

*National Museum of the Pacific War*

*Nimitz Education and Research Center*

*Fredericksburg, Texas*

Interview with

**Mr. Arthur Griffin**

Date of Interview: February 16, 2019

# **National Museum of the Pacific War**

## **Fredericksburg, Texas**

### **Interview with Mr. Arthur Griffin**

Interview in progress.

Mike Zambrano: This is Mike Zambrano, and today is February the 16<sup>th</sup>, 2019. I will be interviewing Mr. Arthur Ray Griffin at his home in Austin, Texas. The interview is in support of the Nimitz Education and Research [Center], archives for the National, I'm sorry, Nimitz Education and Research Center, and archives for the National Museum of the Pacific [War] Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site. Seems like there's a word missing there somewhere.

Mr. Griffin: That's in Fredericksburg, right?

Mike Zambrano: That's right! That's right. Actually, the Nimitz Museum and the National Museum of the Pacific War are slightly different but they're associated.

Mr. Griffin: Oh yeah?

Mike Zambrano: Well, one ... one's for Admiral Nimitz.

Mr. Griffin: And we went to ... when I first came out here, we went to Fredericksburg.

Other Person: Yeah, we visited the Museum, not exactly sure which one we saw, and learned a lot about Admiral Nimitz and ... and the Pacific War, so ...

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, and (unintelligible).

Mike Zambrano: There was ... there was a big submarine out front, that was the ... the National Museum of the Pacific War, but ...

Mr. Griffin: That's years ago is when we were there.

Mike Zambrano: Well, Mr. Griffin, can you please tell me when and where you were born?

Mr. Griffin: In 12/28/21 in Wilkinsburg, PA.

Mike Zambrano: Wilkinsburg?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah. That's a suburb of Pittsburgh.

Mike Zambrano: Ah, okay. Did you ... well, your mother and father – what were their names?

Mr. Griffin: Glen Griffin and Mabel Griffin.

Mike Zambrano: And what did your father do for a living?

Mr. Griffin: High school teacher.

Mike Zambrano: Really?! Okay. Alright. And ... and your mother, I assume, was a homemaker?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Griffin: One sister, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. Younger or older?

Mr. Griffin: Younger.

Mike Zambrano: Hum. Uh, what was her name?

Mr. Griffin: Betty (sp?).

Mike Zambrano: Betty, alright. How long did you live in ... in Wilkinsburg?

Mr. Griffin: Well, we didn't live in Wilkinsburg. That's where I born.

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay.

Mr. Griffin: But I didn't live there. Lived in the next ... in the, you know, the ... around the big city there's always these little suburbs. I lived in the next suburb, Swissvale.

Mike Zambrano: Swissvale.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Ah, okay. Well, since you're a veteran of World War II like many others you lived through the Depression. Can you tell me what ... what that was like for your family?

Mr. Griffin: Well, my father did not lose his job. He ... I think he ... I'm just thinking back, I think he probably took a cut in pay, but he kept his job as a high school teacher in the city of ... there was a big high school in the city of Pittsburgh where he ... he works there for his *whole* life. And, but of course, the things were tough! I mean, you know, everything, I can remember as a little boy probably eight or nine years old, something like that, going to school with a hole in my shoe and a piece of cardboard in it. So, you know, money was

tight to say the least. But ... but we survived. Yeah, we didn't ... he always had a job and we were okay.

Mike Zambrano: What subject did he teach?

Mr. Griffin: Bookkeeping.

Mike Zambrano: Bookkeeping. They would teach bookkeeping in high school?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. But ... but, you know, it's one little step lower than accounting. Accounting is higher grade. He taught bookkeeping.

Mike Zambrano: Bookkeeping. Do they still keep teaching that today? (laughter) So, you're born in 1921, so that would be uh, you graduated in 1939, is that correct?

Mr. Griffin: From high school, yes.

Mike Zambrano: Yes. And what did you do with ...

Mr. Griffin: And ... but the ... now, in 1921, it was in the very end of ... the 28<sup>th</sup> of December.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Griffin: So, I always think about 1922 as a lot easier when figuring out my age.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Griffin: Okay, but anyway, go ... what did you say?

Mike Zambrano: So ... so, did you graduate, I mean, did you graduate from high school in 1940 then?

Mr. Griffin: No, no, no, '39 (chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Griffin: June of '39.

Mike Zambrano: What did you do when you graduated?

Mr. Griffin: I went to college.

Mike Zambrano: Ah! The one you mentioned on our ... on the phone? What college was it?

Mr. Griffin: College of Wooster.

Mike Zambrano: Wooster?

Mr. Griffin: W-o ... W ... W-o-o-s-t-e-r in Ohio.

Mike Zambrano: And what ... what were you going to go study?

Mr. Griffin: Political Science and History.

Mike Zambrano: Oh! Why Political Science and History? I mean, special reason?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah. Well, I always liked history, and I, you know, I ... they sort of go together and I decided to take them, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Hum.

Mr. Griffin: Actually, my major was Political Science, but you know, it took a lot of history courses, too.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, that tends to happen in college. What ... do you recall where you were, what you might have been doing when you had heard that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor?

Mr. Griffin: Yes. I had taken a semester off to go to work to get money, and I was working in a factory there around where I lived there in Pennsylvania in Swissvale. And that was Sunday, and I ... a boyfriend and I had been to a movie that afternoon in ... nearby Squirrel Hill. How, in parenthesis or brackets, Squirrel Hill, of course, they had that shooting just a few weeks ago.

Mike Zambrano: Really? Uhm.

Mr. Griffin: Well, anyway, we coming home on a streetcar, got off the streetcar as that ... at our stop, started walking up the hill a short block, and he lived right around the corner down that short block, and his sister came running out on the porch and says, "The Japs bombed Pearl Harbor!" He ran in the house and I ran all the way home, and there's my father and mother sitting at their ... listening on the radio about the whole thing.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm. Do you remember how you felt at the moment?

Mr. Griffin: I don't know, I was just, you know, I was an old ... eighteen, nineteen like that. I guess I ... I immediately thought I should do something, join ... join something or other to fight them Japs. And ... and that was in, you know, December 7<sup>th</sup>.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Griffin: So, then I finished up my school year which would be January, then I ... and started to enlist and I ended ... I wanted to be a naval aviation cadet, and that's what I did. I got into the naval aviation cadet and they ... since I ... I enlisted in Ohio where I was going to college, I ended up in the Iowa Pre-flight ... Iowa Pre-flight.

Mike Zambrano: Iowa Pre-flight.

Mr. Griffin: Well, the ... see, if I ... I had enlisted in Pittsburgh, I would have ended up in North Carolina Pre-flight. The Navy had these pre-flight schools set up. What ... what they ... where I ended up in I ... they took over two or three buildings in the University of Iowa, and we lived in the dorm and we had the ... the dining room was down in the lower level, and they had classrooms and so forth. So ...

Mike Zambrano: So, this is not long after ... not long after the bomb ... Japanese bombs; this is like the first half of 1942?

Mr. Griffin: No, it was a little ... it was the last half of '42.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. Can you tell me a little bit about the classes that you attended?

Mr. Griffin: (Pause), well, the classes I attended in ... at this ... at this pre-flight school ... see, the idea was that they go ... you go to the pre-flight school, then you go to a flight school and learn how to fly. At the pre-flight school, there was a lot of training in how to march and, you know, military etiquette and so forth. And they had ... well, I'm getting ahead of myself. What happened was, at the end of that they said, "We need ... the Navy needs navigators. If you volunteer to be a navigator, we'll train you to be a navigator. And at the end of the year, if you can come ... we'll bring you back from wherever you are in the war ... uh, world, and we'll send you to flight training." So, I ... when I found out that the navigation school was in Florida, I immediately sign up because I hate the cold weather!

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles).

Mr. Griffin: I would have ended up in Illinois or something if I'd gone on to the flight school. So, I volunteered for that and went to the navigation school in ... in Hollywood, Florida, just about twenty, thirty miles north of Miami. And I graduated and then when I was ready to graduate, they said I would be an ensign in the Navy, but I volunteered for the Marine Corps. So, I graduated, I became a Second Lieutenant in the Marine Corps.

