turned around and it really surprised me. He got with that Falk, and he got with him quick, even though he was a Master Sergeant, because he says his guy is working -- he's talking about me -- "Working his tail off out there, and you're up here with your mouth going."

MZ: Wow.

MFS: I think those were the identical words, when he said, "Your mouth going." And old Falk, it was good for him. It got him straightened out. So then it was a normal routine until I got around to applying for this training. And I think I told you -- well, I haven't yet -- but I joined not because of Pearl Harbor. I joined way back there because they had reduced the requirements for people to get into pilot training. And I was working in a little airport there, and this old boy right here, that picture up there?

MZ: Yeah, it's on the right?

MFS: That's the B17. He and I run around together. He was a little older than I was, and we were working on -- with the machines, the machinists, we were trying to be machinists.

MZ: This is while you were a civilian now?

MFS: Yeah. Yeah.

MZ: OK. What was his name, by the name? The fellow --

MFS: Frank Ashlock. And we had been running around for quite a few years, the same area. And also his brother, his brother and I married sisters. So it's pretty close families, those four got it. And even now, oh, Frank calls me probably once a week.

MZ: Oh, he does? That's nice after all these years.

MFS: Yeah, he's retired American Airlines, not a pilot, but he did quite a bit of flying and helping train crews. And --

MZ: So did you enlist together?

MFS: Huh?

MZ: Did you enlist into the Army Air Corps together?

MFS: Yes. Yes, what we did, we sucked in two more guys at lunch. We joined Air Corps at lunch, and one of them was J. B. Reynolds, and another one was Cleo Rogers. And oh, Cleo was a little bit younger than we were, and J. B. Reynolds about the same age. And there's always stories about that, and you got other things to ask probably.

MZ: Oh no, no, no, no. So you -- the four of you decide that you wanted to go into the Army Air Corps.

MFS: Yes, we went up there.

MZ: So did you always have an interest in flying?

MFS: Oh yes, and I'll start telling you that. It was a good healthy interest, and I devoted my time to it. When I lost my mother, dad continued to farm south of Tulsa, and he was out in the field plowing with a cultivator. I was this little kid about six year olds, but I remember that cultivator. And here, I looked up and I heard this noise, (inaudible), I even know what an Immelmann was when I was six years old. He did an Immelmann.

MZ: A what, an Immelmann?

MFS: Yeah, you go down and you go up like this, and when you get to the vertical points, you rotate it and go level again.

MZ: Oh, OK.

MFS: And you toss bomb doing that, trying to get it -- if you're dropping an atomic bomb, you take one of those old B47s now, this is the present day, and do that maneuver and then roll it out and toss your bomb away from you, you know, that sort of thing.

MZ: OK. Yeah.

MFS: Anyway, he landed. He cut his engine. Well, after he's doing all this tailspin, I come out at tailspin, I think, and landed, then walked over to us. He had already killed his engine and landed dead, actually. I don't know whether he'd let me sit in that airplane or not. But he talked to

us. And I was whittling out wood airplanes for the next six or seven years, while I was going to school at Boynton, this little town I mentioned halfway between Muskogee and Okmulgee. I went there in the sixth grade, and met A. P. Gentry and Carl Casey and a bunch of other people.

MZ: And so that was your first exposure to a plane, pretty much?

MFS: Well, the next thing after I've got to about to -- and I wasn't too good a student. I did about what I wanted to do until I got to the seventh grade. I'm confessing now. I wasn't dumb, I just -- I'd read what I wanted to read. I was reading a little bit before in school. I don't know how it came about. My aunt, maybe. But anyway, I found a book in the library about this sic, and it was written by Baron von Richthofen, you know, the famous German ace of World War I?

MZ: Yeah.

MFS: And I read that thing. I probably got more out of reading that one book, it was pretty thick.

MZ: About an inch or so? Yeah?

MFS: Yeah. And then I started reading Daredevil A-- anything about airplanes. *Daredevil Aces*, I even joined the 4H Club one time so I'd get to go to Muskogee, because Muskogee had

a hangar and several places. And that's the first place I ever saw a master rod for a radial engine, you know, that sort of thing.

MZ: Yeah?

MFS: So that -- and I'd read *Daredevil Ace* magazines, I had some pretty -- once in a while I'd shove in a spicy Western, but I was reading those *Daredevil Ace* magazines. And anything, anything about an airplane, and still hadn't, at that point, I still hadn't been up in an airplane. I'd been around a lot of them. My dad, he was not allergic to airplanes, but he -- when I joined the service, he, I think, had to sign the papers. You know, I was 18 when I went in. So actually, when I applied for the training at Luke, when I applied for that, well I got my school transcripts together and all of that, and went before a board -- if you want to hear it.

MZ: Well, this is just as you're -- well, just so we establish a timeline, you go with your friends to enlist. Where do you go to basic training from there?

MFS: OK. I went to, and I was looking at an Atlas last night, and I didn't find it, it's in one of these drawer. The base is still working, it's still training pilots, and down near Galveston. But I went to Texas, went to Oklahoma

City, swore in in Oklahoma City on August 5th, 1941. Then they loaded us on a bus, we went to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, which is a -- I'm sure that you're -- it's at Lawton. And we stayed all night there, and stayed in the first GI building, you know, two-story barracks. Then they loaded us in another train and took us down to that base, near Galveston Air Base. And we spent 30 days there. And old Frank and I, he's a little bit taller than I am, and our basic training turned out to be marching. Marching, marching. And it was along in the summer, and you were either perspiring or it was raining on you for that 30 days. And you'd run into people from all over the country. I recall one lousy Texan, and he was riding a boy from New York. Now, when I say "riding," he was pestering him all the time. And this individual from New York, good kid, smart, he resembled -- actually resembled you.

MZ: Oh, really?

MFS: About the same size. And this Texan was pretty beefy. And finally, the New Yorker says, "I'll see what we're going to have to do." He said, you know, and had some old boxing gloves around there, and they were kind of cracked, you know, and all this. So he challenged him and they got their gloves on, and oh, that New Yorker like to beat him

to death! And it was the best thing that ever happened to him, really. It was -- he straightened out. He straightened out. And I think they turned out to be pretty good friends.

MZ: Funny how that happens.

MFS: See, I'm dropping off on the stuff like that, and it may be taking up your time.

MZ: No, no. I mean, it's --

MFS: And I've -- that happens to people as they go along. The thing then, though, but this old boy's name was Ashlock, A., and you know how the government works, it works alphabetically, so they -- he had, they put him to a different place in California, and they put the guy I mentioned long ago, and we went to school together over near Muskogee. But it doesn't matter -- we -- Reynolds and Stewart, R and S, and Rogers. We all went to Luke Field. And they, of all things, from that base, this training base down here in Texas, they put us on a Pullman train. But I made the mistake of leaving the window up, and there's the old coal burner. So I was sooty the next morning. But we got to Luke Field. And I was assigned to the 331st School Squadron. And here's something interesting. The base commander was a lieutenant colonel, our present rank. And

he -- I don't know. And I was trying to think of this prominent Republican that we had run for president here at one time, he was a club officer. I don't know how I got in that officer's club, that, you know, as a peer -- I must have got in there cleaning up, or something.

MZ: And this is --

MFS: But he was the club officer, and I -- but he turned out to be the assistant command of Fifth Air Force over in the Pacific. I'm just -- now, that was in '41. And he did a pretty good job. I criticized him a few times on what he'd call, when he'd call a mission, because there are -- one of our foes over there was weather. Weather.

MZ: Right. Well, I don't want to get too far ahead of ourselves.

MFS: Oh, OK.

MZ: What else did you do at Luke Field?

MFS: What did I do at Luke Field?

MZ: Yeah, what else did you do at Luke Field? I think before you mentioned that you worked, or you --

MFS: Running up airplanes, and running up those T6s, and wiping them down, keeping them up. Went on quite a bit that way. But then, I'd be doing a little guard duty, maybe out in the desert on a power station, or something. But that's

after they determined they were going to lose me. See, when they found out they were going to -- I was going to go away, that I'd been accepted for the pilot training, they said, "Well, we're going to lose this guy." And that's when I went and trained in the desert for a while to drive in a convoy, you know, the big trucks?

MZ: Yeah.

MFS: And then, they decided they were going to build Roswell, you know, in New Mexico.

MZ: Right.

MFS: And five of us were sent as an advanced echelon to Roswell. Colonel and a Staff Sergeant, he was an MP, he was a blue uniform, first I ever saw for the Air Force. There's a guy, Buck Sergeant from Arkansas, First Lieutenant -- I don't think I ever knew his name, I didn't associate with him, so I didn't. And had a headquarters over the city jail, and we -- the Arkansasier and I, we took care of two airplanes; the Colonel had two airplanes. He had an old fighter and had a trainer. And we had gassed other airplanes that would come through that little municipal airport. And it was pretty good duty really, there in town. And I got to know this Staff Sergeant that was playing the role of the MP and wearing that blue uniform

that was a first blue thing for the Air Force that I know. And I mentioned, I think -- I don't know whether I mentioned it to you, I mentioned it to everyone -- every military base normally had a Blue Moon.

MZ: A Blue Moon?

MFS: Nightclub.

MZ: Oh, OK.

MFS: Yeah, and this Staff Sergeant that played the role of the officer, you know, the MP, Military Police, he was dating a girl about 23 years old. And the other guys -- I was about his height. He was about six foot, and his girlfriend had a girlfriend that was about 23, and he was probably approaching -- as Staff Sergeant, probably approaching 25. And so he would get me to go with this other girl, and here I was 18, and the other girl was about 23. So he scared me. Scared me. So, but -- and you know, I don't -- well, you're, you know more about it than I do, really, the military, because the infantry, the Sam Browne belts, you don't remember that?

MZ: Yeah, I remember those.

MFS: Well, he had a blue, you know, this MP, he had a black, I guess it was a black Sam Browne. And that's the first enchilada I ever ate was in Roswell.

MZ: Oh, really?

MFS: Yeah, first one. There's a lady that kind of adopted me, I guess, for a while. Then, I'll just mention it, I was eating in a regular business luncheon, and living upstairs over. Then we were on night duty guarding link trainers, that's an instrument, bet you probably flew them. You know --

MZ: Well, I've heard of them, link trainers. You get into them, it's like a little --

MFS: You know, get your sequence in on the flying instruments.

MZ: Right.

MFS: And that deal? And I guess they finally got smart and started teaching people to fly jet airliners using something similar, you know? Then I was sitting in the office of a warehouse at about 8:00 in the morning, on the 8th of -- I believe it was the 8th of February, 1942. And this First Lieutenant that I said was one of the first echelon, walked in and he says, "You didn't tell us that you were going to be leaving on training." And I said, "I didn't want you to know, you'd have booted my butt somewhere else." So I was on the training the next day, heading for Hemet California, primary.

MZ: Hemet, California?

MFS: Yeah.

MZ: Is that H-E--

MFS: H-E-M-E-T. Now was that an air field? Was that an air field?

MFS: Well, that was a primary flight school.

MZ: Oh, that's right. OK.

MFS: You get your first 60 hours of flying there. And you know, ground school, PE, and a hazing and a few other things.

MZ: So tell me a little bit about primary flight school. What do you learn there?

MFS: Pardon me?

MZ: Tell me a little bit about primary flight school.

MFS: OK. Here's what happens. Normally, it's military personnel that's teaching you. Now, we had a commandant of cadets, that was a first lieutenant, Hadwin, I think. I think I still remember his name. I believe it was H-A-D-W-I-N. I'm not positive on that spelling, but I believe that's his name. And we had two check pilots that were military. And they were First Lieutenants. And you sure didn't want to get too many check rides with one of those guys, or you'd be back in the ranks, you know, if you had -- well, let me go on, then. Now they had pinup girls all over the place then, early '42. And now they had four

big hangars, and one hangar was Operations. And you had civilian instructors for flying, you had civilian instructors for the ground school, you had civilian instructors for the physical ed, and everything was civilian except those two check pilots and a commandant of cadets.

MZ: Now, when you say "check pilots," what is a check pilot?

MFS: Oh, he checks a -- he'll go out there and say, "You'll be scheduled for a check ride," you know, at a certain time in your training.

MZ: OK.

MFS: And they'll assign you to one of those check pilots, and he'll take you up and put you through what he thinks you should be able to do.

MZ: OK.

MFS: And if you don't get the job done, why your training is changed. You go back into the ranks. Under those conditions. Now we had -- Pearl Harbor had occurred, you know, fairly recently from the time of, you know, February, when I got there.

MZ: Right.

MFS: And we had a Tech Sergeant that was playing the role of a cadet Colonel.

MZ: Oh, yeah?

MFS: He came -- he got pilot training, you know, he applied over there, and he came from Hawaii. He was in Hawaii when he applied, and received permission to, you know, become a pilot. Now this, I'll tell you a little bit about that type of aircraft. They were called Ryans. And we used to call the base, "Ryans." R-Y-A-N. Ryan, I think we used to call that thing Ryan Air Force Base. Now you had one big strip in those four big hangars, a large hangar. The -- I had my instructor, flight instructor, who was from Pennsylvania. And he was one of these guys who made the country as -- I forget what we used to call him. Pilots that, you know, go around giving rides, or this, that.

MZ: Yeah, I know what you mean. They're --

MFS: He married. I don't remember if -- having any children. He was 28 years old, and looked 50, every bit of it. And he had a few pictures that he was showing of his mishaps, or even nose over, or something. And I kept thinking if I talk about him, I'll remember his name. But I'll stop talking about him. But they had a rule. Never do an aerobatic maneuver until you -- before you soloed your man. And he did 'em all. First time he took me up as a spin, and then he had me go through the spin. And those little

Ryans had 160 horse engine in them, not too much engine. And you could pull it, control it on the fence rows, you know. He said, "Pull it down on that fence row," and you'd pull it down, that sort. The he -- snap roll. Then that was nice. Slow roll. Slow roll. And the spin was, I just mentioned it -- OK, they find him, this minor item. If they catch you doing that, and he was the type that liked to do something wrong and get a little fine. Simpson. That name just come up. He was the chief of the flight training.

MZ: At --

MFS: He was civilian, but he was chief of all these others. And I flew a little bit with a guy named Stone, young guy. And he wanted you to go around -- I mean, just really slick -- now, the other guy, the one I was telling you about, did the aerobatics with the --

MZ: Barnstormer? Is that what you -- the phrase you were looking for? Barnstormer?

MFS: No.

MZ: No? OK.

MFS: No, it wasn't. It'll probably show. But anyway, he ended up later as a commuter pilot, you know, Stone that I flew a little with. Oh, yes. If you -- now we, hey, this first

instructor had eight students. One of them got sick. And the reason I remember it, he flew the airplane just before I did that day. And that kind of scared me, because they washed him, they didn't mess around with him. Just washed him out. And then you have people that do silly things. There's a golf course pretty close to town, Hemet, and that air base was close to town. And I came in one day, landed, and about six other guys landed, and they herded us all into that big Operations (inaudible). And it was wintertime, and we had on coveralls, and those open cockpits, so they racked us up, and that deal that two guys fainted, got too hot. Down they went. And we all had to tell where we -- how low we got, and where were on it, and all that. And there were three guys in there that buzzed that golf course, and two of the instructors were out there playing golf, and you had letters on the side of those stinking things where you could see. So they washed him out immediately, not because they buzzed, but because they lied.

MZ: Oh, they lied about buzzing the golf course?

MFS: Lied. Yes. Lied about what they did. And that's the honor club that wouldn't allow that. So [Shirk?], I remember him. He's a good pilot. He was one of them. But

they washed him, temporarily. And they waited until about the last week of the training period, and reinstated him because he told the truth. When they asked him what he did, he just confessed. And they just flew his butt off that last week, they had him flying nearly all the time. Well, that's about it on that primary -- no, no. You want to know when I soloed?

MZ: Yeah, when did you -- did you solo at Hemet?

MFS: And I was thinking I might think of his name, now. Let's see. Anyway, we had those little Ryans with 160. You had a (inaudible) tube that would go from the front cockpit to the rear cockpit, and that would enable the instructor to talk to you, kind of like when I was a kid, we used to put a wire between a couple of cans, and it worked pretty good. And he used to talk quite a bit to me, but that day, I came in and I bounced that blasted airplane probably five feet on landing. And we went ahead and I shot a couple more landings, and he taxied back, and he's in the front cockpit, and he taxied back down to normal takeoff position and tied his safety belt across the front seat. And then he says, "Go out and give me two good landings." So here I go. And that (inaudible) tube that hooked to my helmet blew loose, at about 50 feet, being in a rush. But I come

around and I landed, did a pretty good job, two landings. And I asked him then, when he took us out bowling, he took -- he got everybody solo, he took us bowling. I think he even gave us a toddy, I'm not sure. Probably did. But anyway -- I don't guess it's important. Something about that -- oh, yeah. That's the best score I ever made.

MZ: Oh, yeah? Solo?

MFS: When I'm -- yeah. But anyway...

MZ: So how long were you at Hemet after you soloed?

MFS: Oh, then I asked him why he soloed me. And he says, "Well," he says, "When I get a student like he's going to kill himself, I'll solo him."

MZ: Why did he think you were going to kill yourself?

MFS: I just -- he was something else.

MZ: Oh.

MFS: He quit flying, I think. Well, I know. I went back, years later, my wife, after I'd been overseas and everything, I went back by an old Simpson, the guy that was over the pilot instructors, he was mayor of Hemet when I went back.

MZ: Really?

MFS: So I went down there, and he had kept, like, school manuals on these guys. And he told me Stone was flying commuter to LA and all that.

MZ: Interesting.

MFS: Yeah, old Simpson. And he wasn't any young kid anymore when I went back to see him. He was up there.

MZ: You know, if I could just take a minute, I want to close the door a little bit, because that beeping sound is kind of -- it just -- I'm not sure why they don't turn it off, but I'm just going to --

MFS: Oh, we can shut that door.

MZ: Oh, I'll get it. Let me just get that real quick.

MFS: And you might shut the --

MZ: All the way?

MFS: The bathroom, you know, the sound could be coming from the next deal.

MZ: OK, that's better. Because there are a lot of people walking by, and I want to make sure that whoever transcribes it can hear clearly what you're saying.

MFS: Oh, well, they'll -- this particular room, they eyeball it pretty frequently, you know, when they come by. And sometimes, clunking, knocking on the door. This Mary Dell, she's an activity director here on the base, or whatever you want to call it. And she kind of wants you to -- let's see what she -- oh, yeah. Yeah. We were married 68 years, and she wanted a deal. She put on a little deal. We

started coming up with a poem at 40 years, and she wanted some kind of a little deal at that. And I used old Ogden Nash to help, and come up with something.

MZ: That's nice. So after Hemet Field, when you're done with your primary flight school, where do you go after that?

MFS: I went to Minter Field, M-I-N-T-E-R, Minter Field. That's near Bakersfield. It was a tarmac, you know, a lot of blacktop and a couple runways, and it's out near a couple little towns. I can't remember the two little towns right now. But it was near Bakersfield, and near County Airport. We use both. We use the tarmac, we use the County Airport, and usually mostly at night. And we were flying BT-13, BT-13 trainers.

MZ: What kind of plane was that?

MFS: It was a monoplane, and it had fuel tanks in the wings. And we called it the Vultee Vibrator, because if you happened to start certain maneuvers --

MZ: It would just start vibrating?

MFS: Shake. Yeah. She'd vibrate for you. And we went to a different sequence on spinning it. If we were going to spin it, and I'll tell you and shorten the story just a little bit, [Stovall?], I remember his name, he was an instructor. Man that just, I think, bought a new '41

Chevy, one of the last to sell. And he -- good man. And he didn't flinch. He may give you -- and I'm glad he did -- quite a bit of formation time, fly in formation. And he made formation take-offs. You know, he would get it there and get you into position, and he'd say, "Now, keep your eyes on me, and nothing else." And you stay on him and maybe you'll only be five or six feet apart at times. And then landings, formation landings, same thing. And he -- it's funny, I don't think I ever met his wife. But anyway, I'll tell you one thing, but this will jump ahead a little bit. But I'll tell you, the next time after I left Bakersfield (inaudible), I saw him. It was at an instrument -- I was getting boned up better on instrument flying when I got back from overseas, and I was trying to teach my English -- I mean, my Spanish wasn't very hot. And I was trying to teach -- and B-25s, of all things. And boy, that's not an economy way of teaching instruments. Now, that old 20 airplane, but they were South American pilots, officers. And I was, for a while, went through the instrument routines with them. And I was down near A & M, Bryan, Texas. And there's a little air base down there, and I put in about 65 hours of instruments. And the war was come, got over just about the time that I came back up

to Pampa. I was stationed up here at Pampa for a while, when I was doing the instrument training.