Mike Zambrano: So, were you given the ... the option of either Navy or ...

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, yeah! They ...

Mike Zambrano: Huh.

Mr. Griffin: ... they asked for volunteers for the Marines. Yeah, so I said I wanted to vol  
... I had probably some of my friends that did, too, I don't know. So many  
years ago.

Mike Zambrano: Can you tell me a little bit about the courses you had at navigation school?

Mr. Griffin: Oh boy! They were (chuckle) you had to learn how to do dead reckoning  
which is, you know, it's daytime, so you had to learn how to take a shot of this  
... using an Astro(unintelligible) and the ... the sun, and a sight that goes down  
through the plane so you could see how the waves way ... which way you're  
going and you would adjust it like that, and you tell the pilot. And at night  
you had an octant rather than a sextant, and you hang it up in this plastic  
bubble at the top of the plane and take sights of well-known stars, and then  
you ... you'll get ... you get a triangle on the chart, you know? You look at  
this star and you look at that star, and there at the small of the triangle the  
more accurate you ... you ... it is. Now, you know where you were at that  
point and you draw a line to your destination and tell the pilot go four degrees  
to the right or left or whatever. You give ... you give them the heading.

Mike Zambrano: Is that very complicated to do?

Mr. Griffin: Not, really. Well, once you start learning ... once you learn how to do it, it's  
pretty simple. They have books, charts, oh I can't say it clear.

Other Person: (Unintelligible) stuff in there.

Mike Zambrano: Oh.

Other Person: To show you.

Mike Zambrano: Here you go (passing documents to Mr. Griffin).

Mr. Griffin: Here's the navigation school where they took over this big hotel north of  
Miami, Hollywood Beach Hotel.

Mike Zambrano: Ah, so what Mr. Griffin is showing me is ... is a binder he has and it is pretty  
... very ... big nice-looking hotel, right on the beach.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, we had ... we, you know, the classrooms were on the lower level and  
we lived upstairs and they had a dining room, the whole thing, so ...

Mike Zambrano: So, it's the U.S. Naval Air Navigation School in Hollywood, Florida. Let me just jot that down (pause).

Other Person: You should take your flight book out there.

Mike Zambrano: So, what else ... what ... what other kind of courses did you go through?

Mr. Griffin: That was it basically. The navigation, learn how to do the aerial ... aerial navigation.

Mike Zambrano: How long was the course?

Mr. Griffin: Three months.

Mike Zambrano: Three months.

Mr. Griffin: And what I, I repeat myself, when I ... when I came to graduate, you graduate, you get to be a ensign in the Navy, but they wanted some ... needed some volunteers for the Marine Corps and I volunteered and became a Second Lieutenant in the Marine Corps.

Mike Zambrano: So, you graduate, you're a Second Lieutenant. Where do you go from there?

Mr. Griffin: Well, I got orders to go way out to California by San Diego. Oh, and the ... what happened, when we graduated, I'm sorry, when we graduated the ... alphabetically, the first half of the class went to San Diego, the second half of the alphabet went to North Carolina and got involved with B-25 bombers. The first half of the alphabet that I was in went to San Diego and got in these transport planes.

Mike Zambrano: Transport.

Mr. Griffin: They called them ... they were ... in ... in ... before the war, they were DC-3s, passenger planes. And what they did was that they took out all the seats and put in metal seats that folded down from the side and we ... they were used to carry passengers and/or cargo.

Mike Zambrano: You know, I forgot to ask you – why did you choose the Navy to begin with?

Mr. Griffin: I don't know, I just sort of liked it, I don't know why, that's all. Just sort of liked the Navy rather than the Air Force or Army. It wasn't the Air Force, it was the Army Air Force.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Griffin: Well, I liked the Navy. I don't know.



Mike Zambrano: (Laughter). Alright. So ... so, you head out to San Diego. Are you there for a while? Do ... do you ...

Mr. Griffin: No, not too long before I ... well, I ... I was there long enough to get married.

Mike Zambrano: Oh!

Mr. Griffin: But my wife came all the way from New Jersey; we got married, and four days later I was a navigator on a plane; we're taking it to the South Pacific.

Mike Zambrano: So, your wife came all the way out from the east coast on a train alone I take it?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, yeah. She didn't have any money either, so she had to sit up. On the way back, she was now the wife of an officer; got a real nice train going back, a roomette and all that stuff.

Mike Zambrano: What do you mean that on the way out she had to sit up?

Mr. Griffin: Well, she didn't have the money to buy a Pullman berth.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, so she had to sit in the seat to sleep?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Oh. And she had a nice ride on the way back?

Mr. Griffin: (Chuckles), yeah.

Mike Zambrano: So, I ... I suppose they must have given her some kind of ... did ... did wives get some sort of identification that had married officers or ...

Mr. Griffin: Oh yeah! That's ... we immediately ... well they ... you get to be an officer and your family gets to be ... you're upgraded, you know, what can I say.

Mike Zambrano: Upgraded, that's quite an upgrade (chuckles).

Mr. Griffin: Yeah (chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: So ...

Mr. Griffin: There's a ... there's a lot of guys in there that I was in school with, you know? (looking through books). My picture ... my little picture's there someplace.

Mike Zambrano: Did any of these friends go out with you to California? Well, I would think so.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah. Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: A, B, C, D, oh, I guess so, 'cause they're all ... beginning of the alphabet. So, you're in San Diego and you get assigned, and it does ... like you said, you weren't there very long. Well, maybe a couple of weeks?

Mr. Griffin: Well, I don't know, maybe it was a month, I don't know, so long ago. But it was enough to ... my wife to come out there and we got married, remember? Four days later I took a plane as a navigator all the way out to the South Pacific via Hawaii and other ... other stops.

Mike Zambrano: Were you in Hawaii long enough to get an impression?

Mr. Griffin: No, we were only there overnight.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, okay. And where'd you head out after that?

Mr. Griffin: Well, after the next stop was Christmas Island.

Mike Zambrano: Hum. Small island, isn't it?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Very small?

Mr. Griffin: Oh yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Was that just another overnigher?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, we just stayed overnight, refueled and then went on to Samoa. And from Samoa, we went to New Caledonia.

Mike Zambrano: Now, is it just a regular flight crew? Or are there basically ... they're taking a group of you out there?

Mr. Griffin: No, that trip was just us, the five of us. The pilot, the co-pilot, navigator, radioman and crew chief. That's a basic pilot, uh, team for the crew for these transport planes.

Mike Zambrano: And you were the navigator?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: How'd you feel about that? I mean, it's the first time really navigating (unintelligible) vast ...

Mr. Griffin: Well, the ...

Mike Zambrano: ... water.

Mr. Griffin: ... the biggest challenge was the very first because we flew from San Diego to Hawaii, you know, Honolulu at night, and it took us all night to get there

'cause, you know, the planes weren't jet planes or anything. They ... they don't fly as fast as today.

Mike Zambrano: So, were you ... you ... I ... I'm guessing you were pretty confident with your skill. I mean, it ... doing in the daytime, I think I'd be a little bit nervous but even at night.

Mr. Griffin: Well, I had, like I said, I had to take these sights of the stars, the three stars and put it on a chart, and depending on where it is to our destination, I'd draw a line and give the course to the pilot.

Mike Zambrano: And how often do you have to do this? Just, I mean, I ... I figured you'd want to make sure you're on the right course.

Mr. Griffin: Oh, I'd, at least, every hour, maybe more. Depends, weather plays a role in ... in this, too, you know.

Mike Zambrano: I take it that it makes it much more difficult if you've got a block of clouds.

Mr. Griffin: That, and the ... the wind and so forth and well, rough and weather, you're blown off course or ...

Mike Zambrano: So, when you get to New Caledonia, what then?

Mr. Griffin: What then was that ... I ... that's ... that's a better part of a day's flight to Guadalcanal; it's south of the ... New Caledonia is a ... is a long island; it was a French colony and we took over one of the airports called Nouméa which was north of the capital. No, it wasn't, I'm sorry, I got you mixed up. Nouméa is the capital of New Caledonia. Our place was Tontouta, T-o-n-t-o-u-t-a which was about fifty miles north of the capital. That was ... the Navy took that over.

Mike Zambrano: Tontouta; I did read about that. So, was it Tontouta airfield? Was ... is that what it was called?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah. Tontouta. T-o-n-t-o-u-t-a, Tontouta.

Mike Zambrano: And what were you going to do on Tontouta? What were your duties?

Mr. Griffin: Well, that ... that was our home base. And then we'd fly the plane up to the Solomon Islands and as to ... just to give you a picture, after I go back home again after, you know, a year or so later, I found out that they had moved it up, the home base up into the Solomon Islands itself, but the fight was still

going on in the ... up there in some of the Solomon Islands. So, that's why the base was the ... better part of a day's flight away from it.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, okay.

Mr. Griffin: And we get up there, and they had conquered Guadalcanal, and we go in there, and by that time, it'd be the end of the day and we'd stay overnight, and then they'd send us to various islands or back and forth or whatever they ... our orders were. You know, the Solomons are a string of islands there in the South Pacific.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Griffin: And that's what we ... that was our job, flying people and/or cargo around these different ... air ... little airstrips in these islands.

Mike Zambrano: So, basically, you're ... you're helping to resupply all these islands before ... never even saw an airplane.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, that's true! Yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Do you recall an airfield called, and I'll probably mispronounce this – Plaine de Gayas (sp?)? It would have been in New Caledonia.

Mr. Griffin: (Pause).

Mike Zambrano: Plaine de Gayas?

Mr. Griffin: Oh, I don't remember that at all. New Caledonia?!

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, I'm not really sure where; it was just an airfield that it listed that was on New Caledonia. So, I ...

Mr. Griffin: Is this modern times?

Mike Zambrano: No, this is during the war. This is one of the airfields that ... that they (unintelligible).

Mr. Griffin: I don't remember that at all. All we ... all we did was fly in and out of Tontouta and we never did anything in New Caledonia, except I think once or twice I went into the ... the capital; what's the heck's the capital name?

Mike Zambrano: Is that Nouméa?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah! Nouméa, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Do you remember the ... the ... what was your unit designation?

Mr. Griffin: Well, to make it simple, we were in SCAT.

Mike Zambrano: SCAT?

Mr. Griffin: S-C-A-T.

Mike Zambrano: Was that Southern ...

Mr. Griffin: South Pacific Combat Air Transport.

Mike Zambrano: Ah, okay.

Mr. Griffin: And it was comprised of Marine Corps, Navy and Army Air Force planes. These DC-3 cargo planes.

Mike Zambrano: And how many times a day would, well not how many times a day, uh, what was ... what was a normal, typical day for you working with SCAT?

Mr. Griffin: Well, a typical day it was ... we had ... you see in that notebook where we lived in these huts. I don't know whether ... there's some pictures there.

Mike Zambrano: You've got quite a few pictures here.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah. See, that ...

Mike Zambrano: Oh!

Mr. Griffin: ... see that's a hut we lived in, like five or six of us in a wooden hut.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, they're bamboo?

Mr. Griffin: And they were ... they were all bunched together, and we were all officers, and we had an officer's club. And there was a river there, and we'd go swimming in the river. And you had an officer's bar, and the enlisted men were in the other side of town, and the same idea with them.

Mike Zambrano: Other than swimming, what ... what did you do in your ... in your spare time?

Mr. Griffin: Drink.

Mike Zambrano: Okay (chuckles).

Mr. Griffin: (Laughter).

Mrs. Griffin: (Laughter).

Mike Zambrano: Uh, so you would swim and you would drink. Hope ... hopefully not at the same time.

Mr. Griffin: (Chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles).

Mr. Griffin: No, there wasn't ... there wasn't much to do, no. Yeah, no we didn't have any, no we just hanging out be ... waiting for the, you know, and then we'd go

out on the next mission, might be a week or so. We just hang out there or it be only a day; it depended on what the orders were.

Mike Zambrano: So, it wasn't like you were going out every day at all; it was just, like you said, just what ... whatever the orders were that came down.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, but we could be ... we might be gone for a whole week.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Griffin: Because once we got up to the Solomon Islands, then they started ... they would send us from ... okay, take these guys over to this island or take this cargo to that island or whatever.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Griffin: And sometimes we were close to the Japanese islands that we'd have a fighter plane escort.

Mike Zambrano: Really?!

Mr. Griffin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Would that happen very often?

Mr. Griffin: Not too often, but we did have a, you look at some of those pictures in there; there's a picture of a fighter plane going along side of us (showing picture). Oh (unintelligible) ...

Mike Zambrano: Do any particular flights stand out to you?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, very definitely!

Mike Zambrano: Like what?

Mr. Griffin: Well, one time, they or ... we ... we took a flight to Australia. We flew from Tontouta, New Caledonia to Brisbane, Australia, due west. And then from Brisbane, we go south to Sydney. That was a big ... biggest city in Australia. So, anyway for the ... on the way to Brisbane, we flew right through the eye of a hurricane, yeah, yeah. 'Cause in those days they didn't have all the electronic aids that they have today. And I ... when we survived and go to ... landed in Brisbane, one of the other guys in operations says, "Oh yeah, that was ... that was ... the other day, we had the same thing up north." Oh, you know, that's how I ... that's how sophisticated we were.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter), wow, things have really changed.

Mr. Griffin: Yes.

Mike Zambrano: Uh, were you scared? I mean ...

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, I was scared!

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle).

Mr. Griffin: I ... I could ... the water was coming right ... leaking right in over all my charts; I couldn't do anything but hang on!

Mike Zambrano: Wow, and then how long did you suppose you were flying ... you're flying through a hurricane?

Mr. Griffin: Oh, I don't know, maybe fifteen or twenty minutes or so. We ... I can remember very well. We ... we were flying east to ... or west to Brisbane, and I looked out the window and there's this big cloud bank ahead of us. It didn't even ... it looked just like ... not ... nothing unusual, and then we flew into it. That's when we got into trouble.

Mike Zambrano: I imagine it must have (unintelligible).

Mr. Griffin: And I could look out the window and see the water down there when we flew through the eye of the hurricane; you could see the water all white caps, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: What other flights did stand out to you?

Mr. Griffin: Well, one of the ... one of the stories is that several months later, they were having trouble with the aviation recognizing that Navy boats, ships, so they set up a procedure where they transfer ... they'd take ... what they did is they took the crew of the plane and put it on a PT boat. Do you know what a PT boat is?

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah. Well, they took us on, they take ... they took us, put us on a PT boat, you know, it was naturally in the tropics, it was warm weather, so we could sit on the deck. And they took us down (unintelligible) we were a mile or so offshore from the Japs for crying out loud! And they stated shooting at us. And the guy ... the captain of the PT boat did a U-turn, boy, and got out of there in a hurry. That was so we would be familiar with them. And the guys on the PT boats would get a trip on the airplane. We were just ...

Mike Zambrano: You were training?!

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, yeah, they ... well, just so we know what we were (pause) ...

Mike Zambrano: So, they got their trip later, I assume?

Mr. Griffin: Beg your pardon?

Mike Zambrano: The ... the crew of the PT boat got their trip later?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah. I ... well, that's what I just told you about the Japs firing on us. They took us on ... said, "This night you're going to go on a PT boat ride, so you'll know what a PT boat is. Make sure you don't have any problem." And I ... our ... the PT boats ... later ... later on, why, they took a ride in our airplane, so they knew what the airplane was all about. So, we ... that's when I ... he took us down around these Jap-held islands, and he got a little too close, and he ... that's where I said he did the U ... U-turn to go ... get out of range.

Mike Zambrano: Wow! That could have ended up badly!