MZ: And this was just at the end of the war?

MFS: It was after the war. Yeah. The last -- let's see, yeah, it was the last B-25 I flew during the -- when I got back, I took an old boy up, he needed the flying time. Got up there, and all of a sudden the old pressure dropped a number on the left engine. I went ahead and feathered the engine. And he says, "It's still running," and I said, "Yeah, but we don't want to ruin the engine."

MZ: Right.

MFS: So I went ahead and landed it, let it rolled as far as it rolled. And that was my last 25 that I flew, that. And it was at Pampa.

MZ: Now --

MFS: And they didn't say, here's where I made a -- I got a reply by endorsement, had to endorse it right up. I went ahead, it was a little bit hot out there. And they had a meat wagon out there in case I blasted that thing, or lost it. But it didn't have a tow truck, so I went ahead and fired that engine off, taxied it in, parked it where it was supposed to have been parked. Then I got a deal to state no earthly excuse for what I did.

MZ: After you -- how much time are you at Minter Air Field?

MFS: Pardon me?

MZ: How much time are you at Minter Airfield?

MFS: How much time? How much flying time?

MZ: Yeah, how much flying time did you put in at Minter
Airfield?

MFS: Well, all told, I had enough -- it's standard to have at
least 1500 hours to get the senior pilots ready. So I got
a little over -- counting all the time. And I flew some
civilian stuff later, you know.

MZ: OK, well let me rephrase my question, actually. So you
were at Minter Airfield, you were doing your advanced
training. You did formation flying. What other things did
you do in advanced training?

MFS: Oh, in the basic training?

MZ: Oh, in advanced training in Minter. What other training
did you do there, other than formation flying?

MFS: Oh, well sometimes they put certain weapons on an airplane,
change it a little bit. Down in South Carolina, now this
is way back, I mean I guess I got ahead of you a while ago.
Probably did. When I graduated, you know, at Williams
Field, Arizona.

MZ: Williams Field?

MFS: Yeah, I graduated twin engine school there in 42-H. In 42-H, I graduated from Williams Field, Arizona. And we'd been flying there. And I guess I goofed you up on something there.

MZ: Yeah, just a little bit.

MFS: Anyway...

MZ: When did you leave Minter Field? And when you left Minter Field, you were already a qualified pilot?

MFS: Luke Field?

MZ: No, Minter. Minter, where you had your advanced training?

MFS: Oh, Minter. Yes, yes. OK --

MZ: When you left there, you were already --

MFS: Left there, we went to advanced, which was Williams Field twin engine. We were flying Beechcraft there, and Curtiss twins, two different types of twin engine aircraft.

MZ: Beechcraft, you said? Which -- do you remember the model of the Beechcraft?

MFS: Yeah, AT-10, Advanced Trainer 10. The other was the Curtiss. And it was, I'm quite sure, all metal airplane. Now the Beech was plywood, and the formers were pulling loose on it. You know, some of the wood formers? And we quit flying it, and restricted our flying to the all metal, except for the control surfaces. It was all metal, the

Curtiss. And it was the hottest little twin engine airplane in service, according to [Childers?]. Childers was a Curtiss test pilot. And this little thing was all metal except for the elevators being covered with fabric, and the other little -- and if you wanted to show off a little bit on that, what you do is put down the gear and fold the flaps, and then you come in and dead stick landing, instead of looking through the windshield, you'd look through the escape hatch. That thing would come down like a brick.

MZ: Really? (laughs)

MFS: I mean, it just -- it was a good airplane.

MZ: Where was Williams Airfield again?

MFS: Curtiss?

MZ: Oh, Williams Airfield, where was it?

MFS: Well, it was at a little town named Chandler, not too far from Phoenix.

MZ: Oh, OK.

MFS: And near Chandler. And you know, the other day, and not the other day, but sometime the last year, I found a diploma, hey, from that school.

MZ: Oh, yeah?

MFS: Having, you know, stating the date and age, you know, age for the month. And my dad was there with me, and I never knew that he came to see me when I was in training. But he made a trip, I guess, to Phoenix. And --

MZ: He just never -- he just couldn't get in to see you?

MFS: Yeah. He -- well, he had a couple nieces in Phoenix, so he came from Oklahoma, I guess, to see them, drove out there. He did things that I never -- for a farmer, he worked at Wiley Post Airport for a while in Oklahoma City. And he'd prop those small airplanes. And that's a tricky deal, you know, it could slash you in two if he slipped, I guess.

MZ: Yeah, I guess so. What else did you do at Williams Airfield?

MFS: Williams Airfield, I did a more intensive work on using the link trainer, what have you. Oh by the way, I had -- this is worth, I think you'd appreciate this a little bit. There's only one Captain, instructor at Williams, you know, training cadets.

MZ: Yeah?

MFS: And his name was Smith. And he had, of course, married a Texan. He's strictly a Texan. And we were flying the AT-10, the one that's mostly plywood, I think.

MZ: Uh-huh, the Beechcraft?

MFS: And anyway, he took me out, first flight. And he said, "You three point this airplane every landing." He said, "Three point it." I said, "Oh, yes, sir." So we got up there and he shot a couple landings, then he shot another landing and he stalled it. You almost had to stall it to get it three pointed. And he hit, he may have been this high off the concrete.

MZ: About three or four feet?

MFS: Enough when you have a dead stall, it'll -- and he hit hard enough that his glasses flew off and went down on the floor of the airplane, and I laughed. I couldn't keep from laughing. And he looked at me and I thought, boy, I'd had it! He says, "If you never do any worse than that, you'll make it!"

MZ: (laughs) Oh, boy.

MFS: But that doggone -- well, he was good. And Stovall, you know, I mentioned him, basic instructor. He did me a good turn when he did all that formation flying, because again, with Smith, we came into formation, night formation, this, that and the other. And there was another Stewart in the same flight at Williams Field, as I was. And I flew with him a little bit, and of course the other students, they knew that the other Stewart was just a little bit nervous.

And he lined up on a disposal plant one night when I was flying with him. And I finally looked over and tapped him on the -- pulled his headset off his one ear and said, "Are you going to land in this disposal plant?" (laughter) Lights were similar, you know, for a runway. Then on formation flying, we'd get up and fly in formation, and somebody would be flying with an instructor, or Smith. And I like close formation, and I could get a wingtip to where the pilot in the lead ship could read a paper.

MZ: Wow, that's pretty close!

MFS: But I was pulling some of that crap, and the guy that was flying with Smith says, he says, "Well, I'll tell you one thing, it's not the other Stewart that's flying that, you know." But he --

MZ: Well, where do you go after Williams Airfield?

MFS: Williams? OK, Williams? You graduate there, and you go -- we went to Colorado Springs, Peterson Field at Colorado Springs. Now, I don't think they had named it Peterson yet, it was probably named after a pilot cracking up a P-38, more than likely. And I lucked out. I graduated, got that Staff Sergeant rank, and I got up there, and right off the bat, I got with a instructor pilot. I don't know whether he was First Lieutenant or not. But anyway, he's

commission. And we flew, flew, flew. I got quite a bit of time. And then when we started flying some of the B-25s out to Long Beach for maintenance, I got to make a few trips out there. And our job at Peterson Field was mapping, primarily.

MZ: Mapping?

MFS: Mapping, using B-25s. Now also, reconnaissance planes were there, P-38s, without -- didn't have the guns on them, but they were using them for reconnaissance. And I came almost lucky enough, however, we had quite a few pilots there, and old boy loaned me 30 minutes of time, and I read up a little bit on a P-38. And old Wells was his name, and he and I had been at Luke together, and everywhere else. And the way you checked out a P-38 pilot was give him three landings in the right seat, copilot seat of a B-25. That put the throttles in his left hand, and that's where you wanted them in a P-38, it's over there. And it was not that much difference in the landing, the 25 and the P-38. So...

MZ: You know, I'm curious, but did you always want to fly multi-engine planes? Did you ever want to be a fighter pilot?

MFS: No, you wanted to fly everything you saw, really.

MZ: But did you put --

MFS: And you didn't get -- always get to do that. I came out one morning with a B-25 over in New Guinea parked in a revetment, and a P-39 was sitting next to it. I crawled in that thing, fired it off, but I decided I'd better use my brain and learn a little bit more about the airplane. It was an Airacobra, and you've probably seen them. And those things would tumble. You know, you could get them in the right stall and they would tumble. You had a -- I think a P-39 had a 20 millimeter firing through the prop. And then they had a fancier one that was -- and the only thing that you had to watch, when I fired that thing off and the crew was already loaded up in my B-25, and I think they was wondering, "Well, is that stupe going to fly?" Is when I got out of it, the engine was located where I scorched my fingertips a little bit. No, our CO flew one of the latest. I think it was the latest fighter. And he has been an old B-26 pilot, B-25 pilot, and a few other things. And he went ahead and flew this B-47, and you had a quite a -- what you call a "prop wash." And he flew that thing, and brought her in and everything, did a good job. But somebody asked him, says, "Well, how was it, Cole?" And he says, "I'm still panic-stricken!" They were pretty -- and

my -- old Ted, my cousin, he ended up going in the service and flying that airplane over near --

MZ: Mm-hmm. I hear it was a good plane. But did you ever want to be a fighter -- I mean, if it was your choice, would you have been a fighter pilot?

MFS: They used to make a slight issue about height on some of those airplanes, you know, like a P-39, didn't have too much room. And old Ted, Ted flew several -- he ended up a fighter pilot, so he flew the old P-40, flew the old Mustang. Flew the -- several different fighters. And I don't think he ever flew a P-38, he probably didn't. Or a P-61.

MZ: But did you ever want to become a fighter pilot?

MFS: Pardon me?

MZ: Did you ever want to be a fighter pilot?

MFS: Oh, sure. Sure. Because you get a little more glory if you -- yeah. But well, I won't get -- this would be way ahead.

MZ: Oh, we'll stay right about here.

MZ: But I'm curious, but how tall are you?

MFS: Fighter pilots on the old P-47, I didn't fly them. But it helped to know a boy, they were storing a bunch of them, and they wanted them run every three days. And I'd go out

with him and we'd fire those suckers off, and you know, just -- in storage, just to keep them operating. And they -- no, I've never, when it comes to the fighter aircraft, I don't think I ever get in any, except maintain them. I worked on them and run them up, all that. But the B-25, B-24 and all of them twin trainers, Beech 18s, you know, just a commercial airplane.

MZ: Oh, let me ask you before you go on. When you were -- when you finished up at Peterson Airfield --

MFS: Pardon me?

MZ: When you were done at Peterson Airfield, where did you go after that?

MFS: OK, good. It's a good question. I went to Columbia, South Carolina. And what I did, see, we had been posted for mapping in the B-25 at Peterson. I transferred from mapping to bombing, and then went to the base that's near Columbia, South Carolina. And I was trying to think what -- I don't know whether they had named that thing yet or not. But anyway, the commander of that base -- not the base, but Operations, he listed all of our pilots, put them on the bulletin board where the personnel that were going to be crew members could see them so they could get an idea of how much time their pilot had. And that's the only

place I ever remember that occurring. And I had, I think, the first thing that come to me on it was, I think I had a little more B-25 time than the others. And 26-year-old Pat [Raynes?] from Ashburn, Georgia, he came to me and says, "Can I get on your crew?" And I said, "Well, sure." And that's the way it went, they could come and ask you if you'd take them on your crew. And then the next thing, I think, it didn't have to be the next thing, but [Riccio?], a Brooklynite radio operator, he came. And I says, "Sure, Riccio." And he says, "I know where you can get a good gunner." I said, "Where is it?" He says, "Guard House." So I says, "Get him." He says, "They'll let him out if you get on a crew." And I says, "Oh, all right." So he did, Old Jacoby. Then a Cape Cod individual, a bombardier, turned out to be a squadron bombardier, and I mean on the Balikpapan deal.

MZ: Right, in Borneo?

MFS: He did the job. We didn't use Norden bombsight.

MZ: No. No, we didn't use it. You're asking for the end if you start using that thing. Usually when we were doing our bombing, oh, he'd pick out about three different altitudes, and he knew I was going to change it a little bit, if that

stuff got too thick. And PDI, I was using a PDI. The autopilot wouldn't, making that bomb run.

MZ: What's PDI?

MFS: Pilot directional indication, yeah, hey, you asked me a question that I'm not sure. But it's the PDI, I'm quite sure is pilot directional indicator, and pilot, he knew you could tumble a gyro on that thing. And he could be going along, using some control. You know, the bombardier. But if the pilot got carried away and made a quick movement exceeding a certain bank, well, you could tumble his gyro that he was using. So but he was good, I mean, really. And I had a navigator that was good. Navigators have got 60 hours completed in pilot training, and then went in and told him he didn't want to fly anymore, he wanted to become a navigator. Can you imagine that?

MZ: That's a lot of good experience.

MFS: That's something. But oh, and for him to get clobbered in Baton Rouge after getting back through the war by a pickup, pickup finished him off.

MZ: What was his name?

MFS: Oh, that's not -- but he was -- he got home quicker than some of them, because when I stayed over there 90 days longer, I'd just go out and pick my crew, you know,

original crew, B-25 crew that's already going home. And I just picked people that would also have another crew. That's when I was Operations Officer, but I'd pick them. And they got to go home quicker, they were flying more missions.

MZ: What was the navigator's name?

MFS: Navigator's name? He was a teacher, and -- if my wife was awake, she'd know in a minute.

MZ: That's OK.

MFS: I'll try to --

MZ: So after South Carolina, where do you go from there?

MFS: Where is that, now?

MZ: After Columbia, South Carolina, where you were working on bombing, where do you go from there?

MFS: Oh, I went to Savannah, Georgia, just for a few days. Pick up a few spare parts, and but first, we picked up -- B-25's only had 15 hours on it in North Carolina. And the first thing I did was, we come down and buzzed a lake, north of Columbia. And I let her go a little bit too low and a little bit too long, and pulled it over a bunch of trees, popped a few rivets in the left wing.

MZ: Ooh.

MFS: And I hate to admit that, and I probably shouldn't have mentioned it, but they went ahead and put a few rivets in it. And then, for some reason, it had foreign material in the left engine, oil, when they checked the [subs?], so they had to change -- I believe they changed the engine. Usually they did. Then I went to Savannah and picked up a few spare parts, stuck them in the bomb bay crawlway, I think. Anyway, we were to go across the US, take it to the West Coast, have them strip the [Samar?] plate off of it and guns, so we could put some gas tank additional, because (inaudible) sent it to get it to Hawaii. Then a boat would take these parts we pulled off to Hawaii, had a depot over there, they put them back on it, then you'd make that rest of that trip to New Guinea. And that was -- kind of turned out to be a vacation, you know what I mean, we even had some entertainers catch up with us, you know?

MZ: So this is the trek that you make to get to New Guinea?

MFS: Yes.

MZ: West Coast, Samar --

MFS: See, B-25, that's 2565 nautical miles from the West Coast to US to Hawaii, where the depot was. And if you just --

MZ: How much time -- well, when you got to Hawaii, what did you think of it? It's very different from home --

MFS: Hawaii?

MZ: Yeah. What did you think of it?

MFS: Then it was not built up like it is now.

MZ: Oh, yeah.

MFS: I think the Royal Hawaiian may have been about it. And Trader Vic's deal, when we made that flight over there. I throttled that old B-25 back to where we'd still get juice, you know, from the generator, and all that. And it took 12 hours and 1 minute to make that 2565 miles.

MZ: Wow! Pull that over.

MFS: And I have a individual, we kidded him. We had a celestial navigator that we got, and we, you know, swung the -- after stripping all the stuff out of it, you had to swing the compasses again. And I slept 13 hours after making that flight. But I hadn't slept a wink the night before, we took off at 10:00. I wanted to party after the last.

MZ: You left at 10:00 at night, or in the daytime?

MFS: Oh yeah, you wanted to, because you've got stars and all that. And we had a guy that was assigned to us, a celestial navigator. Without -- all we had -- I didn't have a navigator, but would do his own, on a B-25. We tried one time to teach a guy that was usually instructing navigation, try to coach Sullivan from Cape Cod, you know I

mentioned it ended up as being a squadron bombardier overseas?

MZ: Yeah?

MFS: I think I mentioned that. He stayed in the service, retired a lieutenant colonel, and may have gotten pilot training. I'm not sure, I didn't stay up with him that long.

MZ: So after Hawaii, you say that you and your crew fly to New Guinea?

MFS: Yeah.

MZ: Now is it just your plane, or is it a group of planes flying altogether?

MFS: Oh, you went by yourself.

MZ: Oh, really?

MFS: Yeah, from there. If you didn't, you know, like some missions over there, along this mission we ever made in a B-24, you didn't fly in formation. You'd burn too much gas. What you'd do is rendezvous. We rendezvoused an hour from the target, when we got that refinery at Balikpapan. We did it, we took the whole group and rendezvoused at a certain spot.

MZ: Right>

MFS: And then the first three squadrons -- and we did it in a pattern bombing. And you just couldn't hardly miss, if you saturated him.

MZ: Right. Well, I want to get into that in more detail, but in a little bit. Describe to me what it was like flying B-25.

MFS: B-25, it was almost a dream, I guess. B-25 was a good airplane, and I guess you probably have heard -- I have heard, I'm not sure it's true, that Eisenhower had a personal airplane, B-25, doctored up for him. That old airplane right there, several generals, if they had enough suction ended up with one of those, you know, after the war.

MZ: You mean the B-17s?

MFS: Yeah, B-17. And the B-24 over there, I got some books, there's a boy of mine left that show this skeleton of these airplanes, the fighters and bombers and what have you.

MZ: Right.

MFS: And I read a deal in there, I've got the magazines over here, and I mean not the magazine, their books, that old Mike picked up, because he was in the Air Force for a while, and he worked on them for a while. And some artist come up with -- you could see the various parts and

accessories and location in the airplane. I can still remember on the B-29, the real bulkhead with a pressure dump, with 646. Then at Operations Desk I remember the 8109 that -- 50 years, I guess, phone number. But the -- now you asked a question, and I got off --

MZ: Yeah, I just wanted your opinion on the --

MFS: Oh, B-20--

MZ: What you thought it was like to fly a B-25.

MFS: OK, a B-25 -- I let the bombardier play with that thing on flights. And when we'd -- and I used to test airplanes and service squadrons. I like to fly, I mean, to add service squadrons, combat areas. And the B-25G has quite a bit of -- had a little more armor plate on it, the B-25G. And some of the later B-25s had a 75 millimeter gun mounted in the -- well no, it was a crawlway, and they could only fire one round. I fired -- I think I told you, maybe. I fired four rounds in one of them, down in South Carolina one day. And I was shooting at a target about the size of that mess of pictures there, about a four by four, and using the torpedo site, it's just like skip bombing, you're just flying the bomb into the target. And but that for some reason, that site helps, I think I hit them. He didn't -- I don't think I missed any of them, but they were white,

and they had them out in the field down near south of Columbia. But B-25 was very similar as (inaudible). You wouldn't think so, but this old B-24, when it first came out, it had levers all over that sucker. You know, you had [mixer?] controls, you had throttles, you had cowl flaps, you had this, that and the other. Then they came out with a one deal that would handle the mixture, and throttle the power. Now it's also -- it was a tri-gear. And a tri-gear is a tri-gear, it's -- all of them is pretty -- even the fighters. Now you know how many airplanes, how many B-24 they constructed?

MZ: No.

MFS: Eighteen thousand. That's quite a few, isn't it?

MZ: It is.

MFS: Eighteen thousand.

MZ: Now, you end up flying the B-24, but later in the war, right?