Mr. Griffin: Well, no, we were okay. Just scared (laughter), you know.

Mike Zambrano: Well, I ... I guess, since (unintelligible) ...

Mr. Griffin: It was a long time ago.

Mike Zambrano: But I guess since you said earlier that there ... there wasn't a lot to do, I guess sometimes training like that would ... would just be something else you'd do.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, I ... I forget now just what day it was or anything. All I know is (unintelligible) doing it. I remember we went to a ... an island called Emirau, and that was just north of these Jap-held islands. But the Americans had taken it. This was the end of the line for what ... what we did. And as the war progressed, you know, we kept moving farther west and north, you know, as we moved ... pushed the Japs back.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Griffin: But when I was there, that was the end of the line because at the end of the year I came back. I got orders to come back home. Like I said, when I ... and got to ... to flight training and washed out, but I was still a Second Lieutenant in the Marine Corps. Or if I hadn't done that, I would have been an enlisted man.

Mike Zambrano: What ... what year was it that you came back to the States?

Mr. Griffin: '44.



Mike Zambrano: Did you ... do you recall what ... what base you were at where you took the flight training?

Mr. Griffin: I was in (pause) trying to think of the name, it's a town just north of Chicago. I ... I can't remember.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. And you ... you washed out. What ... what problem did you have, or what did you ... what happened?

Mr. Griffin: Well, I had a problem with the ... what they do when they're getting the training ... later on they, you know, you're in a plane with the instructor in the plane, too. You're in a bi-plane, you know, two seats, one in front of the other. And we had just taken off and gone a short distance, and he cut the power, and I was supposed to learn how to safely get the plane back on the ground, and that's where I failed the ... and they washed me out. So, just ... I'm just thinking I ... that, in retrospect, that maybe they had so many they had to wash out or something, but I didn't like it, but I ... it was done. So, at least I was an officer anyway.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, at least you got to keep that. Uhm, what ... going back to the Pacific, what other flights come ... come to mind that ... that stand out?

Mr. Griffin: (Pause) well, (pause) early on we had to fly ... we kept flying ... seemed like every time we, not every time, but every week or so they'd take another chunk of another island or something, and we had a little farther to go. But I don't remember anything. We didn't have any ... we had fighter plane escorts sometimes, but I didn't see any Jap planes. I don't ...

Mike Zambrano: Probably a good thing.

Mr. Griffin: Huh?

Mike Zambrano: Probably a good thing.

Mr. Griffin: Yes!

Mike Zambrano: I happened to notice here in your ... in your binder, you've got a ... a photograph of a C-47.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, that's the plane, that's the plane. They called them ... the ... the Army called them C-47s, the Navy called them R4Ds, but they were basically a DC-3 from peace time.

Mike Zambrano: Hum.

Mr. Griffin: That was ... that was what ... the airlines used those planes during the '30s and '40s.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, okay. I always thought there was a slight difference between the ... between the DC-3 and the C-47, but ...

Mr. Griffin: No, they're not. It ... they're the same one.

Mike Zambrano: I see you've got a picture of a flying boat here, too.

Mr. Griffin: (Coughs). Oh, I don't know why that's in there, but that's Navy (coughs).

Mike Zambrano: When I was speaking to your daughter-in-law, she mentioned something about Lindbergh ...

Mr. Griffin: (Coughs).

Mike Zambrano: ... Charles Lindbergh.

Mr. Griffin: (Coughs), excuse me. (Pause) yeah, one time when we flew to this Emirau Island, E-m-i-r-a-u, we went into the operations. You know, we always had to go to operations. Well, I don't remember whether we were going to stay over night, anyway, we went to the mess hall and we were having lunch, and I looked up and over there in the next, very next row, maybe twenty feet away was Lindbergh. And he had ... he had volunteered ... he had ... some reason I can't ... the history is a little vague now, he wanted to fight ... he wanted to join, you know, he (unintelligible) he was an older man by this time.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Griffin: And he want ... he wanted to get in the war. And they wouldn't ... I don't know whether it was President Roosevelt, somebody anyway, he couldn't get in the war, so he went to work for one of the aircraft companies, and he became a test pilot. And they decided to test some of their planes in the combat zone! So, that's how he ended up being in the war after all!

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, I remember reading about that. I think he might even be credited with shoot ... shooting down as Japanese plane.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah! That's right! Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Of course, it couldn't really be official, but ...

Mr. Griffin: Well, whatever.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle), but he got it! I see some of the pictures you have here of the planes. Did you take these pictures in this album?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah!

Mike Zambrano: So, I see you've got a ... Cor ... some Corsairs it looks like. Hum (looking at pictures). What would you normally wear – a flight suit, when ... when you were actually island hopping like this?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah. Well, a flight suit was like coveralls.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Griffin: I never wore coveralls; I just wore the, you know, the khaki-colored shirt and pants, that's all.

Mike Zambrano: What about head gear? I notice on ... on some photos there ... there are fellows wearing, I think it's called pith ... pith helmets?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Was that generally what people would wear?

Mr. Griffin: No. Some guys did, but I never did. You mean when they were on the ground you're talking about?

Mike Zambrano: Yeah (unintelligible).

Mr. Griffin: Yeah. (Looking at more photos), now see, there's ... there's a picture of ... what's that, the radioman?

Mike Zambrano: I think so.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, that's a radioman, and the one before that was the ... was that, yeah, that's ... that's a navigator.

Mike Zambrano: Navigator seat?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah. There's the pilot, the co-pilot, then there was a nav ... I was a navigator, which was directly behind the ... the pilot, and the radioman was across the aisle from me behind the co-pilot, and then there was one other guy, the crew chief.

Mike Zambrano: Those are, you know, some of these flights I imagine would be kind of long. I mean, being on an airplane today, you know, people bring their ... listen to music or they watch movies, they kind of entertain themselves as they're on

the plane, but I mean, you didn't have any that. What did you do to stay awake or alert? I mean, I doubt that you were sleeping. What would you do?

Mr. Griffin: Well, I was busy navigating.

Mike Zambrano: So, you didn't like navigate in spurts like ...

Mr. Griffin: No.

Mike Zambrano: ... every thirty minutes or check your ...

Mr. Griffin: Oh well, it depended ... depended what the situation was. You know, the weather, weather makes a big difference when you're flying a plane, particularly those planes at that time.

Mike Zambrano: But if ... let's say the conditions were perfect, I mean, you wouldn't really have a lot to do other than just check, like you said earlier, every hour or so on the weather on directions, I mean?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, yeah. That's right, yeah. But I don't ever remember having any trouble staying awake (laughter), of that's what you're implying.

Mike Zambrano: No, no, no. I just thought ... did you ... did you write, did you ... did you draw, did you ...

Mr. Griffin: I ... I don't remember (chuckles), you know, this is seventy-five years ago! I can't remember.

Mrs. Griffin: (Laughter).

Mike Zambrano: I know if it was me, I'd probably fall asleep (chuckles), so ...

Mrs. Griffin: (Laughter).

Mike Zambrano: But, you know, speaking about letters, how often did you write home? I mean, you have a new wife, I mean, was there any (unintelligible).

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, oh yeah, I'd write home every ... every week or something like that, and she'd write to me, you know, it ... it'd take a while with the mail and everything. I'm way out in the South Pacific, there's no U.S. Postal service out there.

Mike Zambrano: That's true (chuckles). What about the weather? You mentioned a little earlier; what was the weather like?

Mr. Griffin: Oh, the weather was some all the time! You always see these big cumulus clouds, and they always had to be ... there was always something going on. We were worried about the weather all the time.

Mike Zambrano: 'Cause of course, that would ...

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, and rain storms and whatever.

Mike Zambrano: I imagine it was fairly humid.

Mr. Griffin: Oh yeah, darned right!

Mike Zambrano: I always have to ask the food question. What did you think of military food?

Mr. Griffin: What do I think of ... of the military then?

Mike Zambrano: Well, uhm, you know, the food that they would serve in the field; what did you think of it? Some guys said that they loved it. What do you think?