MFS: Well, I'll tell you, in the beginning it wasn't too popular. I think they lost a few of them. The -- and the only reason I went ahead and -- well, no, it wasn't the only reason, it's an airplane. And I was with a certain group I'd been with a long time. They give us a chance to

transfer to another B-25 outfit, but I stayed with that. I wanted a little four engine time.

MZ: Well, I guess what I really wanted to ask was, between the B-25 and the B-24, which plane did you prefer?

MFS: It's hard to say. At first, it would be 25, you know, really all out. In fact, I went back to 25s and went to Pampa. And I did a wrong thing. I should have gone up Northeast to B-29s, you know, they get bigger, bigger than this, quite a bit bigger. Those old B-29s. And a lot of power. I worked -- well, I think I'll go ahead and mention it ahead of time. When I got out from overseas, I went to work in maintenance with the largest repair facility in the country, at Tinker. He had a lot of -- and B-29 tankers, C-97 tankers, anything that came in there. If you were a crew chief, hey, you drove maybe anything that the Air Force was prime in.

MZ: Right. Yeah.

MFS: And hey, you didn't have to be the hottest mechanic in the world, just know the hottest mechanic, you know, people that are qualified in certain areas.

MZ: Right. Do you recall when you got to New Guinea?

MFS: You what?

MZ: Do you recall when you got to New Guinea?

MFS: Where I got what?

MZ: When you got to New Guinea? Was it 1943? Was it the middle of 1943? Do you recall what time of year it was?

MFS: Well, what time I got -- I'm sorry, I --

MZ: Well, after you left, you said you had left Hawaii, and you had flown -- you and your crew had flown to New Guinea.

MFS: Oh, yes. I can tell you, yeah, I can tell you about that. Actually, when we got over there in Hawaii, we left the US the 5th of -- doggone it, it was the 5th of August, hey, I think in '43. We left the coast. And then we got over in Hawaii and the depot, you know, building those things back up, and we left there about two months later, two and a half months later. Then we hit Christmas Island.

MZ: So you --

MFS: South of Hawaii.

MZ: Oh, OK. So from Hawaii to Christmas Island, and then to New Guinea?

MFS: No, I'll keep going here.

MZ: OK.

MFS: Christmas Island, then Christmas Island to Penrhyn Atoll, A-T-O-L-L. This was a little chain of islands about -- I think it's a little over 12, 1400 south of Christmas. And Christmas I can't remember, it might have been about 1000

miles south of Hawaii, something like that. Then we had a deep water port, American deep water port east of Penrhyn Atoll. But we were at Penrhyn Atoll waiting on a air plug assembly for that B-25 for about probably a month and a half to get that thing over there and get it put up. And Penrhyn Atoll is a French island group, of all little islands, had a lagoon and we had two boats there, had a 24-foot Chris-Craft and a 14-foot, I don't know, something. Fourteen-foot something. And then they were flying a group of entertainers down there, and then they had a B-24 that come in there, that something was wrong with that. And they had to wait for a part. And the other 25s came through there, and maybe they'd need a part, sometimes they'd come to us and say, "Can we borrow that part off that airplane," and you wouldn't dare turn a part loose on one of those airplanes. You'd never get it back. Anyway, this is a deep water port. And we had to stay there eight days. We might have stretched it out a little bit on that right days. But we landed that B-25 before we left, so I'll tell this little story, try to tell it quick. The crew was a little bit leery of me when we was getting ready to leave, because they knew I'd buzz that runway. And I didn't tell them, but the old Colonel, there was a Colonel

there with an engineering battalion there, and he says, "Give us a good buzz before you leave." You know, he gave me the authority, so I did. I gave him a good buzz before we left, and I didn't tell these guys I was going to do it. And it was kind of amusing. And there was a little old vision deal that you can take out of the windshield of a B-25. And that thing, it come down the little old runway they had there, it blew out, I think dropped in my lap. And then a blew -- but then Samar.

MZ: Samar?

MFS: Hey, Samar is the next place we went to from Penrhyn Atoll.

MZ: What do you remember about Samar?

MFS: S-A-M-O-A.

MZ: So what was Samar like?

MFS: Samar was a deep water port, and you had American Samar, and then you had something else, they called it something else. And you had -- of course, the man, remember that, he was driving around over the -- of course, we got transportation. We drove around quite a bit of field. And there was a flat top docked there when we spent those eight days. And the ladies during the day were just as likely to be bare-breasted as not. But we came by at night, when -- this flat top, and they had four or five of those ladies in

evening gowns, boy, decked out. And they had a dance on the flat top. So and then you saw people with -- and Samar was the only place I saw them with elephantiasis.

MZ: Really?

MFS: You see some cases of that. And actually, that's a spooky thing, ooh. Then we took off from there, and went to -- now the next big air field is going to be Australia. But there's a hot golfer from this southerly little place -- Fiji, I believe, yeah. Fiji. Fiji Islands is between Samar and, well, I guess you'd call it Brisbane.

Brisbane's a -- you got a feel there of Brisbane. And a reef (inaudible). Then from there, so we went north.

Excuse me.

MZ: I'm sorry. So you stopped at Fiji too, before you go to Brisbane?

MFS: Yeah.

MZ: OK. All right.

MFS: Heck -- now, at Brisbane, I didn't want to stay. I'm trying to name -- I'm trying to remember the name of this field, you know, that's close to Brisbane, because I didn't want to stay on the base. Didn't want to stay on the base. I stayed in a little -- it might have been Ipswich, a little Aussie kind of like a -- and it's kind of amusing.

I had a friend that married a gal in that town, and she's living in the area that we lived in before we came down here. And she'd come see me every once in a while, because she'd go back occasionally. And I believe that place was Ipswich, I-P-S-W-I -- I don't know how to spell it. I know there's several scraps of our people there staying overnight, and digger, the Aussie digger, you know, the fighting man? They --

MZ: The Australian soldiers, you mean?

MFS: Sometimes a little bit -- and I can understand it, because the American soldier over there is getting a little more money than a digger. I spent a few nights in Australia, in Sydney. I guess I had five 10-day rest area in Sydney, on Bondi Beach. I believe old John Wheatley from Bartlesville, Oklahoma and I would rent apartments in sequence, and then rent old touring cars, you know, (inaudible) touring. And let's see, what else did we do? Oh, we had a canteen on Kings Cross in Sydney. You could eat 24 hours a day. You know, if you wanted to. And I might think of that navigator's name here, in a minute. We took him to a snake pit one night -- we call a nightclub was a snake pit -- and there was a lady with a band, and, oh, I keep wanting to say Bondi or something, for his name.

But he noticed this lady, and he says he was engaged. And at that time, my copilot was engaged. He was a Norwegian, a platinum blonde Norwegian. They were both engaged. And old Rex, the Norwegian, he wasn't as particular about dating the ladies as Bondi, the navigator. That might be his name. It started with "B," I'm pretty sure. But he'd be on the orders, that mission that we'd made to the lake or pond, you know, the refinery. He'd get an air medal on that. Oh, come in! Come in.

MZ: Oh, I think she went back out, so...

MFS: Oh, yeah.

MZ: So from Australia, do you go to New Guinea from there? Do you fly to New Guinea from Australia?

MFS: What?

MZ: Do you fly to New Guinea from Australia?

MFS: Oh, yeah. Yeah. I'll tell you. We lost our navigator, we lost our navigator at the coast of Australia, and the pilot took it over.

MZ: You lost your navigator? What...

MFS: Oh, we didn't, no, upset like he fell over. No, he went back. He was needed elsewhere.

MZ: Oh, OK.

MFS: So that ended his trip, you know, his job, when we're -- and I'm worried about me not remembering the name of that air base in Australia, the first one.

MZ: Where did you say it was near? It was by Brisbane, right?

MFS: Near Brisbane.

MZ: OK. I could look that up. Was it an American air field?

MFS: No, I think it's British. I mean, Australian. You know, they had the airlines, and what have you.

MZ: OK. So when you make it to New Guinea, is there an air field -- I mean, there's an air field there, but this is happening --

MFS: Yeah, I'll mention that right quick. We stayed all night at this little kind of motel routine. Then we went to a place called Townsville, which is a country town in the Northern part of Australia, if I remember. At least north. And then we had a little air base near there, and we'd pick airplanes up later, you know, new airplanes from the States. Port Moresby then, on New Guinea. Port Moresby. And around Port Moresby, you had at least three or four strips that you could land these airplanes right here, B-24s, B-25s, A-20s, you'd land anything, you know. And back early in the war, what they'd do, like on the B-26s, if they had overload on one of those fields or two of those

strips, and knew the Japs, if a large flight of Japs was scheduled to come over and fly out to sea, you know, and just stay out there until the threat was over.

MZ: Just to stay safe.

MFS: Yeah. They tried to -- the B-25s that existed had -- want to say the name of this town was on the --

MZ: Port Moresby?

MFS: Yeah. On one of those strips. They try to -- if we take a good airplane, good B-25 over there, they tried to get that sucker. And of course, I had -- we had orders. We had orders taken to the 22nd bomb group. And we did -- we -- I stayed, and this is kind of interesting, and I wish we had done something about it -- old boy took me to a tent, and all that it had in it was a cot and a cotton mattress. Next morning, I was bloody. I mean the mosquitos.

MZ: Wow!

MFS: And you know what? That was the last mosquito bite I got while I was overseas.

MZ: How's that?

MFS: The last. They'd eat me up that first night on that there. And they were thinking about taking a blood diagnosis and maybe coming up with a vaccination that they could give that would cause the mosquito to leave the man alone. Now

I came back from over there, and it lasted for about six months. And we have a mosquito haven in Northeast Oklahoma, I mean you've got mosquitos, mosquitos, mosquitos. But they didn't get any there. But they had signs up, or they'd paint the guy's backs, or what have you, over there, for typhus, you know, and all this kind of stuff.

MZ: So when you arrive in New Guinea, that's when you're assigned to the 22nd bomb group, and the -- what's the squadron number? Is it the 408th?

MFS: Oh yeah, I was in the 408th. And we had a second squadron. We had a 33rd squadron. And we had a 19th squadron. And the 19th was a silver fleet. They had the camouflage removed from them, they were polished out. That's why they call them the "silver fleet." And they weren't B-25s.

MZ: What were they?

MFS: B-26s. Martin B-26, that they used to call the [wood maker?], way back there.

MZ: Really? Why would they call them that?

MFS: A few of them cracked up, you know? And they were a fast airplane. I only -- I never flew it. I rode in it a little bit. And I might mention this, they went overseas early with those B-26s, the 22nd bomb group took them over

there. And most of the pilots I ever run into that flew the B-26, crazy about it. They really liked it. And the one we kept as a fat cat, we called it a "fat cat," and stripped it, they're pretty fast. Pretty fast airplane, especially if you strip it. And old Cole, this guy that I mentioned flying that pursuit plane, the P-47, a while ago?

MZ: Yeah?

MFS: I rode with him in one. And it was stripped. And this -- it was pretty hot. It was a pretty hot airplane on landings, originally. But that thing just floated nice and gently, it was stripped. It didn't have any weight on it.

MZ: Really?

MFS: And they were still flying combat with those things. And all of them were kind of stripped a little bit. Now we kept -- I think we had a B-25 fat cat, you know, that -- now occasionally, a guy would get a call to fly a colonel or somebody to Sydney, or something. I think I had three of those flights. And I got one story I won't take up your time on.

MZ: Oh no, no, it's --

MFS: It's kind of amusing, because I picked this guy up, he probably wasn't over 28 or 9 years old, and he didn't have any wings on. And I got picked up, kind of dirty down

there, and they said, "Stewart, fly this guy to Sydney." And I says, "Well, I don't have any clothes down here with me," and this was a river base, that I got to where we were. And here comes old John Wheatley from Sydney off of leave, and he had his B-4 bag, and his clothes and everything. And we were the same size, there wasn't any two ways about it. He says, "Stewart, I'll loan you my clothes. Here, take these clothes." So I took his clothes and got to the first deal at Townsville, and they says, "You can't make it to Sydney." And this Colonel was standing right by my shoulder. I says, "Oh, we'll make it." I didn't intend to make it to Sydney, I was going to go somewhere else. And the -- but he listened to all this garbage, you know, a pilot being warned against weather, and then going against it. So we got in a B-24, and we went to Rockhampton. And the reason we went to Rockhampton, there had been a bunch of diggers stationed there, and it had got several women and stuff in there, and we thought it might be a good place to stop and party a little bit. So the field, though, at Rockhampton was only 36 feet long. Well, the 36 feet long and a B-24, you need a little brush at the end of it. So I shouldn't tell you

this, but I used a little bit of that brush, a little bit of that brush.

MZ: Now, was this the 36? Or --

MFS: You know what? I guess it's the only B-24 that ever went in there, because the town came out to look at that airplane.

MZ: Oh, yeah?

MFS: Or, I'll say Rockhampton, quite a bit of it. We left two men all night playing, to kind of keep it together. And went in, and when we got in hotel there, pretty nice hotel, this Colonel asked me, he says, "Have you seen my wings?" I didn't know he was a pilot. He says, "Have you seen my wings?" I said, "No, sir, I haven't seen your wings." And then that flashed in front of me, all those warnings and him listening to them. It's a wonder he didn't just get out of the airplane, and --

MZ: So you -- he understood the conversation because he was a pilot?

MFS: Yeah, I left him down there, and I don't know -- sometimes I wonder why they went down, whether it was just -- don't ever repeat this in anything -- I don't know whether it was maybe for to greet somebody. We had several people get married over there. We had one CO that I had, 22nd. Now

they supposedly named that 22nd bomb group "The Red Raiders," for the commander, Red Robinson. He was a Light Colonel when he got killed on takeoff.

MZ: Hmm, this was before you got there?

MFS: No, it was while I was there. I was the next squadron behind him. He got killed on takeoff. He was only 20-- I think about 24 years old. He had been in a little crackup before, I think. I know he was criticizing himself, he says, "They should have court-martialed me." I don't know what he did. He kept a pair of bird dogs with him.

MZ: Bird dogs?

MFS: Oh, he didn't fly with them, I don't think. I don't think he ever flew with any. But he kept them around there. And I saw the deal, and I don't think -- it may not still be in the Internet, of a picture of him and was six pages of people that, on memorium for the 22nd. And I had that thing with me with some real estate papers, when we came down here. And I think I left them with my son, he was living here then before he retired. And but all -- I know who was -- Red Robinson was flying command pilot when he got killed. He wasn't flying the airplane. He was a Colonel, and when they got to be commander, you know, of organization, field commander, they could fly command

pilot. Command pilot wings, you've seen them, you know what I'm saying? What else happened here? Oh, yeah, they mentioned that on the deal, where I got the list of the memorial list, you know, of the 22nd, this old Ted, the one that finally turned out to be a fighter pilot over in Europe, a cousin of mine? We grew up together, you know, back in the watermelon days. And I'm talking too much, and I'm probably knocking you out of --

MZ: Well, actually, I've just got a few more minutes, and I'm going to have to go. So we're going to have to do a part two. But this is a good place to stop, because, you know, here, your daughter was kind enough to send me your hours, and actually, when we take this up again --

MFS: Here's -- I think it's on the 14th --

MZ: Fourteenth?

MFS: Where I got to -- I'll brag a little bit -- I got the Distinguished Service Cross on that one.

MZ: Yeah --

MFS: And they -- that one, she did a little research, oh, Pat's kind of (inaudible). And she found out the percentage of the fuel that that refinery was furnishing the war effort of Japan, I guess, she mentioned in there somewhere.

MZ: Right. The one at Balikpapan, Borneo. Yeah, I did want to ask you about that, because I did a little bit of reading and it did say it was -- I guess you set some kind of record for the amount of time in the air?

MFS: It was a distance, 17 hours.

MZ: Yeah, and --

MFS: Now, what caused that to be exactly 17 hours, yeah, is I went into -- let's see if I can remember that -- they've changed the name of it now, the town. I went in there and stayed all night, and they hadn't -- I was missing for 24 hours, and we weren't. We sent a message and the message didn't go through when we landed. What was the name of that little town?

MZ: This is on the --

MFS: This was in the Celebes, I think. Let's see. That old -- now we didn't go through all this. It said that, you know, on that ride up on the DFC that mentioned damage to the vertical stabilizer, damage to the bomb bay and shooting the glass out of [Rupel?]'s turret, his old hair was blowing when that glass went. And I was getting ready to send the navigator up to take the gun. And his hair started blowing again. So we just left him up there. I

don't know. He might have got credit for those two airplanes that we got credit for.

MZ: Oh, you mean -- you're talking about the shooting down on those two Japanese airplanes, right?

MFS: Yeah.

MZ: OK. Well, let me stop you here, because that we can get a lot more detail about that particular mission, and we'll go down your list here of hours, of which you have 263 combat hours, is that right?

MFS: Yeah, they put the number of combat hours for each airplane. Is it -- let me -- what are they, here? Here they are.

MZ: Let me do this, I'm going to --

MFS: What they did here, I think, on all of these sheets is -- yeah, this was a second sheet because the --

MZ: Oh, it's on the back here.

MFS: Thirty-one. Well yeah, they end it to 70. Ended on this page, it's 39.

MZ: Right.

MFS: Thirty-nine.

MZ: Just so the listener knows, what we're looking at here is --

MFS: Seventy combat missions.

MZ: It says at the top, "Record of Combat Experience," and it lists Mr. Stewart's -- every mission that he was on. And he was on 70 missions, he did -- it was 31 in B-24s, is that right?

MFS: Each what?

MZ: It was -- how many combat missions in the B-24 did you fly?

MFS: Thirty-one.

MZ: And then the B-25?

MFS: Thirty-nine.

MZ: I'm sorry, B-25 was 31, and B --

MFS: No, B-25 was 39.

MZ: OK.

MFS: Only, like, 11 missions coming home. You know, that's the reason I say we should go with another B-25 outfit for 11 missions, she can go home. And but oh, there's one little thing. Pan American, after I got home and went down to redistribution at Miami Beach, of all places, all the way across the country, and I was Operations Officer, and that old MOS for Operations Officer is on my paperwork and everything. And I got with a doctor, and we stayed at one of the hotels down at Miami Beach. And got to go dancing with the doctor and his two girlfriends. But anyway, the distribution officer, what they called him down there, he

called me up and he says, "There's a check pilot down here from Pan American and he wants to interview you." He saw that I had some four engine time, and what I did. I says, "Well, he can sure interview me." (laughter) So and then in less than 15 minutes he called and he says, "They won't let you out of the service. You're an operations officer, so you can't get out." And I said, "Well, OK." But you know what I should have done, I should have resigned that commission, and probably -- however, you know, if I got interviewed, got that job.

MZ: Well, we could talk a little bit more about that.

MFS: Oh, I don't know. Yeah.

MZ: Let me shut off the recorder, and then we could talk about setting up another time in a couple of days.

(break in audio)

MZ: This is Mike Zambrano. Today is the 9th of March, 2015, and we're continuing Mr. Major Franklin Stewart's interview from the 7th. We're going to pick up where Mr. Stewart first got to New Guinea. Well actually, let me put this on hold for a second. I know who that is trying to call. Restart this, and we'll start with New Guinea. OK, I'm

back. And I'm here with Mr. Stewart. And we're going to start off from when he was -- when he just got to New Guinea, and joined the 408th bomber squadron. So can you tell me what it was like when you first got to New Guinea and you joined the squadron?

MFS: OK. I think I mentioned it briefly. And in your first -- when I started this, pre-war, you know, one, and then two, I go down to part A of the third paragraph, and said, what, do you recall what you were doing when Pearl Harbor --

MZ: Well, that's going back a little too far. We're trying to pick up in New Guinea.

MFS: OK, where do you want to go to?

MZ: Well, when you first got to New Guinea and you joined the 408th bomber squadron.

MFS: OK, New Guinea. Well, I arrived on the trip from Dakota with the crew and the B-25. And we did that series of things to strip it and then rebuild it back up and then take it all the way to New Guinea. And we got to Port Moresby, and I mentioned that there were several strips, aircraft runways around there that they were using them in the beginning, when the Japs had a rather strong air arm. They were using these to just fly the aircraft out to see, and then bring it back when the raid was over. Now when we

got there, I think I mentioned that they tried to take the airplane, but I had orders to get it to the 22nd bomb group. And a little air strip called Dobodura.