Mr. Griffin: Well, I didn't ... I ... I never had to eat out; I always ate in the dining room. And when we'd land on some of the islands, there's all these islands that had mess halls. We'd eat in the mess hall, you know. And you get in the plane and fly away wherever we were going.

Mike Zambrano: Well, was the food pretty good? Or I would think it ...

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, I ... I wouldn't ... it wasn't gourmet by any means, but it was ... it was okay. Yeah, I never had a bring problem. You know, some guys are very fussy about what they eat and so forth, I wasn't. I was (pause) as long as I got my corn flakes why, why the hell.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, did you fly with the same crew all the time?

Mr. Griffin: No. In the air ... Army Air Force they did; you had a crew and they worked together for, I don't know how long together, but they were the same ones. Every flight I took I would be somebody different, and I have the ... I have my log book right here I could show you.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Griffin: You want to see the log book?

Mike Zambrano: Yeah! That's be great!

Mr. Griffin: (Pause), open that up.

Mike Zambrano: So, you have quite a box here.

Mr. Griffin: See, that right there.

Mike Zambrano: This one?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Wow! (Pause). Hum, here you go.

Mr. Griffin: Well, here it is, right here. (Looking through log book.) This is the typical (pause) ...

Mike Zambrano: Hum. Well, I'm looking at his log book right now, and it lists different pilots on different days and then durations of flight. So, you've got oh, let's see, three and a half, six and a half ... I see a lot of names repeated here, so I'm assuming there were limited amount of pilots (unintelligible), but they still switched out all ... all the time?

Mr. Griffin: (Pause), yeah, well, you're only looking at (unintelligible) some more. These are all different ... different.

Mike Zambrano: Was there any pilot that you preferred?

Mr. Griffin: No, I didn't have any choice.

Mike Zambrano: Well, I ... I know, but I mean, was there just one that was (unintelligible).

Mr. Griffin: No, I don't remember, too long ago.

Mike Zambrano: Well, I've some places listed here. Uhm Tontautu to Brisbane, Brisbane to Sydney.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, that's the one that ...

Other Person: The hurricane.

Mr. Griffin: Uh hum.

Mike Zambrano: Auckland ...

Mr. Griffin: That's in New Zealand, south.

Mike Zambrano: Did you ...

Mr. Griffin: (Unintelligible) You know from where we were in New Caledonia, it was due south to New Zealand, Auckland, and due west to Australia. And of course, you know Australia's a great big island.

Mike Zambrano: Oh yeah. To Espiritu Santo to Guadalcanal. Where you required to keep his book?

Mr. Griffin: I didn't even keep it.

Mike Zambrano: No?

Mr. Griffin: That's ... that's not my writing. We ... whenever we got off the plane back in home base in Tontouta, one of the enlisted men would come in and take my ... all my stuff, maps and everything and away it goes, and that was the writing of some enlisted man. So, there was no hanky-panky with it.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, just to make sure that you were going where you were supposed to be going?

Mr. Griffin: And not exaggerating the hours or anything like that.

Mike Zambrano: When you say hanky-panky, what ... would some pilots do something that they weren't supposed to do or ...

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, loop the loop; it was terrible.

Mike Zambrano: Loop the loop?

Mr. Griffin: Oh, I don't know.

Mike Zambrano: Oh (laughter).

Mrs. Griffin: (Chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: So, how many flying hours do you think you had altogether?

Mr. Griffin: Oh, I don't know. I'd have to look in that book to ... to add them up.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, this is a lot of adding (laughter). Yeah, this is a lot of flights! Well, at least this page says six hundred- and thirty-point seven total to date, and that's in May of 1944. That's a lot of hours on a plane.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: And, let's see, you say you ... you came back to the States in 1944?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Well, this page says seven hundred and eighty-two point nine hours.

Mr. Griffin: Whatever it is; I don't remember.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, oh, it says Marine Training Squadron 814.

Mr. Griffin: I'd have to look at the book.

Mike Zambrano: Well, I'm assuming that maybe ... maybe that's the ... the ... when you were at flight school, maybe.

Mr. Griffin: I don't know.

Mike Zambrano: Hum. Looks about June 1944 when it ... when it ...

Mr. Griffin: Let me see.

Mike Zambrano: ... when it ... I think you leave the Pacific. Because there's a page there and then it starts talking about instructor.

Other Person: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, I was back in the States.

Other Person: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Griffin: And another thing that ... whether you know it or not, they would take us ... for instance, the very end of the war, well maybe last six or seven months or so, I was stationed in El Centro, California right on the Mexican border east of San Diego out in the desert. And no matter where we were they'd put us all on a plane and fly us around for an hour or so so we'd get flight pay. You know, flight pay is a little additional to the regular pay.

Mike Zambrano: Right, huh! For flight pay. Was there like a minimum of hours that you had to fly in order to qualify or ...

Mr. Griffin: I don't know; I don't remember now.

Mike Zambrano: Do you remember how much more flight pay might have been?

Mr. Griffin: I don't remember that either. I'm serious; I don't remember.

Mike Zambrano: You know, somewhere in my notes I think I have something about you being a first lieutenant. So, I must assume that you got promoted at some point?

Mr. Griffin: Oh yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Were you still in the Pacific when you were ... when you were promoted?

Mr. Griffin: No. Here's the (pause) ... this is one of the maps that I ... we didn't use ... I didn't use them, but the (unintelligible) that's all of the Solomon Islands there. There's Guadalcanal.

Mike Zambrano: Oh my gosh, there's so many little names on here (looking at map). Would you say you were a pretty good navigator?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah. I never ... I'm alive and well.

Mike Zambrano: I guess that's proof, huh?

Mr. Griffin: (Chuckles), yeah, I did ... I did alright.

Mike Zambrano: What else do you have in your box 'cause I notice you have some other books?

Mr. Griffin: (Pause), here is all of my orders.



Mike Zambrano: Oh!

Mr. Griffin: Here.

Mike Zambrano: Wow, you have all this still?!

Mr. Griffin: I (unintelligible) I have to go to the bathroom.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. Let me just put it on pause here (pausing for break). Okay alright, we're back. While we had the break, I was looking at some of your documents and I noticed that there's one that officially says that you had seven hundred flying hours. So, in case you were curious. And ...

Mr. Griffin: Oh, thank you (unintelligible).

Mike Zambrano: Here we go.

Mr. Griffin: Put them down here. Thank you.

Other Person: Want to go outside (talking to animal)?

Mike Zambrano: So, and now I have a box of photographs. I'm just going to pull a few out if you don't mind. Just take ... take ...

Mr. Griffin: Be my guest.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm. (Pause while looking through photos). (Chuckles), got a picture of someone in the trash can there?

Mr. Griffin: (Pause), yeah, that's the guy, Lou Adams.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Griffin: And here's ... in other words, we were just fooling around. But that's where ... that's our home base.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Griffin: See the wooden huts there?

Mike Zambrano: Oh.

Mr. Griffin: You'll see more of those, they're there.

Mike Zambrano: And you said that they would house about five or six officers?

Mr. Griffin: Yes. At the most.

Mike Zambrano: Was there a ... was there a lot of goofing around in these ... in spare ... in the spare time that you had?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, at the officer's bar.

Mike Zambrano: At the officer's bar? So, you had your own bar? Was it like ...

Mr. Griffin: Oh, yeah!

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Griffin: Oh, yeah, we had a club ... an officer's club. And it was a bar, and in the other part of the building was the dining room. And we were right there on the Tontauta River and we could walk out of the bar, go from here to the end of my lock and we'd be ... uh, a pier there and we could jump in and go swimming.

Mike Zambrano: There weren't like any alligators or anything or ...

Mr. Griffin: No, no, no. It was just ...

Mike Zambrano: Now, tell me a little bit about this photo, this gentleman is holding a bow and arrow.

Mr. Griffin: Let's see.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, that was during off times as well?

Mr. Griffin: That was ... that's ... that guy's name was Denson (sp?). Yeah, that was his hobby. I never shot ... I never used a bow and arrow (chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, I would imagine. It must have been really different back then. I mean, today, I mean ...

Mr. Griffin: Well, he was ... he was ... well, all those guys are good guys. They ... he's from Georgia. It turned out that his family had money. I don't know whether they had any ... with the bow and arrow.

Mike Zambrano: Did you stay in touch ...

Mr. Griffin: (Coughs).

Mike Zambrano: ... with any of them after the war?

Mr. Griffin: (Coughs), excuse me. I didn't, no; but they ... one time just within (unintelligible). There's some photos there of the guys and their plane with their wives, and they had, like I said, this one guy had ... had money, and they flew around and visited us within the ... it was still the '40s, so like 1946 or '47, something like that. I haven't seen any of them since. Nope, I never communicated or ...

Mike Zambrano: Never any reunions or anything like that?

Mr. Griffin: No.

Mike Zambrano: And I notice you have some ... some pictures of ... of, I'm assuming they're ... they're probably natives.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, I don't whether they ... how they got in the ...

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, what'd you think of the natives? I mean, did they ...

Mr. Griffin: I didn't ... we didn't have any contact with them at all.

Mike Zambrano: None at all?

Mr. Griffin: No.

Mike Zambrano: What about things like ... like laundry? How did that work for you?  
Everyone did their own?

Mr. Griffin: No. (Pause), no I didn't do it. They had some arrangement, you know? It's a big outfit and you had ... contracted it out to somebody. I don't know, it's so long ago.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm. It looks like someone had a dog. Does that ring any bells?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, it's John Friedmeyer (sp?) and his dog and that's the ... the wooden hut that we lived in. It's hit pet dog.

Mike Zambrano: It wasn't like your ... your group's mascot or anything like that?

Mr. Griffin: No, no.

Mike Zambrano: Was it a dog he found on the island?

Mr. Griffin: Was it what?

Mike Zambrano: Oh, was it ... was it a dog that he found on the island?

Mr. Griffin: I guess ... I think so, I don't know; it's so many years ago.

Mike Zambrano: When ... when you would fly, was everybody required to carry a weapon in case you crashed or anything; got on a ... ended up on a Japanese island?

Mr. Griffin: (Pause), we had, yeah, I think so. I think I had a revolver. Yeah, I think so. I'm, you know, seventy-five years ago and I ... I think I did.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, hum. What else was I going to say? Well, you've got quite a few pictures in here.

Mr. Griffin: On the back of it that, you know, there's ...

Mike Zambrano: Oh! Bougainville.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, it was a big, big island in the Solomons. Had a big battle that get the ... away from the Japs (coughs).

Mike Zambrano: (Unintelligible) any Japanese prisoners of war?

Mr. Griffin: Hum?

Mike Zambrano: Did you ever see any Japanese prisoners of war?

Mr. Griffin: Yes!

Mike Zambrano: Wow! Well ...

Mr. Griffin: I saw Japanese prisoners of war because when I was ... got orders to return to the States, I came back on a troops ship, and on the troop ship in one of the lower decks was a big cage. And in that cage was about four or five Jap prisoners of war. Why they were taking them back to the States, I have no idea, but they did. And I had to ... we took turns guarding them.

Mike Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah! I've ... I ... I remember at least a couple of times because the ... the trip back on the troop ship from New Caledonia to San Francisco, I thought we was never going to make it. It was so long and they zigzagged and ... I don't know. Anyway, they did ... I did see Jap prisoners of war (chuckles) over in lockup.

Mike Zambrano: That's strange that they would bring them back like that.

Mr. Griffin: I don't know what they had in mind. I don't know.

Mike Zambrano: Hum. How long did it take you to get back? I mean, you said it seemed like a really long time.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, it did! Thought I'd never get home! I don't know, several days, at least. Because like I said, they did the zigzag part, so that slowed them down.

Mike Zambrano: You know ...

Mr. Griffin: And then another ... another incident that slowed them down was that one of the guys jumped overboard.

Mike Zambrano: What?!

Mr. Griffin: Well, he ...

Mike Zambrano: Jumped overboard?

Mr. Griffin: ... yeah, you about today, people having nervous breakdowns, so forth.

Mike Zambrano: Well, I can understand that.

Mr. Griffin: Some ... some guy, I don't know who he was or anything, and they ... the ... the ship's captain circled around looking for him, but we never could find him.

Mike Zambrano: Really?!

Mr. Griffin: He drowned, obviously.

Mike Zambrano: Was it just one troop transport taking you back, or was it a whole group of them?

Mr. Griffin: No, just one.

Mike Zambrano: And, I can understand if he was going to the Pacific, but coming home?

Mr. Griffin: Well, going to the Pacific I was in the plane, remember?

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Griffin: I was the navigator.

Mike Zambrano: Oh no, I was ... I was just saying that the man who jumped overboard, I mean, I ... I could see maybe if he didn't ... well ...

Mr. Griffin: No, I think he snapped, and he, you know, you read about it in the paper today that the guys, veterans and so forth, are go ... get a little loopy.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah. I ... yeah, you're right.

Mr. Griffin: That's what happened to this guy whoever he was.

Mike Zambrano: Was there anything else that happened on the back?

Mr. Griffin: That was it.

Mike Zambrano: Do you remember if your ship was overcrowded or was it ...

Mr. Griffin: Well, it was ... it was full of ... of service people – Army, Navy, Marines, nurses, and one of my friends fell in love with one of the nurses as soon as they got back. They got married!

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles). Well, that's a nice story.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, 'cause we had nothing else to do, just sit around and talk and look at the ocean.

Mike Zambrano: Today, everybody would probably be looking at their phone instead.

Mr. Griffin: They were ...

Mike Zambrano: You get the drift (laughter).

Other Person: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Uh, I've got ask about this picture here 'cause it's normally something that you wouldn't want to be doing (chuckles). A picture of a soldier sticking a ...

Mr. Griffin: That's me!

Mike Zambrano: That's you you're point at?

Mr. Griffin: Yes!

Mike Zambrano: You're pointing your rifle at yourself?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah. Yes, yes. That's ... I'd had it; I didn't like the food.

Mike Zambrano: You didn't what?

Mr. Griffin: (Laughter).

Mike Zambrano: You didn't like the food?

Mr. Griffin: No, just kidding (laughter).

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, it's ... yeah, it's normally they would teach you not to be doing. My golly. Hey, I'm think (pause), what's this? Uhm, I don't know why, well, it's a picture of ... looks like a long shelf with ...

Mr. Griffin: Yes, well, that's the inside of one of these wooden huts ...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Griffin: ... that we were living in, and they had ... the guys had put together this shelf and that's a picture of my wife on the shelf there.

Mike Zambrano: What was her name?

Mr. Griffin: Ruth.

Mike Zambrano: Ruth.

Mr. Griffin: She passed away.

Mike Zambrano: Sorry. I see someone wrote on a wall, "Gestapo," there.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah. I don't know, you know, we were just young guys fooling around.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter). Oh, and I see some ... some drawings on the wall.

Mr. Griffin: Well, one of those guys is an artist.

Mike Zambrano: I ... I guess you're just keeping busy, huh? And I see, well, actually, there's one back here, I mean, again, yeah, I can imagine how there's a lot of down time. I ... I see he's got three or four bottles of liquor sitting up on the desk there (chuckles).

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, looks like it. I think it was ... that was ... I think that was Joe Fuller because he liked to wear that pith helmet. And ...

Mike Zambrano: And I think this is a really good shot of your ... of your living quarters. So, it had two windows per side, and it looks like it's just a big square pretty much.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah. That's it right there.

Mike Zambrano: And of course, the ... the poster on the wall of the girl in the bathing suit. I'm sure it was probably quite common back then?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, that was the, oh, what was that magazine? Oh, I don't know, that's ... that's exactly what it was and it was ... it had a little sink there.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, there's a picture here that shows one (unintelligible).