MZ: Dobodura?

MFS: Dobodura. And of course there were tents and a few other things there. And at the time we landed, there was a end of a little air strike by the Japanese. We had Tokyo Rose that said they were going to send over 50 Japanese dive bombers and clean up the Dobodura murderers.

MZ: Really? Who were the Dobodura murderers?

MFS: Huh?

MZ: Who were the Dobodura murderers?

MFS: She -- they would do things to affect their own people, you know? (inaudible). I liked Tokyo Rose because she played good music to us.

MZ: That's what I hear.

MFS: Yeah. Very good. And I think they finally gave her a sentence of some sort, you know, after the war, what have you.

MZ: Right. But the Dobodura murderers, I tried to look that upon the Internet, but I really couldn't find --

MFS: She was the one that was using the expression, "Dobodura murderers."

MZ: Really? To describe who?

MFS: She was confusing us with -- and I'll tell you, we had -- I'll go ahead. We had the 22nd bomb group there at Dobodura, and we had the 38th bomb group there, strafers at Dobodura. We had another unit, the old 820 straffer there at Dobodura. Now when we first got in that area, the Japanese had approximately, oh, according to the report, we had close to 600 aircraft in the area. Not at Dobodura, in New Guinea and New Britain. You know where New Britain, just about New Guinea.

MZ: Yeah.

MFS: Now within 90 days, there was a drastic change in the number of Japanese aircraft in the area. No strafers got to work. And they -- very effective. And I tried to remember the commander of the 38th bomb group, let's see. He later became an authority with the production of news and the -- put out by the Air Force.

MZ: OK, do you remember the --

MFS: He was a young, light colonel. He was about 24, I think, at the time. And oh, he had some -- I will mention this, too, the 22nd bomb group, when they first was put overseas, they had a squadron of B-26s, I think I mentioned that, the silver fleet. They removed all the camouflage from them,

and that was the 19th squadron. And they were a little faster than a B-25, as far as that goes. They finally changed them, finally changed them along and got new B-25s. And they kept one fat cat, B-26, stripped. I had the pleasure of getting a ride in that thing, and it's pretty fast. It was stripped down. And now, we spent several months flying out of Dobodura. And I've got a list over here of 39 missions, most of them were flown out of that particular area. And they were short, and two gun positions and airports and troops. We were also flying and aiding the ground troops of the Australians. They'd get them in a canyon, we'd drop parafrags on them, or this sort of thing. And the strafers, they'd go after personnel as well as ships, and aircrafts, they went after a lot of aircrafts. They suffered -- the 22nd suffered some losses. And I was visiting my cousin, Ted, who became a fighter pilot on Europe. I was visiting him, and he says, "What rate of loss do you have?" And we didn't have -- nobody had maintained a rate of just what we had. But he went to his TV and he got a deal -- I say TV, it's his, what do you call it? Internet. He went to the Internet and got a bit, a six-page loss that the 22nd had, not just on the B-26s, but on the B-25s.

MZ: Oh, OK.

MFS: And it also recorded the death of our commander, a full colonel at 26, and a six-page memorial of the losses. I don't know whether they still got that or not. I had it along with this material that I have, and but I also had some other property with it, and I think my son, when he retired, took it with him.

MZ: Do you remember what that colonel's name was?

MFS: Now --

MZ: Do you remember what the colonel's name was? The one that died?

MFS: Pardon me?

MZ: Do you remember what the colonel's name was? The one that died.

MFS: Oh, yes. Yes. Robinson.

MZ: Robinson?

MFS: Red Robinson. And the 22nd bomb group had another name besides the 22nd, it had Red Raiders. And he was a redhead, and they supposedly named the group after him to get to Red -- you know, Red Raiders.

MZ: I remember reading about that. Didn't he die, like, on takeoff or something?

MFS: Pardon me?

MZ: Doesn't he die on a takeoff?

MFS: Oh, yes. Yes, that's what happened. On the takeoff. And so the weather was a little bit raunchy, and this, that and the other. He was not flying the airplane when he died. He had a -- he was flying command pilot. And the command pilot's last name was Hume, H-U-M-E. And it was in that memoriam list that I mentioned, I mentioned a while ago. And it's quite a list there. Now my first mission -- you may or may not be interested in that -- I flew it with a squadron commander. He and I went on a flight to New Britain, north of us, and the Japs were pretty strong there. And we did it simply to check and see if the rest of the people could get in there now without -- and I wore my little Mae West and I got in the clouds, I welcomed those clouds, we got in the weather. Single ship, that's what we were flying, (inaudible). And they didn't get to hit it that day. So we got back, and I was not commissioned yet. And when we got back, he looked at me and he says, "All my first pilots are first lieutenants." I said, "Well, that's fine." His name was R. O. Miller. And he was a captain at the time. But in a short time, he was a light colonel. And he went home as a light colonel. He's from North Carolina. OK now [Copsey?] was the

first -- next guy I flew with. And he was from Wyoming, and he was quite a cowboy. And then Copsey and I flew a little bit more together, and then we'd go out and buzz the ocean, and then he would play at times. And I came in and I landed almost in formation with him. He made first mission, our second mission. And they all saw it. He saw that I'd almost landed in formation with the leader of the ship (inaudible). So Copsey said, "Oh, you did a good job." And Copsey would -- you could have been hanging on the tail of that airplane in front of him, and he wasn't worried about it. Anyway, we've had this business of any new person coming into this -- our new crew coming into the squadron. They checked him out and this, that and the other, and of course they put us through a formation situation, and all this. They got carried away one time though, and they flew the Operations Officer in one of our squadrons, and they flew the squadron commander in the same little operation going on. So they eliminated an operations officer and a squadron commander with a little reckless formation in flying over the field, messing around. I didn't have to mention that; it didn't put a very good over on the 22nd bomb group that time, one of the squadrons. Now we moved to a little, well, Lae, you're

familiar with Lae and where it's at, everything. And I guess that was the last time they saw Earhart. She took off from there on her cross-country --

MZ: You mean an island named Lae?

MFS: Pardon me?

MZ: Is it an island that's named Lae?

MFS: Well, Lae is in a little cove, and it's in New Guinea, it's in New Guinea. You have, oh, a small population there. And we had temporary runways north about 20 miles north of Lae. They just lay 'em like -- and they could do it overnight, and we flew on those, even with 24s later, when we went to heavies. We flew on those metal runways. They just -- and they can -- you could see later on, they would get damaged. You'd see a piece of metal sticking up out of the runway as you go along, and all this. But we have just simple control towers. Now if we stayed somewhere for any length of time, we usually build a little club. Now at Dobodura, it's a pretty good size, pretty good size. It had a horseshoe bar, and it had a dance floor in it. And if you want me to explain what it's -- it's pretty nice. It's pretty nice. I was on the gambling committee, and let's see -- then we had a third field, I'm pretty sure that's the name of it, third field hospital, fairly close

to this club. And that was a pretty good layout, the club with the dance floor and what have you. And I remember, I'll see nurses showing up, and I thought they were partiers, just like anyone else. And we were not scheduled to fly a mission the next day, when we opened that thing up. And of course we had our little tents out there, and old Sullivan, that bombardier that I mentioned from Cape Cod, he and I -- we just put tents up, didn't bother to dig a slip trench to get in. And of course our own ack-ack, the Japs sent, we called him "Bed Check Charlie," he came over and dropped two 500-pounders across the little creek from where we had our bivouac. And now this was the first night of our stay in that deal, and we just threw up tents, put our shoes under a cot, and the next day the shoes floated out of the tent. It had rained that night. A guy stood there right in front of the tent and shot a .45 three times, and we slept right through it, and slept through the two 500-pounders were going off across the creek. So enough of that. Usually, we'd fly those B25s. We'd go sometimes as high as 12 airplanes, you know, in the squadron. And your crews on B-25s were only six.

MZ: I'm sorry, go on.

MFS: Were six in number. Of course, on the B-24, we'd go as high as -- with observers, we'd go as high as 13.

__: Sorry.

MZ: Let me just -- I'll put it on pause.

MFS: She's just, she's back from a meeting.

__: She's back? Oh.

MFS: Yes, she just --

__: (inaudible) got food, you know?

MFS: Anyway, the first thing on the menu was to build another club. And we kept the same native. I mean he was a blasted engineer, building these clubs out of thatched huts, you know? And then you'd have the native dances every once in a while. And my copilot on the B-25s, he'd really take those in. He kind of, well, he was a teacher, and he's also a druggist, and I don't know what all -- he -- and a college graduate. And I will tell you a little bit later when we went across the States, we supposed to have maintained radio silence and not have everything to get to the West Coast, and then strip them, and then go to --

MZ: I know --

MFS: But I'll keep going on the other deal. Now what did we do? We didn't do a lot of it, but we were getting up out of

Papua, New Guinea when we got delay. And we're building -- you had kunai grass about six feet high everywhere up there. And we got strafed one time by some Betty bombers there, shortly after we got up there, on our way out to get a mission off. Nothing, hey, really happened out of it. And we kept our parachute deal out on the flight line near the tower, control tower. Control tower consisted of usually one occupant and just flares, because it was just out there. And then I can tell a little story that might be interesting to somebody about me leading the squadron, sitting out there in lead position, and waiting and waiting and waiting in this dusky, dark morning, a mission. And all of a sudden I got tired of that noise, and I just went, boom! Started down the runway, and man, I thought the Fourth of July had occurred; that tower just -- ooh. And it was a bad deal, and I could see a B-24 coming in, landing toward me on this metal --

MZ: Runway?

MFS: -- and it was about 80 miles an hour, going to -- had been a nice mess. Anyway, I did a 180 degree turn, and I saw about those things sticking up out of the metal ramp. And I should have checked the tires, but didn't, went ahead and flew the mission. Everything went all right. I didn't

intend to keep going with that story, but I did. And occasionally, your ground fire, that friendly fire was kind of rough. And B-25s, I've had more of it come at me than anywhere else over there. And there was a little fire strip north of Nadzab, and Nadzab. And they put -- mission was pretty important, so they took my radio operator and substituted his squadron commander's radio operator at that time. And all of a sudden we got north of Nadzab a little ways, and one of the waist gunners says, "Our field is shooting at us." And I says, "Well, what's the deal?" And this hot-shot radio operator that belonged to the commander had forgot to turn on the IFF. We were enemies as far as they saw it.

MZ: Really? So your own field was shooting at you?

MFS: Yeah. And that's usually what happened, if you got shot, you had somebody. And they've -- Yamamoto, when he got shot down, they took a while over there to decide who shot him down. A couple of P-38s got in on it, you probably read about it and all this stuff.

MZ: Yeah. Yeah.

MFS: Then I started to tell it a while ago. Usually -- oh, and some of those, when you get up, we're about out of Papua when we got delay. And then we got on a farther end of

Dutch New Guinea, and we captured a couple pretty good strips up there, and we flew out of them. You know, it got us closer to some of the other Jap targets. And we were flying strafers out of it, and B-24s. We were flying B-24s at them. And that was kind of tricky, because the A-20 strafers, I've had them come within 10 feet on the landing, overhead, coming down. And that's the first time I ever slipped, Hollandia was the name of the Dutch town where that strip was. H-O-L-L-A-N-D-I-A, I think is the way you spelled it. And --

MZ: Are you still at Dobodura at this point?

MFS: Pardon me?

MZ: Are you still at Dobadura?

MFS: Oh no, no. No, no, we'd come from Dobadura and went to Nadzab, which was north of Lae, and built another -- and took the big six-foot native engineer, took him with us. And he had one going good right away, after we get the six foot kunai grass cleaned out and all that, put it in. And one morning, this -- I'll tell it, whether it's good to tell or not. I woke up, and I'd hear a piano was playing. That's after we moved up at Nadzab. And I said, what in the world? So I went out there, and there's a guy named Wells. And he's a pilot. And he's -- our club was through

and the piano was on a bench, and similar, it wasn't as fancy as the one at Dobadura, but it was adequate. And he done a pretty good job on that piano. And I said, "Look," he says, "I can teach you to do it." So I started taking piano lessons for a while there. I was in (inaudible) then. And Wells was quite -- he was our transport pilot, too. He'd manage to do that. And we had a Coke machine -- are you interested in stuff like this?

MZ: No, that's fine.

MFS: Yeah, we had a Coke machine, fluids bit, and the 408th had it. And we'd -- the group, the whole group, the 408th had the 19th, 2nd and 33rd, they'd all use that Coke machine. Somebody happened to get a promotion, he might buy Cokes for somebody. The only trouble, if you got a pretty good promotion, the whole group, it'd be a pretty good sized drink that you'd be paying for. And the candy happened to be swamped with Butterfingers. I never got so tired of Butterfinger chocolate in my life! (laughter) And the trouble, finally though, they were hauling a load of candy in and lost the airplane, and lost a sergeant with it.

MZ: Oh, yeah?

MFS: The manager of the little deal. Then they wanted an ice cream machine. One of the rest deals that I went on, they

talked me into going down to the business section and somebody had seen one, and they were wanting \$1850 for it, one of these old ice cream deals. And I think old Wells had to fly it in from Sydney. And we had the first soft ice cream in New Guinea, I think. So we're a diesel outfit, I went, of course the officers had a .45 with shoulder holsters. And that's the only time I wore my shoulder holster in Sydney, was when I went down there and turned that \$1850 over to that guy. It wasn't in a very nice area.

MZ: So you had to fly the city to go pick up this ice cream machine?

MFS: No, I was going on a rest area, 10- or 12-day rest area, and I just slipped down there and bought the thing, and it took about three or four months to get it back up to where we were. We were getting pretty close to -- well, we were in Owi. We had moved to better runway setup, had longer runways. And we didn't have as good a -- we didn't build a party place there, a club.

MZ: No?

MFS: We didn't build a club there. And that's where we hit that Balikpapan, that was from Owi. But Biak, it was a Dutch, little Dutch city, right, it's in the Dutch portion of New

Guinea. And this might be of some interest. Rockefeller's son and another couple were on a little deal there one day once. And I don't think they ever found them. They were in, further down in New Guinea from Biak. And then another time, and on Owi, we had three guys who wanted to do a little bit of sailing, so they found a P-47 drop tank, which is pretty substantial.

MZ: Oh, yeah, I've seen that.

MFS: Then we rigged him a sail, and we stopped the search after five days. They got out there sailing that stinking thing, and I don't know.

MZ: He just disappeared? He was gone?

MFS: That's kind of -- and now, here was a deal in New Guinea, almost the length of it from Dobodura, it was a link to the Dutch part of New Guinea. And we would fall bombs, the B-24 -- I'll put it this way. The Aussies had, in the jungle, had little saw mills and stuff. And we'd modify the bomb bays on some of those B-24s.

MZ: Really? Why?

MFS: And we'd get the lumber from the Aussies. And then we'd do this. We would, if we had a guy that -- usually a navigator -- that was waiting around to go home, we leased a house in Australia next to a female dormitory for

military, military (inaudible). And then we would -- I'm going to tell it anyway. We would do this. We wouldn't get permission to take a B-24 and one of these big wrecks in the bomb bay. You could haul a lot of food, a lot of food in the bomb bay on a B-24, in fact, that's when they first designed that thing, I think it was used as a transport. Called a liberator, you know, way back there?

MZ: Yeah?

MFS: And but you'd go down there and get steak, onions, potatoes, what have you, load that sucker. And you'd normally haul 6,000 pounds in a B-24, or eight at the most. And I know I made one trip down there and didn't -- you just go out and load that thing up. Sometimes you'll pull the prop cover in case some authority came by and have a excuse for not being -- flying. I hate to confess to these dastardly acts, but I like to see those people eat about two days or three days of food. And you do this always, they knew people were doing this. You didn't broadcast it, but you would bring back the Australian beer on kind of a wooden crate, light wooden crate, and it was in quarts. And it was 18%. And that's certainly not three percent, like here. So what you do, you'd leave two of these lights wooden crates with those quart deals on the group

commander's porch of his dwelling. You'd make it a point to have a dump truck unload that, take it over there. And now that I've put myself up for a court martial, I'd better go on. Then, I mentioned this the other day. Every once in a while you'd get a request to haul some guy with some rank somewhere, either to another base or to another island, this, that or the other. Now from Owi, when we made that mission, that was the thing that was unusual about it was number of hours it was going to take to do it, because I took about 30 more minutes than some of the others, because I wanted to check the airplane over, it was pretty well peppered up. And I stopped at a little old town, and what was a Celebes Inn, now it's been changed, the name of the town. And they stayed all night, sent a message in that where we were, and the message didn't go through, so they had us missing for 24 hours, and put up some search lights until they knew we'd be out of gas. But it turned out all right. And now we're getting pretty close to the Philippines, as far as being -- ladies, they're still -- the Japs are trying to take it back, and all that.

MZ: Well let me ask you something --

MFS: And Owi was a nice little -- and I might mention it, I'm bragging, I was leading that group to that refinery.

MZ: Are you stationed at Owi when you go on the raid?

MFS: Yeah. And I didn't think they'd let me lead it. I was a First Lieutenant. But I'd been leading for quite a while. And I got out there, and guess what happened at takeoff, 2:30 in the morning.

MZ: What?

MFS: Number two engine would not pull more than 36 inches, and you're supposed to be able to pull 54 inches. Well, I knew that if I could get that thing -- and it was a good runway, lengthy runway -- I knew if I could get it in the air at 36, you could cruise on the 36 inches, and you could -- but you would like that welcome 54 inches, but didn't have a bit of trouble with that thing, got it off the ground, and then cruised to the rendezvous point. They all cruised, all that group cruised to the rendezvous point. Then they got in pattern bombing and smothered that thing.

MZ: The oil fields, you mean?

MFS: The refinery.

MZ: The refinery?

MFS: Yeah.

MZ: You said, you said --

MFS: It had been bombed the day before. And 13th Air Force was in on it the day before, and I think some guy, they used a Norden sight. And he may have been a little higher, I don't know. But I don't think according to the -- but you can hear rumors on things, and he was from the 13th, and he lost a -- anyway, Sullivan and Stewart didn't use a Norden sight. I made lefts on the 45-second bomb run on that thing, and that's a lot better than done more than a minute. So --

MZ: How high were you during the bomb run?

MFS: Thirteen thousand five hundred feet, and I had another three altitudes picked in case it got too thick at that certain altitude. And Sullivan, the bombardier, I was flying the PDI and he knew that if necessary to evade the little bit of ack-ack. They didn't even brief us on the ack-ack. They had a lot of it. And he knew that I'd tumble his gyro, if I had to, I'd tumble a gyro. And he'd fix up three or four more heading changes.

MZ: Right.

MFS: Oh, he was good. I mean, he was good. We was using about the same thing as we would on a B-24 -- I mean on a B-25, same -- and we didn't get the B-24, I guess, was about twenty-five thousand feet. I've had them to twenty-four

thousand in the mountains. But so that deal going back, as I said, I just stayed overnight in another place. But they spent -- we had a -- I'll go ahead and talk about it.

MZ: Well, let me ask, why was it so important to bomb these refineries?

MFS: Pardon me?

MZ: Why was it so important to bomb the refineries at Balikpapan?

MFS: The amount of fuel that they were furnishing their war effort. I think my daughter did a little research on it, and it was productive. That sucker was productive. And they had it pretty well protected; they had fighter cover. And the fighters were equipped to drop phosphorus bombs, and if you take a whole group of airplanes flying over and dropping bombs, if you can get higher than them and you drop those phosphorus, and you hit some of those airplanes, that's pretty -- right to the wing and fuel tanks.

MZ: Wow. Never heard of that before.

MFS: We lost one, B-fighter, we lost him. I think it could have been a dead pilot in the Jap airplane, or it could have been one of these -- what do you call them?

MZ: Kamikaze?

MFS: Yeah, you know the ones that deliberately, suicide, what have you. But I had a guy in -- no Stewart, Rupel. Captain. And he was a pretty good gunner. And they shot the glass out of his turret, but his hair started blowing again and that saved a navigator from having to go relieve him.