Mr. Griffin: But the ... the ... it doesn't have a bathroom; it just had that sink. The ... the latrine was out in the middle of the camp where guys would take ... do their business in this latrine, you know, what a latrine is? Well, we had several of them scattered about the place. But they ... you didn't, you know, they didn't have internal plumbing (laughter) or anything like that.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, I guess nowadays folks wouldn't think about that. Is this a latrine like someone had to clean it out occasionally or ...

Mr. Griffin: I ... I don't know; it wasn't my job!

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Griffin: Or I would have remembered (chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, mosquito netting – were there a lot of mosquitos?

Mr. Griffin: Oh yeah, oh ...

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Other Person: (Talking outside of room, unintelligible).

Mr. Griffin: It ... it got so that you sort of got used to it or something because I remember putting it away 'cause it would ... it was hot! That netting would keep the, you know, and I'm laying on a cot with this netting and it was ... got so hot that I just put the netting away, and the other guys did the same.

Mike Zambrano: And rather just deal with the mosquitos?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: I see there's ... there's a planking that goes ...

Mr. Griffin: Look on the back.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, this one? It says, “Lived in first hut to ride with Hooker, Roscoe, (unintelligible), and I see there’s wooden planking between the two huts, so ...

Mr. Griffin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Is that to say that when it rained it got (unintelligible)?

Mr. Griffin: Hooker, Roscoe and Friedmeyer, yeah. Yeah, with, you know, it was rainy, and it’d get muddy, so they made a wooden walkway.

Mike Zambrano: I’m curious about that one there (showing photo), the sailboat?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, this is the ... the Wolf – Tinker and Clactus, uh, Cactus, two of the guys that was there, they built this in their spare time, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: They built it? They built a sailboat?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, and it wasn’t ... it was mostly cloth.

Mike Zambrano: Well, it looks pretty nice!

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, it was. It was just in that river by the officer’s club. There was a wide spot in the river where ... and they ...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Griffin: ... built that. You know, we weren’t flying all the time. We had ...

Mike Zambrano: Right. Cactus, I’ve seen that name a couple of times. Is that ... that’s got to be ...

Mr. Griffin: Well, that’s ... that’s his last name was Denson, like his nickname was Cactus.

Mike Zambrano: Cactus was always the quite ... quite the busy in his off ... off hours. Isn’t he the same guy with the bow and arrow?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah! Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Let’s see now, uhm, alright (pause) hum. So, you come back in ... in June of ’44. Let’s see, you ... you wouldn’t remember the name of the ship would you?

Mr. Griffin: No.

Mike Zambrano: Now, I ask, some people it just stands out in their memory what the name was.

Mr. Griffin: (Unintelligible).

Mike Zambrano: So, you come back, and I think you said ... where do you land in the States when you come back?



Mr. Griffin: San Francisco.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, so you were in San Francisco.

Mr. Griffin: And I wanted ... I ... that's where we landed, then they took us ... sent us to ... well, we report to the Marine base there at San Diego.

Mike Zambrano: So, they took you down to San Diego – what bus or train or ...

Mr. Griffin: Train.

Mike Zambrano: Oh! When you were heading out and you got to San Diego before you went to the Pacific, was that train also?

Mr. Griffin: Yes.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. How'd it feel to get home? Well, I mean, you're not home, but you're back in the States.

Mr. Griffin: Good.

Mike Zambrano: And of course, you're looking forward to going to flight school?

Mr. Griffin: Well, I was looking forward to seeing my wife! (Laughter)

Mike Zambrano: Oh yeah, of course. Did she come out to meet you when you got back?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah! She came out again, and we bought a second-hand car, and had it for the rest of the, and then we were headed for our way to flight school.

Mike Zambrano: And flight school was some place north of Chicago you said?

Mr. Griffin: (Pause), no, it wasn't, not this ... not then ... then. It was the first time after I got out of (pause) ...

Mike Zambrano: So ...

Mr. Griffin: ... in Iowa pre-flight.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Griffin: Ended up flight school was in ... but when I came home, the flight school was Ottumwa, Iowa.

Mike Zambrano: Ottumwa, Iowa.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah. Even though it was wartime, they took over ... it's all over the place and (pause) ...

Mike Zambrano: So, did you and your wife go to Iowa together?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. And ...

Mr. Griffin: I got back to the States, I said, "Come on out here," so she got on the train and came out to San Diego and we ... when she was here ... there, we bought this second-hand car, then I got orders to go to flight school in Ottumwa, Iowa and we went there by car or by our own car. 'Cause they used ... they had, you know, they had orders to agree to ... where I wouldn't have to report for maybe ten days or so. It'd be plenty of time.

Mike Zambrano: So, was she living in the area while you were going to flight school?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, yeah. We rented an apartment. And I'd go ... and I'd take the car and go out to the field, and she'd stay in there. And then we were there long enough she even got a job (coughs). Excuse me.

Mike Zambrano: So, how long were you in flight school before you washed out?

Mr. Griffin: Oh, I don't know, probably a couple of months, I don't know something like that.

Mike Zambrano: Did you ... where did you go after flight school?

Mr. Griffin: They sent us to a Marine Corps airbase in North Carolina.

Mike Zambrano: Marine Corps airbase. Do you ... do you remember the name?

Mr. Griffin: No. And I remember it was in North Carolina because, you know, my wife and I were there with our car and for some reason, we were driving north, that panhandle that sticks down, you know, between Chesapeake Bay and the ocean?

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Griffin: South of Delaware?

Mike Zambrano: Delmarva Peninsula.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, Delmarva Peninsula. We were driving north there with the radio on when they announced the death of President Roosevelt.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Griffin: I remember that very well. President Roosevelt was a big deal to ... to particularly me because he was the guy that ... during the whole Depression and World War II. You know, he was ... he was the only man elected to four terms of office, then they restricted it two. They passed an amendment to the Constitution that you could only serve for two terms.

Mike Zambrano: Right. What'd you think that ... that he'd died or ...

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, well, it was sad, but he was, you know, getting up in years, so ... whatever. The sad ... the part of the story that I didn't at the time, you know, he was with his mistress in Palm ... Warm Springs, Georgia when he died. They didn't tell you anything about that though.

Mike Zambrano: No, I guess ... I guess they ... back then you wouldn't talk about that sort of stuff.

Mr. Griffin: And Eleanor [Roosevelt] was up in Washington D.C. in the White House, and you know, she did a lot ... she was a ... she was quite a woman, did a lot of traveling and making speeches and everything; she was good. She wasn't very good looking, but that's beside the point. But they had ... they had what ... they had five sons or something like that or five ... four sons and a daughter, something like that.

Mike Zambrano: Something like that.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm so you get to this base in North Carolina, and what do you do? What ... what duties are you going to be given now?

Mr. Griffin: Well, they were ... they put me in a B-25 squadron as a navigator, and, you know, on the bombing. That was a medium-sized bomber.

Mike Zambrano: Do you remember what ... what ...

Mr. Griffin: Well, all we did was fly around. We took a trip to ... we flew up to New Jersey and back and so forth. Now, this is towards the end of the war, you know?

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Griffin: So, the plan was to go out to the ... the whole squadron would go out to the west coast and on out to the Pacific, but the war ended. So, we all got drunk.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter). Your theme.

Mr. Griffin: (Chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: Well, do you ... do you remember the squadron number or anything like that, do you?

Mr. Griffin: No.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. So, the war ended ...

Mr. Griffin: Well, it might be in that ... where's the flight book? Here. The flight log.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Griffin: It might be in there.

Mike Zambrano: Let's see (looking through flight log book).

Mr. Griffin: I don't know; I ... I don't know, you know, it's so long ago.

Mike Zambrano: Well, there is ... okay, there is this Marine Training Squadron 814, and it's dated May '45. Uhm, so May '45. Okay. There are places like Cherry Point.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: That kind of stuff.

Mr. Griffin: That's in North Carolina.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, so this must have been the name of the outfit.

Mr. Griffin: That's just after the war, after I got back from overseas.