MZ: Because his hair was blowing? I don't understand...

MFS: Well, that turret is enclosed, enclosed the gunner in glass. Well, that's getting pretty close to the gunner, they shot the glass, and his head was close enough to the glass, his hair was long enough that it was blowing. But I didn't see it blowing right off. I could see it from the, you know, palace location.

MZ: So you could tell that he was alive, then?

MFS: Huh?

MZ: So you could tell that he was alive?

MFS: Oh, yeah. Yeah. And then the navigator, doesn't want to kill the navigator. Put him out there, replacing that, because the navigator is pretty important. But what happened, I just wrote it up in awards, damage to the vertical stabilizer, damage to the bomb bay, shot the glass out of the nose turret. And spent ack-ack and peppered it, and he's getting little air holes. They had enough ack-

ack, doing a real fine job. Then the engineer, flight engineer come up, and he says, "We're losing gas," and he says -- and he had a little catwalk going down to there. He had already started on it. He says, "We're going to have to get gas out of one of our bomb bay tanks," because we had added more gas and less bombs to make that trip. And he said, "What do I do?" I says, "You can't do anything. We can't make our next fueling point unless you get the gas out of that tank." So he had quite a bit of gas trickling through that stinking airplane, but he either changed a line to the bomb bay tank to another bomb bay tank, or he changed our fire, the one that shot up the bomb bay. And actually, the only recovery method we had was a submarine that was in that area. And boy, that big -- usually you had at least an airplane picking you up, you know, a Navy. So we got back to a refueling point, and I started playing with that engine again after I got it on the ground, and it still -- 36, that was it. And of course, we weren't loaded then. And here I was running up the engine, running up the engine, and there's a couple of P-38s taxiing behind me, and here come a jeep. Jeep comes out there and pulls into the wing, and I looked at him, the guy. He's got a quart in his hand, and he's Hutchinson

from Peterson Field, Colorado. They've got him over there, he's out there telling me all for creating a tailwind for the P-38.

MZ: Now, this is your friend from back --

MFS: Pardon me?

MZ: This is your friend from back in the States, right?

MFS: Yeah. We didn't know each other that well, and it had been years, it had been years since I had been at Peterson Field. But he married some General's daughter, I think.

MZ: Oh, really?

MFS: Yes, this Hutchinson. And he had a -- we lost a couple P-38s one day, and I got sucked in, just going out there and looking at them. And he -- then he demonstrated a B-25. You know, he didn't do much, B-25 and a P-38 -- P-38's got different props, props run away on them. It's a little tricky. The -- well, let's see where we went from Owi. Oh, yeah, we made a mistake. Now Owi was an island, strictly an island. We had tents. And Biak was right across the little inlet from it. And you got into guilder country, then. You know, the Dutch money? You get in a poker game, you're playing with pounds, guilders, dollars.

MZ: Yeah, oh, OK.

MFS: All that sort of thing. But now, we went to Palau Islands, of all places, P-A-L-U-A [sic]. It's about 600 miles east of Manila, out there in the ocean. And you had on one of the islands, there's these little chain islands, one of them at that time supposedly had twenty thousand Japanese on it. But we still went ahead and made that run out there. And we, 7th Air Force out of Hawaii, they came out there, and we used some of their trucks and what have you. But anyway, you still had some Japs on the island that we bivouacked on. And of course, Roberts -- Robinson, our red-headed commander, you know, Red Robinson, he was still alive, but he got killed on the strip back in the Philippines later.

MZ: Right. Right.

MFS: But I flew him to bomber command once from there, and I took a B-24 copilot and put him in that. I flew the fat cat B-25 we kept.

MZ: Oh, but that was back on Dobo-dura, isn't it?

MFS: Huh?

MZ: That's back on Dobo-dura, isn't it?

MFS: Well anyway, I flew to Leyte Gulf, where the bomber command was. And then we went back to Palau, flying that 450 or 500 whatever, it's around there. And I had a worried

copilot. He was a B-24 pilot, and I put him on -- Williams is his name -- I put him in the right seat of that B-25, and had a throttle linkage break on the B-25, and it [retarded?] the left engine. We only had one engine for the last 400 miles. And he was a little -- but that old 25, it just kept clucking, you know? We just had to land with the left engine down back there.

MZ: You're flying what, again?

MFS: Huh?

MZ: What plane were you flying again?

MFS: B-25.

MZ: And that's still --

MFS: Well, I had been flying the B-24s, but I was just hauling two or three men from there to a place -- to the field in the Philippines, Leyte Gulf.

MZ: Now, the B-25, that is two engines, right?

MFS: Pardon me?

MZ: The B-25 has two engines?

MFS: Oh, yeah.

MZ: And did you say one of them went out?

MFS: Oh, yeah. In it the linkage broke, and it's spring-loaded, and it retarded it. It got it down to about -- I went ahead and feathered the engine. You can feather the engine

and get less, as you know. And let's see, it was pulling. It will still pulling about seven, ten inches. But that wasn't -- hey, enough to -- you feather it and you've got more than the other engine. Oh, it did a good job on it. In fact, the last B-25 I flew was up here at Pampa. And I went ahead and feathered the engine, because the oil pressure gauge went bad, and didn't know whether the engine was losing oil or not, or using.

MZ: Well, that's pretty -- what's the word I'm looking for -- isn't that kind of dangerous, you just flying on one engine?

MFS: Well, yeah. Look, there's a guy demonstrated to me, like when I first went -- come back from the States, I ended up being -- I picked Pampa. I picked Pampa rather than going up Northeast and picking a B-29. I should have picked the B-29s, really. But I wanted to get back to my old, good old B-25s for a while. And then there's a guy that demonstrated a takeoff to me, just as if I'd never seen a B-25. And that's a habit. And he took off for no reason, like a Doolittle takeoff; he wanted to make it like -- you remember Doolittle? Flying them off a carrier? Well anyway, he took off with this thing, and it wasn't equipped for combat, it's just I was using it to try to teach some

Southern pilots instrument flying. But he got up there about two thousand, three thousand feet, and I says, "Well, that's a good takeoff." But I says, "Can I have it for just a minute?" So I put the gear down and put the little flaps down, and then I've got it around -- not a lot of power, but enough power. And then enough power to climb a little bit. Then I jerked the throttles back, and that thing -- (laughs) it's going to go. It's going to roll. And if you -- if that engine conks when you're pulling that nice, short takeoff, it's going to go in. That wing's going to --

MZ: And you would --

MFS: Well, you got the gear down, you got the flaps down and those B-25s, they were sensitive to trim, the rotor trim on them. I think I saw an old boy one time, or at least he was trying to tell me that he peeled the nose wheel door off of one on takeoff, you know, they're still down. The nose wheel door's still down. And what he did was, reached down and twirled that down the floor, twirled that trim tab --

MZ: The trim tab?

MFS: And it just (inaudible) that thing. It didn't roll it. But it come pretty close. Then I'll tell you this, I

followed him down to Dobodura, I was just down there to pick somebody up, that was way -- been over there a long time. But here come a guy, wasn't even anyone in a tower there, then. Here come a guy with a B-25, and I was in takeoff position, had checked the mags and was ready to go. He didn't stop and check his mags or anything, but he come zooming around and got out on the runway, he kept going. But when he made that turn to go out on the runway, he pulled off his shirt and threw it behind him, behind his seat. And I think there's control pulleys going to the rudder. And his nice, little khaki shirt could be in that pulley bracket holding the cable. That's just what I think happened. Either that or he was a Russian, and went nuts and did a barrel roll. Now some of those Russians had been known to do a barrel roll in B-25s. And that thing, he did a good barrel roll. But he lost it, went out in the jungle off to the side and hit, and I just waited about five minutes. I was wondering, I says, "There couldn't be an air current that would take a B-25 and barrel roll it, I don't think." So, and that thing was burning all over. I don't see -- when I took off, went over it, and no way anybody surviving on that thing. But now, I try to --

MZ: Well, I've got a question. The -- just going back a little bit to when you were bombing the oil refineries, now that would be missions like, what, 17, almost 18 hours long?

MFS: Yeah.

MZ: Why did it take so long?

MFS: It was a long flight. It was a long flight. And you didn't fly formation or things, see, we rendezvoused, rendezvoused and circled an hour from the target. And it is just a long -- well, the reason it took about 30 minutes longer for me is, I stopped and landed at another field.

MZ: Oh, yeah?

MFS: And I did it to look the airplane over. You know, the stabilizer and fuel?

MZ: Yeah?

MFS: So mine was about 30 minutes longer than the other guy.

MZ: So everything was all right with your plane, then?

MFS: Hmm?

MZ: Everything was OK with your plane?

MFS: No. No, no. The thing had been shot up, and a vertical stabilizer --

MZ: Oh, this is after the bombing.

MFS: Yeah, this was after the bombing. I was trying to make it back to the nearest fuel station. And I had to either

align from a bomb bay tank, shot out, or it had to pump itself.

MZ: Right.

MFS: And if the [old boy?] changed the pump, that is quite more of an accomplishment than just changing a line. But there's enough, in either one, there's enough to have a little stream of gasoline --

MZ: Yeah, that could be dangerous.

MFS: -- running down the deal. But now in the -- Palau, I got smart and moved that B-20 second to a place near Leyte Gulf, almost -- you had a -- we had a mission there, and add some thatched huts in a little old village. And a 6,000-foot strip. That's a little short. So if I remember, I think we didn't cut the load down though, we went ahead. But it was being supported by the CBs. They were working on taxi ways and a little bit on runways, and had one little control tower. And I don't know whether they had an individual in the control tower or not, but the weather just changed on them. The visibility wasn't too hot. And I imagine Hume was making an instrument takeoff, directional gyro, line her up and keep your eye on that directional gyro, and let her roar. And he had some object of some kind. And Hume, I was in a lead airplane on the

next squadron, 408. And he, when he got that left wing, that thing circled that field. He still had the throttle going, trying to get it off the ground. And I think his gas went first, I think the gas went. I don't know about the bombs.

MZ: So he crashed?

MFS: Huh?

MZ: Did he crash?

MFS: Oh man, he killed the whole crew, you know, as far as that goes.

MZ: Oh, wow.

MFS: He did. And Hume had been, I think, a military pilot before, and then he got out of the service and he had flown commercially for quite a while. He'd flown some, I'm sure, jets, instead of the prop B-24. Now we commuted back and forth from that place, that little field, to Palau for a while. And so I lost the engine on that 25, I mean -- yeah, on the 25.

MZ: Is that where you ended up -- you told me at one point that you were in an island for, like, a week or something, waiting for parts for your plane? Is that where that happens?

MFS: Do what?

MZ: You told me at one point you and your crew were stranded for a little while, because you needed parts for your plane, is that where that happened?

MFS: Oh yeah, yeah. It's for a landing gear uplock assembly. And if I get in to telling you about that trip all the way from Dakota to Australia, why I'll mention that -- I'll mention it like this, the engineer in the B-25 discovered that we were low on hydraulic fluid. And I says, "We'll get some hydraulic fluid when we land down here at Penrhyn Atoll, add it, and go on." He says, "Ah," he says, "I wouldn't do that. I would stay there and order an uplock assembly." Somebody had, according to him, put the wrong fluid in it.

MZ: Oh, yeah?

MFS: And it damaged the uplock assembly. So we stayed there on that Penrhyn Atoll quite a while, and we waited to go back to States to get that part. And then there was an old Colonel there, and he had a house there, and there were only about five personnel other than that -- oh well, no, they had a black crew that maintained something there. And they had a lagoon and all that. And the Colonel, there was a native Hawaiian, actually, the command of the Air Force there. And this Colonel was commanding the blacks. And

they had their own little leper island, and the whole works. But when we got uplock assembly in, and pumped it up by hand, you know, retracted the gear, get it down, everything, the Colonel come down and he says, "When you leave," he says, I had already tested the airplane and flown it, he says, "When you leave, give us a couple good buzz jobs." And I didn't tell the crew -- I think I might have told you that.

MZ: Yeah, you mentioned that.

MFS: I didn't mention it. And so we did, we gave him crew.

Then we went to Samar, where the bare-breasted and evening gowns I mentioned.

MZ: Right.

MFS: Then we went to Fiji, I'm pretty sure. And who's that hot-shot golfer from Fiji?

MZ: Oh, Greg -- oh, I don't know.

MFS: Yeah, anyway...

MZ: But actually, I wanted to know a little bit more about when it was you switched from B-25s to B-24s?

MFS: Why did you switch?

MZ: Yeah.

MFS: Yeah, you could haul more bombs.

MZ: When did that happen?

MFS: It happened -- let me -- oh, it happened in the spring of '44. Forty-four. And we -- I'm glad you asked that question. And then we took those B-25s all from Nadzab, you know, north of Lae?

MZ: Right.

MFS: We took them from there to -- what's that big town on -- you know, when you come from Australia? It starts with a P.

MZ: Port Moresby? Is it Port Moresby?

MFS: Well anyway, the one that had all the little strips. We took those B-25s and we took them down there and put them on those strips for the other B-25s to use. And I know I didn't have a copilot on that trip, about 25 down. And a guy named Snip, which had checked me out in a B-24. He had two and a half hours when he flew that B-24, and he had two and a half hours when he turned me loose with it. So there's that much -- hey, similarity between a B-25 and a B-24, with that nose gear. And a B-24 is a pretty good formation airplane. And anyway, this engineer on that B-25, he flew the copilot seat. And we got in the weather. And I was flying formation on old Snip in the weather. We were sucked in, but and he come out, and I could see the runway in front of him. And I was flying his left wing,

and this guy in the right seat was sweating. (laughs) He was -- so we did. We landed in formation, and it had been raining. Well, like I said, weather. And I hit my brakes, and it was on a blacktop runway, and the brakes didn't do much. Didn't do much.

MZ: Oh?

MFS: And here we go, gradually approaching old Snip, because we landed in formation. And I had about 20 feet left, when -- and only way to do it would be to kick it out. I'd have kicked it out, (inaudible).

MZ: Yeah. So what happened? Did the --

MFS: Nothing. Nothing in that case, except that, yeah, I was nervous for a few days.

MZ: I can see why.

MFS: Now let me see if I can tell you something about no more flying around the Philippines. We hit Taiwan from that --

MZ: From the Philippines?

MFS: -- and there was a guy here, a CB, I don't know whether he's still here or not, that was working there on our strip. And I was trying to -- the name of the island was, I don't know -- isn't that something? I lived on that thing for a while.

MZ: Was that Angaur? Does that sound familiar?

MFS: Angaur was Palau, I think, on Palau. You know, that bunch of islands...

MZ: That island chain?

MFS: Babelthuap was one of them. Babelthuap was the one that was supposed to have 20,000 Japs on it. And then we had -- they were coral runways. Pretty good runways.

MZ: Did you bomb Babelthuap?

MFS: No, we didn't bomb them. Just hey, they were cut off from that larger island. And they've got Avon sales people there now. (laughter) I was reading that, Avon. Now let me -- oh, there's one deal I could tell you, yet you may tell me to shut up and get on something that's worthwhile. [Mo Reuther?] from Michigan, he and I were good friends. He was a deputy commander for a while. And old Mo and I, we got -- I was operations officer then. And I got to mission off in my old jeep, the top shredded and everything else. We decided we'd -- there was a rumor a civilian plane had crashed across from our little lake inland from our runway, or our field. And supposedly the Filipinos had built a little memorial to the place. And we said, well, we'll go take a look. And I crawled into that old shredded jeep and he got in there with me, and we went by the ordinance and got two rifles and had our trusty .45s in

these holsters, and all that. And I had had mine silver plated when I first got it down in Sydney, and it ruined it as a combat weapon. I wore a black sock on that holster.

MZ: Oh, so it wouldn't reflect the sun?

MFS: Yeah. But it was the best .45 in the squad -- in the outfit. Those .45s, if you get a good one, you'd better keep it, because you could plink, like .22, you know how you can plink with a .22?

MZ: Yeah.

MFS: You could do it with that .45. And I had guys trying to buy it, but I couldn't sell it. But anyway, we went about as far as I'd dare go with the gas I had in that jeep, and we run into a young couple with a water buffalo pulling the cart. So we parked that old jeep, and knew we could take the cart and come back and get enough gas anyway. They took us down to a little sand pan they had on the lake. And then you could see in the distance across the lake, little palm constructed village. So let's put the sail up, and here we go to them. And the closer we got, the more people would gather, and about 25 gathered. And there was a lady, you could see her in a blue -- the dress was -- and she had sling pumps on, as we got close to her. She really

decked out. And you see kids running around these shacks with iguanas on leashes.

MZ: Oh, boy!

MFS: And I guess they were preserving them as far as eating and playing, play with them, and then eat them. And there was about 22 [guerrillas?], they were guerrillas. And this lady was the girlfriend of the leader. He had (inaudible) in English, but you'd have to punctuate his talk, you know, to get a --

MZ: Yeah.

MFS: And old Mo was standing by me, and he had a Parker pen in his pocket. And she wanted that Parker pen! And he just took it off, went over, and her V, he pinned that. I said, well, here's where we get shot, you know, when he pinned it in that particular spot.

MZ: Oh, oh, in the --

MFS: But anyway, it was (inaudible). Then they had to come like a day room that you see around some of these little bases. And it was a palm deal, and they all went in it, and they still was talking. And finally, somebody asked old Mo where he was from. And he says, "Flint, Michigan." And there was a young man laying on kind of a cot over in the corner. And he hadn't been saying anything. And that

sucker spoke up in perfect English, and he says, "Is such-and-such hotel still in Flint?" He says, "I worked in that thing for three years." And he was a native, supposedly. He had dog tags. But he didn't make that death march, you know, out of Corregidor?

MZ: Right. Right.

MFS: He went back home. I mean, he wanted to get back -- he was a native, and he'd become a member of the military, and --

MZ: Was he [for real?]?

MFS: -- I guess. Anyway, I don't know. We didn't quiz him, didn't quiz him, but old Mo worked in a mint, I think, somewhere in Flint. And we took him out to -- we may have taken a spy out, we don't -- well, he had those dog tags, and there was something else that we had of his. And he went out with us. We took him out, turned him over to the group, and I never knew what happened to him. But that, I think, was kind of interesting, or I wouldn't have taken your time.

MZ: No no. No, it is.

MFS: And he was still pretty young. And old Mo was 38 years old. And I was a -- I think I was still about 19.

MZ: Wow, he was 38, huh? That was kind of older to be a pilot then, right?

MFS: Pardon?

MZ: That was, I guess, considered pretty old to be a pilot then, right?

MFS: Well, old Mo, he was a sharp old boy, not too bad. And old [Range?], that Georgia boy I told you, ended up with a B-25?

MZ: Yeah.

MFS: He ended up (inaudible) in B-24s.

MZ: Flying B-24s?

MFS: Yeah. And old Sullivan, he ended up a squadron bombardier, and was a pretty good crew. And Jacoby, if he'd stay away from the bottle and stealing jeeps, he'd have been all right.

MZ: Who was the rest of your crew?

MFS: Pardon?

MZ: You mentioned Jacoby and Sullivan. Who else was part of your crew that you remember?

MFS: Well, I didn't go to Cape Cod to get him. You know, he was in the service.

MZ: Oh yeah, but no, my question was, what other crew members do you remember?

MFS: Oh yeah, I remember Range, the copilot. I remember Sullivan, John Sullivan, the bombardier. I remember

Riccio, the radio operator. I remember Jacoby, the gunner that was in the guard house.

MZ: Oh, I remember you said you went to go get him out of the guard house.

MFS: Yeah, that's right.

MZ: Because he was such a good gunner?

MFS: Yeah. Old Riccio was his buddy, you know, and I guess they knew each other when they were back in Brooklyn. I said, "I know where there's a good gunner." And now when we got down to Savannah and picked up those spare parts I mentioned the other day, and they gave us some instructions to go to McClellan and maintain the radio of silence, now that course was almost on Ashburn, Georgia, where old Range lived. And I says, "Do you want to go by there?" And he looked at me like, "You're going nuts," because he had heard him say no radios, you know. So we went by, and I forget who it was that was going to throw a wrench out with a note on it in the school yard. But I said, "No, we don't throw wrenches in school yards, throw a towel. Tie a note on a towel and I'll pick out that -- where they do the running and what have you, and I'll go down, you can throw the towel out the west window.