Mike Zambrano: So, let me just jot this down, hum, Marine Training Squadron. (Pause), 814, C-a-s. Do you ... do you remember where you were when you heard that ... that the Japanese had surrendered?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah. (Laughter), that's very good! Japanese had surrendered. That was in '45. Well one night I called us or something?

Mike Zambrano: Uh yes.

Other Person: That was just a few days after Jimmy and (unintelligible) were born.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, why do I remember that? It ... it was secondary to the fact that we had twin boys.

Mike Zambrano: Oh.

Mr. Griffin: Like (unintelligible) says.

Mike Zambrano: Wow!

Other Person: August 10<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: August 10<sup>th</sup> of '45.

Other Person: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Do you remember hearing about the atomic bomb?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah. They had ... there was some things in the paper a few days before that saying that some sort of nuclear device or something; it was sort of vague, but they ... I don't know what, but then I ... we got the news about it, you know, or on the radio or whatever.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm. So, with the war being over and you being in the squadron, what ... like you said earlier, you didn't go to the Pacific, what is that ... that happens?  
What do you do?

Mr. Griffin: Well, I ... say ... ask me again.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, with the war over, and your squadron not going to ...

Mr. Griffin: Oh, we didn't do anything. I was stationed in El Centro, California like I said, and we just waited for orders to come through so we could go home. We didn't do anything. The war was over. And they were cutting these orders and they'd get ... just couldn't do them overnight, so I was there for another month or so before I got order to ... I was through.

Mike Zambrano: So, are you ... you mentioned on the phone that you got out of the service in '45?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: So, you must have a lot of points to get out.

Mr. Griffin: I don't if ... I know what you mean, but I don't ... I didn't have to have points.

Mike Zambrano: No?!

Mr. Griffin: No. We get out, the war was over! I wasn't going to re-enlist or anything.

Mike Zambrano: No?

Mr. Griffin: No!

Mike Zambrano: So, 'cause I ... a lot of veterans I've ... I've spoken to would have been ... gotten out in about '46 or so, but I guess you were already home (unintelligible) recently.

Mr. Griffin: Well, maybe ... maybe they were enlisted men. Now, that was different.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Griffin: I was an officer, so ...

Mike Zambrano: So, maybe a ... it's probably late '45 that you get out.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, I think it was like October or something I got orders to ... I was ... was over officially as far ... far as my service was concerned.

Mike Zambrano: Did you stop to think at all about staying in?

Mr. Griffin: No, I did not. I wanted to go ... I had to finish college. I had interrupted my college to go to war, and I wanted to go back and finish my education. Besides that we were married and we now had two twin boys.

Mike Zambrano: So, where do you end up residing – you, your wife, your twins? Do you go back to Pennsylvania?

Mr. Griffin: I went to Wooster (sp?), Ohio where the college was.

Mike Zambrano: Ah! Okay.

Mr. Griffin: We rented rooms in an apartment across the street from the campus.

Mike Zambrano: And did you continue to get your political science and history (unintelligible)?

Mr. Griffin: Yeah, yeah, it took me all of '46. I didn't actually get ... graduate until January of '47.

Mike Zambrano: And did you use the GI Bill?

Mr. Griffin: Oh yeah! Darn tootin! Absolutely!

Mike Zambrano: Did that pay for more than just your tuition?

Mr. Griffin: I think it was just basically the tuition; I'm pretty sure that's all it was.

Mike Zambrano: And what did you do with your ... your degree when you graduated?

Mr. Griffin: I framed it

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Griffin: (Chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: Fair enough.

Mr. Griffin: (Laughter).

Mike Zambrano: Or ... uh, with your college experience, and knowledge what ...

Mr. Griffin: I ended up in ... I ended up ... I ended up being an insurance adjuster.

Mike Zambrano: Oh!

Mr. Griffin: And then I proceeded up through the ranks of the ... of the insurance called Casualty ... Casualty Insurance Company.

Mike Zambrano: Casually?

Other Person: Casualty.

Mike Zambrano: Casualty.

Other Person: Property and Casualty.

Mike Zambrano: And how long did you do that?

Mr. Griffin: Rest of my career, yeah. I retired. Yeah, I was in there about ... years and years.

Other Person: Wound up in New York City.

Mike Zambrano: About what year did you retire?

Mr. Griffin: When was it, Rich, '82? Something like that?

Rich: Yeah, something like that; '82 or '83.

Mike Zambrano: So about thirty years of ...

Mr. Griffin: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: ... of the business.

Mr. Griffin: Roughly, yeah, thirty years.

Mike Zambrano: Is there anything that I haven't asked you about your World War II experience that comes to mind or that I ... I didn't maybe ask the right question? Anything you'd like to add?

Mr. Griffin: You didn't ask me about that time I got drunk.

Mike Zambrano: Well ... okay can you tell me about that time you got drunk?

Other People: (Laughter).

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Griffin: Yeah. One time, no, I'm serious. This is after the war and I was working for this insurance company, and the big boss comes down from Hartford, and it was the ... my ... the two of us went out to a bar, and I can't remember how in the world I got home that night. But I ... I managed to make it, but I really was in bad shape. And he just ... he just had to go across the street to the hotel, but I had to go all the way several miles to where I, you know, my home. But anyway, that's the only time that ever happened.

Mike Zambrano: So, all the other times in the Pacific it was in moderation?

Mr. Griffin: What do you mean?

Mike Zambrano: Oh ...

Mr. Griffin: Oh, you mean about drinking?

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Griffin: Yeah. Yeah, I was never a ... bad ... drinking was never a problem with me. But we had an officer's club and a bar, and we'd go over and have a beer or a mixed drink, you know? It depends on if we had to pay for it, too, but not, you know, cheap, everything was because we were in the service and they, and you know, like cigarettes were real cheap and so forth. We did a lot of smoking. I ... that's the only time I really ... I ... I've always been a moderate smoker and I haven't had a cigarette for fifty years or so now. But like, you know, the tension and so forth, why, you tend to smoke more.

Mike Zambrano: Did you get cigarette rations back then?

Mr. Griffin: I'm trying ... I don't remember. I think ... I've never had any trouble getting cigarettes. I ... (unintelligible) but the details I don't remember.

Other Person: Malaria pills, Dad.

Mike Zambrano: Malaria? Did you have malaria at any point?

Mr. Griffin: No.

Other Person: Did ... they have pills out on the table?

Mr. Griffin: What?

Other Person: Didn't they have pills out on the table for you guys to take?

Other Person: Tell him about the carrots.

Mr. Griffin: What?

Other Person: The carrots. They would always serve you carrots with dinner because carrots supposedly helped your eyesight.

Mr. Griffin: Oh yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Carrots? Okay.

Other Person: I thought he said once (unintelligible).

Mr. Griffin: I forgot about that.

Other Person: I don't remember that one.

Other Person: No? No quinine tablets?

Mike Zambrano: Okay, so what about these carrots?



Mr. Griffin: Well, they just ... they put carrots on a dish on the center of the table and, you know, you'd nibble away on a carrot. That's all. Like he said it supposedly helps you with your eyesight.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm (unintelligible). You know, I just thought of something. All these hours that you spent in the air, did you ever have any temptation to sit in the co-pilot seat?

Mr. Griffin: No, uh uh. He was there, always there (laughter).

Mr. Griffin: No, I didn't ever ... I never had any kind ... to want to ... maybe I did once or twice now that you say so. And you know, the pilot was there doing the flying and I was just sitting there for ... for maybe a hour or something like that. The co-pilot we just ... change of pace or something, you know, was ... happen.

Mike Zambrano: Well, I think you've answered all my questions.

Mr. Griffin: Good!

Mike Zambrano: And I think that you've given your ... your ... back to your family.

Mr. Griffin: What?

Mike Zambrano: I think ... I think I can give your day back to your family now. So ... uh, on behalf of the Museum and myself, I just want to say thank you for your service.

Mr. Griffin: Well, thank you.

(end of interview)

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