MZ: Now where was this, again?

MFS: Athens, Georgia. Athens, Georgia.

MZ: This is --

MFS: And old Range's dad owned a drugstore there. Now here's this thing, that I did it knowing that I might break some glass. But we went out, you know, that's getting down pretty low down the school yard, but I went out and went down below some trees, and they wrote us a letter after we got overseas. And they thought we had gone in, you know, crashed that thing behind the trees. But we come in and I raised the right wing over the steeple of the church. But before I got to the church, I changed the prop pitch. And a B-25 has got pretty good sound. And I increased the prop pitch a little bit, and the vibration could have cracked some plate glass windows. That was stupid.

MZ: Wow. Now this was all before you go overseas, right?

MFS: Pardon me?

MZ: This was all before you go overseas?

MFS: Oh yeah. Yeah, I was going across, hey, going across the country to get the airplane strip to where it -- and work on it and get it over there.

MZ: Just real quick, when -- what else do you bomb other than the refinery? What other things would you bomb, or what other missions would you go on? Because, I mean, you have

70 missions. That's a lot. So what other things would you do?

MFS: Yeah. Well, the 70 missions, if you're looking close enough, the B-25s, they're shorter times, total time, you know, this time is -- and the B-24s, naturally, were longer missions. And I say longer, but some of them were pretty short. There wasn't a -- a B-24 was another big airplane, as it appears to be. Oh well, it is too, it's, say, faster than that B-17. And it's -- you knew you had that B-24 loaded correctly when you, like, going after that contraband food, you know, down there, and the beer. If you load that thing and the nose wheel goes up in the air and tail skid hit the ground, if 18 inches of mercury will get that nose wheel on the ground, hey, you're safe to fly, weight and balance. And eight thousand pounds of bombs. And that's what had happened. The nose wheel would hit the ground -- no, no, the nose wheel would come up and that tail skid would hit the ground.

MZ: Right.

MFS: And let's see, I was trying to think of some -- oh well, I told you about needing a little brush at the end of the runway at Rockport. And I told you about, oh, Wheatley and

I renting an apartment and living on Bondi and renting these little British touring cars.

MZ: Oh, but what I wanted to ask you is, what other missions did you go on? I know that Balikpapan was a bombing mission of the refineries. And I know you mentioned you did some -- you said, "armed reconnaissance?"

MFS: Do what?

MZ: You went on a -- you mentioned that you had gone on an armed reconnaissance mission. I was just curious; what other missions did you go on? I mean, what did you do?

MFS: OK. Well, I've dropped frag bombs and little parachute bombs. And I had a torn (inaudible) below in the center section of a B-24.

MZ: Oh?

MFS: It had gotten a couple, three little holes between number two engine and the fuselage. The thing that was spreading the little cluster, I think, was probably a ten-gauge shell, shotgun shell. I never did inspect it that close. Another thing that we did, and Snip, he didn't make it over. He didn't make it overseas. I'll tell you his story. I think he used to fly a river in New Guinea, small river, between -- I think he was a good pilot. Good pilot, about a six foot two man. And anyway, we used to fly some

bombs that were a little risky with a B-24. And we'd fly them a pretty good distance. And some people would forget what they were hauling and just dump 'em. You know, just [jerk them?] and dump them. And when they dump them, they stand a chance of blowing things up, whereas they did use the low transport to transport the bombs, this, that and the other. That didn't happen too often. But Snip and I, we hauled two loads of bombs, all the way from Dobodura, you know, way down on up to near Owi, up near Biak, which is, that's the beginning.

MZ: Yeah.

MFS: And he stopped to gas up, and I didn't stop to gas up. And we just landed them, got rid of the load, and I had a navigator that I'd trust with just about anything. And we had two mountain ranges to go between. And I think that little stream that I heard somebody saying that Snip flew the stream one time. But anyway, I went ahead and my bombardier -- not bombardier, navigator -- give me a heading. He gave me a heading and I went between them, and then broke out of the weather on the other side, and landed fairly nearly in the afternoon. And I got to kind of sweating him, because later in the evening, no Snip. No Snip. So we started searching. We searched for three days

for Snip, didn't find him. And then I had a dream of all things. I met him in our squadron area in this dream. And he looked at me and he says, "Stewart, I thought you would know where I was." And I went to the Operation Tents, looked at all the maps, trying to see a familiar name of some little old place. But I never could see anything from there. And Charlie, and what was his last name? He and I flew together quite a bit, and he was Snip's copilot. And Charlie, he retired from Eastern Airlines here not too long -- well, last year, I think. And you know what he was going to do? He's manning a search party, now this has been 50-some years later. He was manning a search party to go back to New Guinea to try to find the wreckage of that airplane.

MZ: Really? And what happened?

MFS: Yeah, and I'm trying to think of his last name. But his mother was a friend of the original owner of the Eastern Airlines. And who was the Eastern -- top ace in World War I, wasn't it? Wasn't that who owned that? (knock)

MZ: Oh, Eastern? Oh, I don't know. Hello. So he went back to try to find Snip's plane?

MFS: Pardon me?

MZ: So he went back and tried to find Snip's plane?

MFS: No, I didn't go back.

MZ: No, no, no, Charlie did?

MFS: And maybe he didn't go back. And I won't know that they ever found Rockefeller's kid, you know, on Northern --

MZ: Yeah, yeah. But --

MFS: And there was about three guys, I think, in there.

MZ: What was Snip's real name?

MFS: Huh?

MZ: Do you remember what Snip's real name was?

MFS: Charlie [Zeweiler?]?

MZ: Oh no, Snip. What was his real name?

MFS: That was his last name.

MZ: Oh, what was it?

MFS: Snip. Yeah.

MZ: Oh, really? That's the last name?

MFS: Yeah, I'm quite sure it was. Let me, hey, let me run it by a couple times. Snip. He was flying a B-25 with a red-headed woman's head on it.

MZ: That was what he had painted on his plane?

MFS: Yeah. See, he was flying a B-24 when he, hey, when he was lost. He wasn't flying a B-25. We was flying loads. And I'll tell you one about Sullivan, it's worth listening to, I think. Sometimes bombs would hang in the bomb bay of a

B-25. You tried dropping them, and they'd still be in there. And you're silly if you tried to land with one hung up in a bomb bay, because it can come --

MZ: Yeah, fall out in your --

MFS: So old Sullivan knew that. He knew his business. And he didn't have the hole on top of a B-25, pretty small. But he was slim. Old Sullivan was slim. We used to horse around with each other, I broke his finger once. But anyway, he got a rope. They had a rope in the airplane, tied a rope around him. He went down through that hole into the bomb bay with the doors open and kicked out that bomb that hung up. And he should have got some pretty good award for doing that. Then later on, a guy named Pascal, I wouldn't remember his name except he made a mistake. We come landing behind him one time from a mission in a B-25, and he's in a B-25. And he had one hang up, and you know what he did? The minute the wheels hit the ground, that bomb came down through the bomb bay doors and rolled along that metal runway. We landed right behind him. And here comes an MP with a jeep and throws a chain around that bomb and starts dragging it, of all things.

MZ: Oh, OK, oh!

MFS: And the doggone B-25 bomb is armed. You see, you can't get -- in a B-24, you can arm your bombs after you had them in the racks. But on a B-25, a little prop, you know, when it drops through the bomb bay doors, it'll spin.

MZ: Oh, yeah. I know what you mean.

MFS: Oh, wait a minute. Maybe they're armed all the time. They may be. I know the B-24, you didn't worry too much about arming any of your bombs. But you did on the B-25.

MZ: So what happened?

MFS: Did it go off?

MFS: I was trying to think of something else connected with the terrain, and you might want to know when I was discharged or something.

MZ: Well, but what happened with that bomb that fell out of -- it fell out, did it go off?

MFS: Oh, it didn't blow. It didn't blow. And the MP should have been glad it didn't. We had him pull on it with a chain behind a jeep. But I'll see if I can think of something in the Philippines, or something connected with your Pacific, you know?

MZ: Well, let me ask you this. What was the weather like?

MFS: Huh

MZ: What was the weather like?

MFS: Oh, well, let's see. Now I think I can -- I've got one here that's really a doozy, but I'm not -- I can't tell it is. You'd get too many people. How was the weather? No, you -- sometimes if the weather was cantankerous over there. And you didn't have navigational aids to handle the thing. Your best bet if you've got bad weather was to get out there, get down over the water and start hunting for the shoreline. That'll work. We had -- the weather, the weather. We lost a kid, just made Captain. And I think he's looking for the shoreline. But some guy was flying with him, and I think maybe got a little lower than he should have got. But --

MZ: Yeah? Did they crash?

MFS: Now, there's one guy, I'll mention him, his name was Whitehead, I'm quite sure. Whitehead. At Luke Field, he was the base commander when I got out there. You know, that was an advanced AT6 school. And there's a question in there somewhere -- where were you when you heard the war was over?

MZ: Oh, well that's a little outdated there.

MFS: I was over Texas in a T6, flying instruments.

MZ: Really?

MFS: And any of them, when I got over here -- I named that little old town two or three times, where I was stationed. And I went down to Bryan. Yeah, Bryan's the one that's by A & M?

MZ: Yes.

MFS: And I flew 60 hours instruments down there, trying to get better, you know, on the instruments. And when the war was declared over, we went to Hous-- I believe I went to Houston, and I think I went to the nearest -- anyway, I -- people were passing out, you may remember, passing out drinks on the street and everything else.

MZ: Really?

MFS: I didn't have any of the drinks, but I had a little bit in the back of that old '41 Ford.

MZ: This was Houston, you said?

MFS: Huh?

MZ: This was in Houston, you said?

MFS: Yeah. And there's another deal I could tell you, and it would cause a lot of mothers and men to -- those Aussies, they'd furnish you lumber under certain conditions.

MZ: Oh, yeah?

MFS: If they'd get a little hooch. A little hooch. And by the way, Camels, you remember, they were 50 cents a carton?

MZ: I've heard of that, yeah.

MFS: That's a quart of hooch down in Sydney. In Sydney. And weather, weather, weather.

MZ: So it could get pretty bad --

MFS: Oh. I got lost in the US one time, trying to teach Sullivan how to navigate. Picked up a navigator that was an instructor, put him in a B-25, and we have [liaison set?] with a fish on the end, electric, if you got lost. And --

MZ: Oh, is that like that antenna-looking thing?

MFS: Yeah, you could be pulling the fish, looked like a fish, behind you, if you was going to use that electrical set. And I've called it a liaison set. But anyway, Sullivan, they -- I got in bad weather and got rough, you know, and broke the line. Broke the antenna going to the -- and then, the instructor got lost. We were somewhere in Louisiana. And we should have been back over to Columbia, South Carolina. So I got back to the radio compass, and I got a couple of commercial stations just to get a gamble on them. But then, all of a sudden I saw some flashes. And you had beacons along routes, and I forget what they called the routes. But I ended up in a field in Georgia, and then I says, "Boys, put on your chutes." And I was flying a B-

25 that didn't have the auxiliaries filled when we left.

But we made it all right. We got back to Columbia.

MZ: Now, this was before you go overseas?

MFS: Oh, yeah, this was back during the training bit, the training bit.

MZ: Well --

MFS: Look, there's got to be some -- I've been in some rough weather.

MZ: What about the food? What did you think about the food in the Army?

MFS: Adequate.

MZ: Adequate?

MFS: Yeah. I was -- let's see, what -- let me see this just a second. There was something I was going to -- oh, yeah. Something about advanced training.

MZ: Oh, we already covered that last time, the advanced training.

MFS: Did we?

MZ: Yeah.

MFS: Did we mention -- let's see. How long did your specialized training last?

MZ: Oh, yeah, yeah, we covered all that, that part.

MFS: It was from February 8th, February 8th of 1942 to 27th of August, 1942. It was the extent of the training. That's one I just wanted to just mention. And see, here --

MZ: OK. You know, my chip is actually almost out of time, so I guess we will have to get together one more time to finish up.

(break in audio)

MZ: This is Mike Zambrano. I'm here with Mr. Major Franklin Stewart, again, Major is his first name. And this is the third part of the interview, we're going to be finishing it up today. I want to read a little bit from the Distinguished Flying Cross that Mr. Stewart received for bombing Balikpapan, Borneo. That was the 17, almost 18-hour mission that we talked about earlier in the interview. And I'm here with Mr. Stewart, and I'm just going to read this really quick. "First Lieutenant Major F. Stewart, Air Corps, United States Army, for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight to Balikpapan, Borneo on 14 October, 1944. Lieutenant Stewart led a formation of B-24 aircraft which took part in a history-making mass formation daylight

strike against the strongly-defendant and strategically important Japanese oil refinery base at Balikpapan. Carrying unusually heavy bomb and fuel loads, these bombers made one of the longest flights ever undertaken by B-24s in the Southwest Pacific area. Shortly before the formation came over the target, swarms of enemy fighters attacked B-24s and dropped aerial phosphorus bombs. During the bombing run, enemy antiaircraft fire broke all the glass in the nose turret of Lieutenant Stewart's plane and damaged the bomb bay and vertical stabilizer. He nevertheless continued his bombing run and dropped his bombs directly on target. During the prolonged aerial battle with enemy interceptors, the crews, which he led, destroyed two fighters and probably destroyed two others. The outstanding courage and devotion to duty displayed by Lieutenant Stewart during this flight are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Army Air Forces." And that was for his Distinguished Flying Cross. Mr. Stewart, can you add anything else about that mission? Like the paper says, it's a very long mission, history-making mission. What can you tell me about it?

MFS: The reason it was extended for approximately an hour, you know, 55 minutes I think it was there, was to check out the

damage done by the ack-ack. And we'd had an engineer and one other assistant engineer on the plane -- I'm talking about flight engineers -- that repaired the fuel leak. Well, you know, when it mentions in the award that the vertical sta-- the bomb bay was damaged?

MZ: Right?

MFS: I think it got a few slugs from a fighter, in the fuel system. And they either changed the hose to the bomb bay tank, or pump off a bomb bay tank, so that we could get a tank empty. Unfortunately, they shot one up that we hadn't used up yet.

MZ: Oh, just to add -- this is --

MFS: Anyway, these -- that was quite an accomplishment. And we stopped and we had a lot of perforated places in the airplane, and the bombardier got a little bit concerned about that. And we buzzed a little bit when we got back to the base. I told you that we sent a message when we stopped at this little place in the Celebes. And they didn't get it through, or just didn't get around to sending it. And they burned out some search lights, until they knew that we would be out of gasoline and out of fuel. And then -- I didn't tell you this, because it was asinine. I told you about seeing -- I was still checking one engine

out that was low in power, number two, and here come a jeep and a guy with a (inaudible), what we called them was "joy sticks," or something. But anyway, it was Hutchinson. He had been my commander at Peterson Field way back there when I got out of school. But anyway, people, three of four airplanes in the squadron were pretty close to me, and they knew it was shot up pretty good. And they got the idea that this Colonel had ordered me off the field, which he didn't. He just told me don't go to those P-38s. (laughs) But old Mo Reuther, you know, I mentioned Mo and I going in there and running into some guerrillas in the Philippines? Old Mo Reuther, now we were pretty close. And I was pretty young. I was 10 years younger than old Mo, he was about 30. But he made some statements when the crews went back, and they thought this Colonel Hutchinson had ordered me off the field. He said, "I'll kill" -- and I won't put the adjectives in -- but according to the people that talked to me when we got back with the crew. So I just thought I'd mention that now. He wouldn't have, of course. He had more sense than that.

MZ: Just to be clear, this is after the --

MFS: But it's (inaudible). Now I think, and I told you that old Sullivan, the bombardier that had been -- squadron

bombardier for quite some time. And the navigator had two teachers on board, which is interesting. I mean ex-teachers. I hadn't done any teaching -- well, I had, I taught a little flying, you know, that sort of thing in the service, taught a few people to fly instruments a little better, and that sort of thing. But one was a elementary teacher. Very -- he wasn't timid, but he's very reserved. And I had one that was, I call it a "platinum blonde," and I liked to take him to Sydney on leaves. He's pretty good mate to me down there. And I didn't tell you much about Sydney as far as -- but I did, I think, recall is either two or three wheels, you know, one man, take a B-24, and that's pretty expensive transportation for one man to be hauled away from the Philippines to Sydney. But -- and then I criticized old MacArthur; he may be one of your -- really, "I shall return" MacArthur, you know?

MZ: Yeah.

MFS: And he returned all right, but old Wainwright never left to return. Wainwright was left up there at Corregidor with that march to contend with, at --

MZ: Oh, before we go on, I just want to be clear that after I read the Citation, what Mr. Stewart is referring to is their landing after the bombing at Balikpapan. Just wanted

that to be clear for whoever is going to transcribe it. You know, it's funny you mentioned Corregidor, because right here on your list of flying hours, at the very end there, I see Corregidor one, two, three times. Do you recall anything about these hours, and why you flew to Corregidor?

MFS: Let's see how many hours we've got there. It was coming from Samar. Not Samar, not Samar. Maybe on the last one.

MZ: It might have been Samar, because --

MFS: Corregidor Island, Corregidor Island. Now we had people still prisoners there. I had a man come to me, had another mission down at Samar, you know that little mission I mentioned there? And he was just faded away, you know, and he didn't look too old, as far as that goes. He was one of the prisoners. And he's telling us, he says, "When you people bombed Corregidor, we'd come out and cheer." And I said, "Well, you're lucky you're being able to tell me this story, because we weren't that accurate with our bombing on Corregidor." And when it comes to accuracy on bombing, we sported quite a few Australian troops. We had a -- I think he wasn't a full General, but he had a bunch of people, a bunch of Japanese pinned up in a canyon. And he called for our support. So we went in with B-25s, and we did a pretty

good job, I guess. And he sent a message to us, oh, it was excellent, because you got within 100 yards of our lines. We didn't intend to get within 100 yards of his lines, but we didn't tell him that.

MZ: But he seemed pleased.

MFS: Yeah. And those old 25s, both airplanes were OK. They just changed us from twins to heavies, so we could haul heavy stuff.

MZ: Were the heavies harder to handle when you were flying them?

MFS: Pardon me?

MZ: Were the heavies harder to handle when you were flying them?

MFS: No, no. No. You know, you -- in the beginning, they had -- the B-24 had more little -- they lost a few of them, like any new airplane. They lose a few of them before they get them developed. And that one, I think, oh, maybe one or two of them burned. There's one thing I don't think I told you. I may have just mentioned it. The B-25, the original airplane at the B-20, that 22nd bomb group took over to the Pacific, was the B-26. And the B-26, you know, they lost a few of those in the beginning. And they

mentioned things like the widowmaker. You know, they was calling that B-26 a widowmaker for a while.

MZ: Oh, that's right.

MFS: But it had a good record, and I told you about the silver fleet, the 19th squadron of the 22nd.

MZ: (laughs) Yeah, I remember you telling me that.

MFS: We polished them out, polished them out. And tried to make it sound good. And it did. And we kept a fat cat, we had one B-26 that --

MZ: Was that polished out, too?

MFS: Pardon me?

MZ: Was that one polished out, too? The B-26 you mentioned?

MFS: When I said "fat cat?"

MZ: Yeah, when you said, "fat cat."

MFS: A "fat cat" is something you haul things in that aren't really related to combat.

MZ: Oh, OK.

MFS: You take -- strip it down. We had a B-25 also that we didn't have it loaded down with animal -- that would take -- I flew our commander a couple times, our group commander, to the briefings over in the Leyte area. And actually, you sometimes had fighter cover when you were hauling a fairly important individual. I think only one

time that I was doing that before we got to the Philippines, was two P-38s, all of a sudden that old 24, and I had a guy in the right seat that was pretty important. And only reason I was in the left seat is, he was a good pilot, good commander and all that. But he didn't -- sometimes he as far as weather, I didn't mind weather so much. But anyway, I think that's the only reason that he wasn't flying by himself, probably.

MZ: Who was it?

MFS: And just like that, that P-38 come over. I didn't know, but there was two escorting us. He didn't miss the nose guns on that stinking 24 ten feet.

MZ: Really? Just diving in front like that?

MFS: Coming from the [Gulf?]. And I looked -- then he got on the right wing, and I counted -- I think his name would have been above these, and I didn't bother to read his name. He's that close, he come in close.

MZ: That is close.

MFS: But 21 Jap symbols. So he's pretty hot-shot.

MZ: Wow, I wonder who he was.

MFS: He was pretty competent. And the other -- then to show off for the home troops, I got the old B-24, a little over 300 miles on there, and a slight dive, you know. And went down

the runway, and here the two P-38s, one on each wing, showing them the ground troops. In the (inaudible), put on a little show for the troops.

MZ: Who was the pilot in the right seat that was important?

MFS: Cole.

MZ: Who?

MFS: Cole. C-O-L-E, the Californian.

MZ: Was he a General? Or --

MFS: No, no, no, he wasn't. He just -- these individuals, Cole, I'm not sure. But Cole at one time, I think it as Cole brothers. But I don't think that he was -- he could have been one of those. But I'm not going to go on record as saying he was.

MZ: Was he civilian?

MFS: Because he just got through flying a new pursuit plane before he got in that right seat. There was a P-47, and here he was. I think somebody asked him, "How do you feel after flying that P-47?" And I don't know whether that was the guy that I helped tail on on a midget Mustang one time, or whether it was Cole saying I'm panic-stricken. By "panic-stricken," he meant that thing had a torque -- good airplane, good airplane. One, I guess, if you ever -- I've heard him say, "If you ever dump [stick?] on that B-47,"

and I had a cousin, first cousin that finally got in the war late, but he was flying that sucker in Europe. I think he got three airplanes, so he wasn't an ace. He didn't get enough to be an ace.

MZ: Do you remember what Cole's first name was?

MFS: No, I don't.

MZ: Was he civilian or military?

MFS: No, he was military.

MZ: OK.

MFS: He was military. By the way, oh, you know that Lindbergh was over there for a while.

MZ: Yeah, yeah, I do.

MFS: Yeah, Lindbergh was over there for a while. And these two P-38s could have been just alerted and happened to give us a little cover, going through this section. And they had a rumor out over there one time that the Japs had captured some Mustangs, and that's kind of bad news. And supposedly, they had one B-24 flying around somewhere over there. Now, these are rumors. These are rumors. Don't quote me as saying, I saw a --

MZ: Oh no, no, no, no, I understand.

MFS: Yeah. The -- and we had air shows here in this -- Texas. I attended one over here, I forget the name of the little

town now. We had one of the fighter pilots we were on, a Jap fighter pilot, and he had his tent up. And he's been, you know, we had been fighting against him over in the Pacific. And he -- and then -- just tell me to stick with the subject, but Boyington. Do you remember the story about Boyington? Marine pilot?

MZ: Yeah.

MFS: Over in the Pacific? When we got over there, down a Dobodura, though up in my first mission, (inaudible) New Britain right above New Guinea. And that Rabaul, Rabaul had a lot of airplanes around it. But there was a Japanese fighter pilot running around up there with 12 American flags on the side of his airplane. And Boyington supposedly was out looking for him, you know, of course all of them were looking for him, if he had saw him. But I heard an old boy say Boyington was missing; he showed up missing one day. And another guy says, well, he must have found that Japanese with the 12 symbols on the side of his airplane. And I think he spent his remainder -- they didn't kill him. You know, he had forced him down. And I think he spent the remainder, they thought enough of him to keep him on the homeland of Japan as a prisoner for the rest of the war.

MZ: Yeah. He was.

MFS: I think that's what happened there.

MZ: You know, I did want to ask you a little bit about the last field, or area that you flew out of. You said earlier that Samar was the last place you were in before you were shipped home?

MFS: Yes. Yeah.

MFS: Can you --

MFS: I hitched right out of the gate at Samar.

MZ: But you flew out of there? I mean, you flew a mission out of there?

MFS: Yeah, I bummed a ride. We had a guy that was flying back and forth from bomber command to our group command with a AL-5 liaison plane. He was equipped to hold one body, you know, injured individual, or -- and some of them were built not to haul anything; they're just same air frame and everything.

MZ: Right. Because they were pretty light, right?

MFS: Yes. It had a 435 Lycoming in them. And they weren't restricted to aerobatics or anything, you could do -- if you want to try, you could do aerobatics in them.

MZ: I don't know. I've seen them. They're kind of fragile looking.

MFS: Anyway, anyway this individual volunteered. I didn't -- he was going over there. And he says, "I'll give you a ride." I says, "Fine." He skirted some rain squalls, because that thing -- he had a wood prop on it, and he was afraid it'd get damaged, maybe hail or something. And it was the first flight I ever rode in one of them. But pretty good airplane. Anyway, I told you about his turn and the half spin, the one in the water, parallel to the cliff, the Tanawan strip? I told you about that.

MZ: Yeah.

MFS: And got on the bank -- I had a B-4, where that body would have been hauled. And it threw it to the side of that, his fabric cover was on the back. And I got bruised up a little bit, because I jerked my shoulder harness and safety belt a little quick. And I got out of there a little quick, because six inches of gasoline above your head, and that thing cartwheeled. And you'd want to get out in a hurry. So it wasn't about this deep --

MZ: So your chest, about the middle of your chest?

MFS: Yeah. And I got the B-4 bag and got home bank, and looked back out there, and he was, oh, 150 feet I guess out there, still in the airplane. And two guys come down, they couldn't see what happened to us. We run down below this

kind of cliff. He says, "How's the pilot?" I said, "I'm not too concerned about the pilot." He was kind of -- he was just sitting there. He should have -- he came close to recovering. But he kind of froze. And we went in at an angle. That's why I'm sitting here, doing all this blabbing. There's a thing, went in at an angle, and tore the tail off, tore the wings off up his struts.

MZ: You mentioned a couple of times a B-4 bag. What is that?

MFS: That's a bag you can stick almost anything in. You know, I had it full of clothes, and I had an ordinance officer that came to me and says, "You want to check your gun?" An old .45. I said, "No." "MacArthur has got an order out if you take a combat weapon off of..." But I wasn't thinking. Mine was not really a combat weapon. I had had that thing coin-silver plated when I first got overseas. I was wearing a black sock over it.

MZ: Black sock?

MFS: Yeah, so it wouldn't glitter.

MZ: Oh, OK. Yeah, you mentioned that.

MFS: Yeah, I mentioned that. But I didn't have the edges. A lot easier to clean, you know, to keep clean, if you get it silver plated.

MZ: Yeah. So he wanted to take it from you?

MFS: Well, here's the thing about it. I technically -- I was just not going to go against his orders. I didn't take a military weapon off of -- you know, out of the area. And it was an excellent gun. And it might have been good, I might have shot somebody if I'd have kept that thing.

MZ: Did you ever shoot the weapon?

MFS: Oh, yeah. Yeah. In fact that -- the whole squadron knew about Stewart's gun, as far as that, because I had guys try to buy it, because it was -- and you could (inaudible) was probably a .45, and .22. A little Ruger .22, you can have a little fun shooting knots on trees, and all this. You could do the same thing with that old .45. And that's why they was trying to buy it. It's rare that you get a real fine shooting .45 automatic. I mean, the military that I had. That's kind of like, you might say to the boys, go over there and get in that building and see if you can hit a wall with that thing you're carrying. And he was pretty much lucky he had hit a wall, if he just pulled the trigger. And I had sense enough to know that if you was out there trying to battle people with rifles with a .45, and this is pretty close range, you'd be --

MZ: It would be tough.

MFS: Yeah. I don't know, I've done a little bit of everything. Riding Model A Fords on the fender, hanging on, shooting over the top of them. Once in a while you knock a little hole, or cut a hole in one if it's rough road. And I've ridden with an Indian sheriff one time, that guy could take a -- I don't know what kind of -- it wasn't automatic, but he could shoot jackrabbits. And I think he was just lucky.

MZ: Well, you know, I almost forgot to ask you this, but you moved around to the Pacific a lot. So did you ever see any Japanese prisoners of war?

MFS: Not alive.

MZ: Not alive?

MFS: No. Don't believe I have. Let's see, I will wrack the brain a little bit. Oh, I've heard some weird stories about treatment of live prisoners of war, but I'm not going to voice them. For little guys -- well, guys flying alive Japanese soldiers in C-47, you know, an old C-47, DC-3, and I've heard of a Japanese getting out of line one time, I think, in an airplane. And I'll stop. You can use your imagination.

MZ: That was when he was a prisoner, though?

MFS: Yeah, he was a prisoner. He was a prisoner.

MZ: Yeah, I can imagine.

MFS: And I've told you the story that I couldn't remember about hauling a load of Australian diggers, you know?

(inaudible) people? And they were loaded. They were in the airplane, and we had a special -- I think there was 28 of them in that B-24. And it might have had a special rack in the bomb bay, but you could haul about -- I had several on the flight deck all ready. And these people had their packs. Boy, we had that thing loaded. But I think I told you the way I checked B-24s to see if you were OK, as far as weight and balance. If you went out there and that nose wheel was off the ground, tail down, it means somebody loaded it and it was a little tail-heavy. But if you could get the nose wheel to touch the ground with 18 inches of power, it was OK. And sometimes they'd have an overload, more often than not, overload of bombs. And if it was bootleg food from Australia, you'd normally always have the nose wheel off the ground with that deal. And it'd slow the food, we'd haul more than 8,000 pounds.

MZ: Now that you mention the bombs, for the heavy bombers, what kind of bombs, and how heavy were they?

MFS: Well, if I remember, there was a Class -- I think they called it a Class B bomb, and whatever it was, it got to be a D instead of the B. But they'd warn you about dropping

one. You know, sometimes, you'd -- I've hauled a couple, three, and you didn't get missions for it. I've hauled B-24s loaded with bombs to get them to an advanced place where strafers could use them. And they'd be -- they wouldn't be the big bombs, they'd be the smaller ones. But they'd warn you not to trip them out, you know. Some of these guys trip them out, and none of them bounce on the ground. And you didn't have many silly people like that.

MZ: Yeah, that's pretty silly.

MFS: And I told you about Sullivan, going down and seeing the little manhole in a B-25, to kick one that loose that hung up one time.

MZ: Yeah. I remember that.

MFS: Yeah, and I told you about (inaudible) who didn't do it, and we landed behind him, or to the side almost from it, and he had one hanging up, and when the B-25 he was in hit the ground, it jarred enough the thing came loose. Went through the bomb bay doors, and they didn't have them open, I don't think, but it went through the doors. And then this guy with a jeep throwing a chain around it and started dragging it off down to the -- oh, you see --

MZ: That's crazy! I mean, that could be --

MFS: I know.

MZ: He's the crazier brain to do it.

MFS: Hey, you don't have to be too smart to stay away from a live bomb and throwing a chain around it and pulling it. Yeah.

MZ: Yeah. Well tell me a little bit more about Samar, the last place you were at before you came home.

MFS: OK. Samar, we didn't have any bad weather to speak of. I think when the -- I was in the second -- in the cockpit, I was the second squadron to be going down that runway, and we got a little fog, for some reason. And all of a sudden, I was shopping the throttles, and getting out and going down looking at some of the remains of the airplane that was leading the group that day. And it was Hume that was the pilot. And anyway, we had a guy in a little old control tower, supposedly, supposed to have been in there. But evidently Hume just tried the instrument takeoff, an object got in the way of the airplane. I found a wing that was five feet long, tip, in the left wing. And Mo was with me, old Mo. And we walked down there to where he hit this thing. And he still was frogging that thing, trying to get it off the ground after he knocked that five feet off. And I'm surprised he didn't do it. The airplane turned into

that short wing, you know, all the way around, and had four different explosions that I remember.

MZ: Really?

MFS: So he covered quite a bit of a circle after he hit the object. So and that's sad, because he -- I don't know. I bet that guy had -- no telling how many thousand hours he had in the air, because I think he'd been in the military, and then went commercial and then was still tied up with the military. And then war come along while they sucked him in. Oh, something else.

MZ: Wow.

MFS: Something else, you know, when we was talking about when I first went in the service, you know, before I got into flying. And you had a question in a little deal that you left with my wife about how did the fellas feel when they heard about Pearl Harbor? There's several of them that were really unhappy. And you probably already know why. We were drafting before Pearl Harbor, selective service. We had a selective service. And boy, being a school teacher, I know I run into one school teacher, he had a masters and the whole works, and of course it was a high powered master. But he had it, and he was unhappy because he was just about due a discharge. I think they had, I'm

not sure about him. But they just had specific times when they had the selective service to get them in there, and then they'd let them out. And of course, those guys, if they were in there, they wouldn't -- I don't know of any that got released. Now, they'd move some (inaudible), but...

MZ: When did you leave Samar and come back to the States?

MFS: Well, I can tell you. I can tell you --

MZ: Let me close that door, because that beeping is --

MFS: Oh, did I leave that door open?

MZ: Oh no, no, no, that's OK. Don't worry about it. It was pretty -- it was quieter earlier, it just got noisier.

MFS: Because they get some pretty conversation going out there.

MZ: No, I think it will come through fine. It just helps to have less noise.

MFS: Yeah, I remember you had to closet that before. I can tell you one landed in San Francisco. That's pretty close.

MZ: You landed in San Francisco. OK.

MFS: Landed in [Chester?], San Francisco, I think, on April the 30th, then got to Camp Chaffee, Arkansas. Oh, got a leave, on a leave after that. But no, you says, how did you feel about FDR? Well, the first thing I thought about FDR was him dying down in Georgia. And of course, everybody knew,

I guess, that he was interested in being in Georgia, occasionally. Or at least the rumors were. Now --

MZ: So you --

MFS: I spent 16 days on the Dutch Liberty ship after I boarded it. And it was about 16 -- it must have been 30 -- the end of March, I would say.

MZ: End of March (inaudible)?

MFS: Somewhere around the end of March or the 1st of April.

MZ: That's when you boarded a Liberty Ship from Samar?

MFS: No, I got on the Dutch boat 16 days before I hit San Francisco.

MZ: Where did you get on the boat, though?

MFS: Well, it was New Guinea, but the exact spot, I'm not sure.

MZ: Oh, that's OK.

MFS: (inaudible) might have been, if there's such a flat place. It kind of rings a bell. And I told you the story about him too, I think. He's supposed to have been a first cousin of General Rommel, a tank wizard for the German Army. And I told you about getting informed that I shouldn't be late to Captain's breakfast. I think I was a couple minutes late, the old boy got a little bit irritated with that, little old Captain. But he didn't -- one boat, just one boat. And it wasn't a troop ship. We had six

men, not women, six Red Cross men, and we had two, a captain and a first lieutenant. I was a captain and I had first lieutenant. And he -- and also, old Truman, I think, supposedly said -- I didn't hear him, but this guy was criticizing him when FDR died -- Truman supposedly says, "I felt like a load of hay fell on me." Something like that.

MZ: Yeah, I remember that.

MFS: And then you asked something about if we heard about the atomic bomb.

MZ: Well yeah, but let's go back a little bit.

MFS: OK.

MZ: OK, so you left Samar to New Guinea, and from New Guinea you took the Dutch -- what did you say it was? It was a Dutch ship? Did it take you to Pearl Harbor, or did it take you straight to San Francisco? Do you recall?

MFS: What ship?

MZ: The Dutch ship you mentioned.

MFS: Oh no, it took us to San Francisco from New Guinea.

MZ: Oh, OK. Wow.

MFS: Yeah, see I just ended up I was bruised up a little bit after that do-dad at 10-01 strip, you know, in Leyte Gulf, because I jerked my belts a little early, you know?

MZ: Oh, with the L-5 going down?

MFS: And I got bruised up a little bit. A knee and a hip. I got bruised a little, because I hit the side of the ship when I jerked that safety belt and shoulder harness. It hit. And then got on out and got my B-4 bag, it's floating. You know that B-4 bag you asked about a minute ago? It was floating.

MZ: So you get to San Francisco about the 30th of April, and then you said you went to Camp Savvy?

MFS: Do what, now?

MZ: You said from San Francisco you went to Camp Savvy?

MFS: No, I think it was camp -- if I'm not mistake -- the first thing we did was went down to the, you know, harbor, the eight-person band playing there. Went down there and then we stopped and dropped the mail off at Alcatraz.

MZ: Oh, OK.

MFS: And then we went on across the bay to an infantry base. And I can't -- I'm not sure of the name of it. It could have been the [Oar?]. Now don't -- I'm not going to give the name of it. But I'm going to -- since I was a Captain, I think they had me listed somewhere as commanding this troop train going across country, I'm not sure. (laughter) And look, I'm on a -- wasn't really interested in my command, as far as the troop train, because I had had a

little experience with that before. And we left when we joined, when I joined up here in Muskogee way back there, you know. We lost -- I say lost -- we left, stopped in Fort Worth, we left about 10 or 12 people in Fort Worth. And a person, if he's got enough on the ball to join the service, you know, then he didn't -- he shouldn't have to have some pauper lead him around. I remember one time, I flew it a little bit, C-54. And having an engine getting hot, getting -- and I was riding as a passenger on it from Tinker Field. Had a nose strut for another, I think, C-54 at Nellis, somewhere up there. And we had 18 people on that thing. We landed at Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas, and I called transportation for every one of them, since I had a little more rank than they did. Got a bus, took them all in to Las Vegas, dumped them -- dumped a -- well, there's another lieutenant colonel on there, and dumped him at the airport, and then tucked these 18 people and left them kind of on the main strip in Las Vegas. And I hope they got back to Nellis for the rest of the flight. Now the old boy, I told him, I says, "You give them a little pitch and tell them a good location that you want them at at a certain time. And if they don't show, you can feel sorry for them."

MZ: So this is still part of your coming home, right?

MFS: Oh, this was just a deal, I was bumming a ride on a C-54.

And when that engine started getting warm, well, one old boy, copilot cut back and says, "You want to get a little stick time on this thing?" (laughter) I says, "Yeah." And so I -- now you try to fly as many airplanes as you can fly.

MZ: Yeah, I can see that.

MFS: I think. I don't know. I got to looking through -- oh, by the way, in our -- just stop me. That airplane that I was in that the old boy put in Leyte Gulf?

MZ: Yeah, the [old pilot?]?

MFS: I ran into one that a guy was, in LA, Los Angeles. And they had one, I saw it sitting in the lot at the airport, just like that. Only somebody had modified it and took the fabric covering and replaced it with metal. They put a metal prop on it, a controllable hitch prop. They put the instruments in it, so black boxes were still in it, all this. And it belonged to a tool company. And they had an individual, one of the officers in the tool company, was using it for his own personal airplane to go to Mexico and back. And they were wanting to get rid of it. And I says, "OK," and I made them an offer on it. And flew -- got him

to fly it. And he checked me out in it. And I'd never flown one, I'd run. And I says, "Well, you've got a neat overhaul." And so I knew I could buy the parts, the inserts, the brains and all this stuff.

MZ: Right.

MFS: And the other members, you know, the other officials in this company were very happy to get rid of that airplane, because you get him on job, I guess, a little bit more. So I'll shut up. But anyway, I went ahead and pulled the cylinders and stuff on it, and a young kid in the speed shop in Pomona built it back up. And it was a good airplane after that. But it had a skin, well, it's metal now, it had been fabric.

MZ: Well, when it is that you get home? Because I notice on your Certificate of Service, it says that you're separated at Camp Chaffee, Arkansas.

MFS: Yes. Yeah, that's where we separated. And that's the 16th of November. Sixteenth of November.

MZ: And what do you do when you get separated? Where do you go? Do you --

MFS: Where did I go from there?

MZ: Yeah.

MFS: Oh, I went to the nearest phone, and I called an old boy on the phone, at Boynton, Oklahoma, that little town that I went to school in. And my dad, somebody had called him anyway. And he already knew. [Weird?] Jacks, the guy that I called, he says, "Your dad already knows you're back." And there was a guy from Tulsa. And I had a little old Ford Coupe then, and dad had it. And I left it, when we went overseas, I just left it in South Carolina. And a friend of mine was a friend, he hit a bus with it. And my dad went down and had a body shop -- he drove it back, I think, with a fender tied down, or something. But you couldn't tell it had ever been touched. They did a good job on it.

MZ: Yeah. So in 1945, you get out. But you decide -- what do you do first? Do you decide to go back into the service, or do you go to college?

MFS: I decided to party.

MZ: Oh, OK. (laughs)

MFS: I partied a little bit, and of course I already knew -- I met Jeannie over here, through her family, those four red-headed sisters I've known, two of them are friends that had married two of them. And then I think I went through all that routine, visiting Hazel, her husband was in the Navy

and on a boat. Jeannie, she got Jeannie here. She was a senior in high school. I robbed the cradle.

MZ: Oh, boy! (laughs)

MFS: Senior in high school. And I was dating -- well, I think I told you, this little teacher, that Bacone Indian College in Muskogee when I went over. She furnished me cigars while I was over there. But anyway, I took her over to see Hazel, Jeannie's sister, because that's his sister-in-law. And while I was there was [Zel?], that little gal walked through the door, just didn't knock, nothing. Just walked in the house, and she's wearing a white blouse and a red skirt, went over to the ice box, jerked the ice box open and got a little bite of something and then started to leave. And then Hazel introduced her to me, her sister. And so the next day I came back, was eating up town, little town of Wagoner, and (inaudible). And here come the little gal up to see what I wanted, and she didn't see -- I had a different woman the next day, different girl. But anyway, she invited us -- well, I ordered a beer. I did drink a beer occasionally, ordered a beer. And she went and got a beer and brought it back. And I happened to be sitting in just a little café, not a beer joint. But she went ahead and sold me that beer. It's a wonder they didn't close

them down. That was her boss' beer. It just happened to be in the refrigerator, and she got -- but that's the way I met my wife. And she had told her principal that she was going to get out of high school in three years, and she did. She did. And she was writing, oh, plays and stuff. I think she had probably one or two little stories. And but when some of the guys got out of the service and met her, they says, "Where did you find that woman?" I said, "Well, it wasn't too hard. Wasn't too hard." Little competition.

MZ: Well, what year did you get married?

MFS: Got married -- let's see, we went around, and she had a sister -- they -- oh, there was a break in this courtship. She and that sister went to a Naval station in the Northeast, because one of their sisters was pregnant and going up there with her husband, and her husband was in the Navy. He's teaching some of these submariners how to get out -- escape from a submarine. And they got work for a Naval Officer's club, those two. And I think they -- I don't know, probably wore out a couple of pair of shoes dancing, more than likely. (laughter) But they enjoyed that. And they rode a train up there and back. And but they spent a couple of months up there. And I was out

here, I went to this little old town just up the road,
here. I was stationed up there for a while.

MZ: You mentioned, well, because we established you went to
college. Where did you get your bachelor's degree?

MFS: OK, I got it at Edmond, Oklahoma, at a teacher's college.
And it's a university now, it's gotten larger since I've --
I got out in '58. And I was eating at a senior citizen's
place in Seymour. And I ran into one of my classmates that
I hadn't even met in that deal up there. And she brought
me a book out from the college, you know, it was -- and she
said, "I don't check anything but the obit column anymore."
That's [against the law?], you know, since '58. But she
and her husband both were graduates in there. And it had a
pretty good reputation for teachers. Now I got my first 60
hours, though, at a Methodist college in Oklahoma City.

MZ: Methodist college, OK?

MFS: Yeah, 60 hours there. Got it at night while I was working
as a mechanic at Tinker Field, Oklahoma.

MZ: You said 1958. You go back in the service before you go to
college?

MFS: Oh, I went back in -- no. I actually was still going to
night school. I went 60 hours at night school.

MZ: Oh, OK.

MFS: More or less. And then I went to the wife one day, and she was working at Tinker Field as an accountant when I was working out there. And we were married at that time.

MZ: But are you military, or a civilian?

MFS: Yeah, I was still in the Reserve. The Reserve.

MZ: OK, oh, the Reserve. OK. OK.

MFS: And then, I said, I got a GS-9, I was wage board as a mechanic. But I had got a planning team and doing something else, and I got a GS-9. And I told Jeannie, I says, "I'm either going to school full time, or I'm going to work full time." She says, "Go to school." So I went back down and took a couple of courses at the Methodist bit, and then I went to that teacher's college at Edmond, just up the road. Commuted back. And you asked me something about, did I use the GI Bill?

MZ: Yeah, did you use the GI Bill?

MFS: I used it for the equipment; textbooks, slide rules, you know, this. But I think there was something about our salaries that -- and I did this in some cases. I'd check out the school schedule, and while I was working, I would sometimes -- but I didn't, I'd gotten teaching. Well, I went ahead and commuted and got where I had my intern teaching to do. And it was a new high school in Edmond.

And so I went up there and I was the only student teacher this Bradley lad; I remember his name, Bradley. And he was teaching an intramural deal during lunch, basketball, you know. And math teacher. And the first week he had me teaching five math courses through, and there was one course in the evening, there was a couple, three pregnant -- well, there was two pregnant girls, and they were keeping them out special living quarters, and I don't know what. Then he fell in his bathroom, this teacher. Fell in his bathroom and hit a stove. Buggered him up pretty good. So he missed over six weeks of school. And they never bothered to hire another teacher, the student teacher. I'd had Math courses at the Methodist, and I was teaching through algebra II, and two classes of geometry, plain geometry. And I get in the pay line at pay time, I didn't get paid. But I should have. I just lined up and -- I got letters from the schools. He took a little vacation, because I was getting letters from Albuquerque, offered jobs. Carlsbad offered jobs, he's recommending me, this teacher. And anyway, teacher -- I mean, the superintendent in the secondary schools in Oklahoma City or Edmond, in Edmond, old Bradley when he came back, he called me down there, and he says, "I want you to meet somebody."

I said, "OK." So he had the superintendent down there at school one day, and they offered me a job.

MZ: Great!

MFS: And I says, "Well, I don't see any fishing places around here. Can't see any fishing places, so I'll" -- but there's only one trouble. Well, it wasn't really a trouble. Bradley asked me, he says, "If I can" -- I only needed two hours to get my degree, when he called me down there. He says, "Will you finish teaching this trig course you're teaching right now for me?" He says, "I never taught a trig course." And he says, "Will you teach the rest of the semester," it was getting near the end of the school year. I said, "Well, sure. I'll do that." And you know the school wouldn't let him do it. Can you imagine that? And the school was a history course in math. That's what -- I mean, that's the course, two-hour course, I picked it because that's all I needed was two hours. Two hours. But old Bradley, he was something else. But I went five days before school started, I went down to this little resort town in Oklahoma, on the lake where you can run a boat 55 miles and never retrace your step, and that sort of thing. And I got in there, and they had a little trouble mustering their school board. They got them together. And

I was -- told them, I says, "I want you people to know that I don't approve of local school boards. You need some kind of a board, but you sure don't need it locally, because you're old buddies, and you've all been classmates together and everything else." And they thought, well, this old boy is just popping off. But that was about the way it was. In fact, the president of the school board got the superintendent, and the superintendent wasn't any blacker than he was when I went there, and six years later, he's building a new school. And I'd just got back from Illinois, you know, when I got back from up there, they had put Cartesian coordinates on all the desks, slide rule, opaque projector and everything. Boy, they really had that Math lab fixed up.

MZ: Yeah, it sounds like it. Did you like them? I mean, a bit interest for you?

MFS: I went back there after I finished up at the University of Illinois.

MZ: And that's where you got your masters? University of Illinois?

MFS: Yeah.

MZ: OK.

MFS: Yeah, actually, that was a Math institute at Illinois. He had 36 college profs in that institute, and you had 12 of the secondaries. And some of those secondaries has masters, not in Math. There was one more boy come from -- turned out to be one of the sharpest in that class. He changed from English to Math. And I know his accent, you know, it was prominent. And some of them kind of smirked about his accent. And they were asking him questions when the prof couldn't answer them before the end of the year. And there's a gal from a little college in Hawaii up there, Chinese, and one day, she asked me, we were in a lounge, she asked me. Says, "Stewart, where are you from?" I says, "I'm from" -- let's see, what was the name of that little old resort town? It's near Gore, so I want to say Gore.

MZ: OK.

MFS: And I'm taking up a lot of your time. But anyway, I told her the name of our town. But we had a hospital in that town, [abortionist?]. Abortionist. Henry was his name, this doctor. And Jeannie had used him as far as a cold, and got some kind of settling shot, or something. We never got a bill. We never got a bill from this hospital. I went down to pay the bill, I said, "Well, she came down and

got this." And I found out that anybody in the town, he didn't charge in this little town, 1400, in the town.

MZ: Right.

MFS: Anyway, she says, "Was it Gore?" I'm just saying, I says, "Yeah." I says, "(inaudible) in Missouri gave Dr. Henry a party, going away party, when he left." And we got a -- in our Reserve unit, we got a lawyer in, new lawyer in, and he lost a patient. He lost a patient. So Billy went ahead and prosecuted him, and they sent him down here somewhere in Texas and all this, and even the little resort town gave him a going away party. And she just couldn't believe that at all. And actually, PTA, I think, gave him a Citizen of the Year award. That didn't seem white right to me. Important. I'll shut up.

MZ: Actually, I want to ask you, you said that you had taught for 20 years. You taught, let me back up. You mentioned you taught for 20 years, is that correct?

MFS: Yeah, I taught for --

MZ: Your daughter had told me that you were part of a team that was going to put textbooks together for Math?

MFS: Oh, we wanted to, when they went through that Math study group, you know, make them study deals, and all that. And then up in Illinois, UCISM, they were putting out a little

deal. Now she got carried away and said we were doing certain things, like study lessons, this, that and the other, and observing some of the kiddies in class at University of Illinois. And what she'd also do, and we've -- modern Math, you know. Some modern Math. You didn't know when you was going to teach, and you didn't have an textbooks. You had notes from different colleges and stuff. But you didn't know when you was going to teach. This one little boy, he did say -- I remember when he hit me (inaudible). I got up and no textbook in that class, what have you. And this one that they criticized from Texas, he was teaching in a religious school down there --

MZ: Well, before you go on, I'll just say it was only you and a handful of other mathematicians who were working on those books, right?

MFS: Well, now wait a minute. She's getting carried away. They were working on a math program.

MZ: Math program, OK.

MFS: And their text, they was pushing their text. You see that SEM or something, you know, University of Illinois that said that. And you had -- it's what they start you out at. You do all right on the first 16 hours of math, and you get

the next 16 hours of math. You do all right on those 16 hours of math there, and you get the next. And finally, you end up with eight hours of math in summer. And then you didn't have to write a paper. You didn't have to write a paper. And that's when I -- I'll do this -- I had already gone to some summer math institutes, four, I think. And some of these profs up in Illinois had taught in a couple of those. Then, let's see --

MZ: How long did this program take to develop? How long did it take for this program to develop?

MFS: Well, for me to get the degree, it took a year, you know, 40 hours. Forty hours of math and you got it. But in the beginning, I applied, sent you to the math institute, I applied, and NSF was financing it, and I got \$700 and something a month, \$741. And my wife, she's fortunate enough she went with me up there, and she took a little course or two. But she went back and worked for Chanute Air Force Base because she had worked for the deal at Tinker. I couldn't have done it, not on \$741 with two kids. But anyway, she worked. But I'm getting back to the -- oh, yeah. I applied to Texas, I applied at New Mexico, I think I told you that, maybe. And University of Illinois would have me write a essay telling them what I was going to do

with, you know, math (inaudible). And then, Texas told me when they accepted me, "You can study anything you want to." And New Mexico, University of New Mexico, told me the same thing. And I know that if I took either one of those, that I'd be goofing off. And so I wrote the essay, and they accepted me. I was kind of surprised they accepted me, because -- but they were doing on some of their undergraduates, and they were getting shown publicly, you know, in the Student Union area what those kids were making grade-wise. And I just got -- not us, but I'm talking about the regular kids.

MZ: Right. Well, I understand you were in the Reserve this whole time. When do you finally retire from the Reserves?

MFS: Retire from what?

MZ: The Reserves? Or from the Army.

MFS: I didn't retire from the Reserves. I went right on through. I was in the Air Force for, let's see -- I was born in 1923, and I was qualified to retire, I think, for 60 years. I mean I went back and went to Air University. And I think I've got that somewhere in that -- what did I do with that thing?

MZ: Oh, well, that's OK. What year did you retire?

MFS: Huh?

MZ: What year did you retire from the Air Force?

MFS: Nineteen eighty-three.

MZ: Nineteen eighty-three.

MFS: That's when I started -- at 60 years plus 23 that I was going.

MZ: And what rank were you when you left service?

MFS: When I left the Air Force?

MZ: Mm.

MFS: Oh, I was, way back there, you know, when I got to Captain, and then I stayed in the Reserves while I was -- I was still in the Reserves. Here, this, you can read. You can read this a little better here.

MZ: When you got out --

MFS: Here's one.

MZ: Thank you. When you got out in 1983, what rank were you?

MFS: Well, 1983, I didn't get out. I'm still in. I'm retired. I'm retired in the Air Force.

MZ: Right. But when you did retire from the Air Force --

MFS: Nineteen eight-three.

MZ: What rank were you?

MFS: Lieutenant Colonel.

MZ: Lieutenant Colonel.

MFS: And I even got invited to go back when I got -- just when I got out of Illinois, I went back to Air University, you know, commanding staff. You know, if you get to be a field officer, you command and staff.

MZ: Yeah?

MFS: Yeah. And one reason I went to that, I was working out at Tinker, and all of a sudden we had a bunch of pilots and some navigators when they pulled -- we used to have some airplanes we could go out and fly anytime, AT-6s, twin Beeches. And all of a sudden, Eisenhower got in, I think, and they jerked the maintenance on them. Next thing they did, they pulled the airplanes. And these old boys got a little irritated. And the program, such as the Reserves, had out at Will Rogers Field, they kind of reduced them. Or they just walked off. They walked off from these deals rather than put up with that stuff of losing their airplanes. So I went out there one time, and they were having trouble getting payroll out. And they had a Corporal working on the payroll for the Reservists, and I volunteered to help work the payroll. And we got it out on time. And this Colonel remembered it, that commanded the Reserve out there at Will Rogers Field. And so he asked me, he called me up on time and he says, "Can you get off

long enough to go down and attend the commanding staff this year?" I said, "I'll make it, all right." So I went back for four and a half months there, and I'd put in correspondence and other things. But I didn't know it, but people had been applying to get in that command staff for quite a while. And I found out later that 21 had applied when I got to go down there. Well, there was about three or four Reservists got to go to the -- they check you out, and the old Colonel gave me a top secret clearance temporarily. You know, he had enough rank to do that. But they -- I remember that about four or five Reservists go in there, and two of them they pulled after they had time to check them, you know, clearance. Oh, I think I've been going to school all my life.

MZ: I guess to some degree, yeah. That would be true. But in the military, you know, when you get up to the right (inaudible) --

MFS: Well, I had a course to take.

MZ: You have to take -- you have to keep doing that.

MFS: They had a course for teachers. I took their little course for teachers. And now what I was going to do with this, you know, I laid it out.

MZ: Yeah, I see.

MFS: And I was going to point it out to you and show you when the ack-ack was bad, and show you if you lost an airplane, or four airplanes. On one of these we lost four airplanes, weather. Hey, when the shots fired, hey, when they lost those four airplanes, they gobbled them up, that ocean. So I'm almost certain there was, because there was more losses than that. But all I was going to do is take that bigger brown deal and just stick every one of these in it, and let you take it with you if you wanted to look at it.

MZ: Actually, I just think I need this one because your daughter had given me a copy of these.

MFS: Oh, she sent you copies of these?

MZ: Uh-huh. As well as this, so I've got a copy of this, the Citation we read at the beginning.

MFS: Well, I didn't know, I figured -- I did this -- actually, there's more campaigns that I was in than what he listed here.

MZ: OK.

MFS: I think there's one more...

MZ: This is a copy?

MFS: Oh, I've got two or three copies.

MZ: Oh, OK. All right. Maybe I'll scan it in and send it back anyway, just to make sure.

MFS: I've still got -- when I said I was going to just put these
-- that discharge, too, you know, that you saw?

MZ: Oh, yeah.

MFS: That discharge that I got?

MZ: Yeah, this is a copy of that there.

MFS: This is the old one, but there's a new one there, I think.
A new copy.

MZ: Yeah, this is the copy. But you want to hang on to that
one. I think that pretty much answers all the questions I
have for you. I think we did about five hours altogether.
Well not today, but we did an hour and a half today.

MFS: Well, wait a minute, hey, let me pull that out right quick.

MZ: OK.

MFS: Let me -- what did I do with the doggone thing? The big,
heavy envelope -- oh, there it is.

MZ: Well, let me turn this off for now, and then we'll look at
that --

MFS: Look, I made some notes.

MZ: Oh, OK.

MFS: I went over it and made some notes on that deal you'd left,
and then here I've been telling you about all my -- I don't
know whether I can read them or not. No, this has been
interesting.

MZ: Well, I appreciate your making the time for me.

MFS: Let's see. I'm just going to ask you, a victory garden.

I've got it muted on that. Hey, I was doing gardens -- I must, before, see, I wasn't in the service at the time we was asking this bit. You know, but I'd been doing gardens, I guarantee it. And let's see, did you ever -- you said, "Did you work before you enlisted," you know, on this first deal. Yes, it was at a little airport in Muskogee, Oklahoma, Hatbox, trying to learn to be a machinist.

MZ: Oh, I think we did talk about that maybe.

MFS: And getting paid a little bit, you know, for NY, I'm pretty sure national use or association, NY.

MZ: (inaudible)?

MFS: I believe that's it. Now here, let me look at something else. When did you enlist? And of course it was the 5th of August, 1941.

MZ: Right.

MFS: What did your parents think? College.

MZ: Really?

MFS: That's what they thought. That's what my -- any relations, college. You don't want --

MZ: Oh, I think we covered all this already in the first four hours.

MFS: Well, we probably did cover it.

MZ: Yeah. But the victory garden, and the other one, yeah.

MFS: Well, it says here, where did you go through? Where did you go for advanced training?

MFS: OK, you asked where did you go for advanced training, and I said Hemet, Bakersfield and Williams.

MZ: Yeah, we've got that.

MFS: Yeah, we've answered most of this.

MZ: Oh, yeah.

MFS: Now, what would happen if you failed a test? You know, you asked if you -- do you take a test? Yeah, you take a test before you -- and you'd go back to the usual military work if you -- yeah, they fired -- I mean, they kicked quite a few out of primary out at Hemet. They get sick, motion sickness. Let's see, routine -- you asked something about, you get it, goof off and have to do KP? KP was a routine job for boot camp.

MZ: Yeah, that's what I'm finding out, it was (inaudible), right across then when you said it was any kind of punishment, yeah.

MFS: And are you -- I got it out the other night. Where we got boot camp is still -- unless they've closed it in the last 90 days, that thing's still teaching pilots.

MZ: Wow, all these years.

MFS: And that was back in '41, you know? All this, '41.

MZ: You know, I think we covered all the other questions on there.

MFS: OK, I think so.

MZ: So I think we're good.

MFS: And I had a hard enough time reading. And if you don't want this stuff, I'll just box it back up.

MZ: Yeah, because actually, I have a copy of those there, and this is a copy of your certificate --

MFS: Because I've got another copy of these.

MZ: No, that's OK. I've got this one. And Pat had sent me those already.

MFS: And you've got these, huh?

MZ: Yes. Yes, the Citation.

MFS: And you've got a copy of this?

MZ: Yes.

MFS: Yeah. OK.

MZ: All right, well --

MFS: I'll take them. I may give them to somebody, you know.

MZ: I just want to say on behalf of the museum and myself, I want to thank you for your stories, these (inaudible).

MFS: I hope I didn't waste too much of your time.

MZ: No, no. I appreciate that you made some time for me.

MFS: I'll tell you, just --

MZ: Hold on, I almost forgot to say one thing. Today is the
22nd of March, 2015.

END OF AUDIO FILE