THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Center for Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

Stephen M. Perrone
Somerdale, New Jersey
March 7, 2007
Radar Bombardier
63rd Bomb Squadron, 43rd Bomb Group, 5th Air Force
B-24 "Snoopers"
New Guinea, Morotai, Tacloban
Mindoro, Clark Field

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is March 7, 2007. I am interviewing Mr. Stephen M. Perrone by telephone. His address is 225 Woods Lane, Somerdale, New Jersey, 08083. His mailing address is P. O. Box 100, Somerdale, New Jersey, 08083. His phone number is area code 856-783-1271. This interview is in support of the National Museum of Pacific War, Center for Pacific War Studies, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Perrone

I thank you for contacting me. It's just great that you read a letter that I wrote. Several people called me locally.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, the letter that you wrote to the editor of the World War II Magazine.

Mr. Perrone

I provided some input for the article because we were flying over the Philippine Islands when this particular, as written in World War II Magazine happened.

Mr. Misenhimer

I have it laying right here in front of me. Now the first thing that I would like to do is to get an alternate contact. We have found that sometimes two or three years down the road we try to get in contact with a veteran and he has moved or something. Do you have a son or daughter or someone that we can contact in case we can't find you?

Mr. Perrone

Sure. I have a daughter that lives about 15 miles from here. Her name is Rosalie Hamilton. Believe it or not I have to look in the book. The problem is that they have too many numbers. She has a cell phone, my grandson has a cell phone, my granddaughter has a cell phone; you know what I mean? I'm going to give you her number. Her address is 133 N Brentwood Avenue, Pitman, New Jersey 08071. Her phone number is 856-589-2294.

Mr. Misenhimer

Thank you. Now the next I thing I need to do is to read to you this agreement with the National Museum of the Pacific War. When I do these in person I give it to the man to read and sign, but since this is by phone let me read this to you to make sure that it is okay. "Agreement Read." Is that okay?

Mr. Perrone

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me start off my asking, what is your birth date?

Mr. Perrone

May 29, 1920. President Kennedy had the same birthday. He was three or four years older than I was. Of course you know he was a World War II Navy guy.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you born?

Mr. Perrone

I was born in Philadelphia.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Perrone

I have two brothers.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were either of those in World War II?

Mr. Perrone

No. My brother who was 8 years younger went to Korea.

Mr. Misenhimer

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

Mr. Perrone

We lived in an apartment. My uncle, my father's oldest brother had a house and he had five daughters. He was a widower. His wife died early. We rented an apartment in my uncle's house. We had a two room apartment and shared a bathroom with my uncle and his daughters. I had two brothers and they were 8 and 9 years younger than I was. I slept in the kitchen on a bed that folded up. It was one of those beds that folded up and you snapped them closed with some kind of arm bar and they stayed up and then you opened them up at night. I slept on that bed until I started high school. I don't remember the year. I didn't graduate from high school in that apartment but when I started high school I was still in that apartment, maybe the first two or three years. My father worked for RCA in the cabinet making area. In those days they made Victrolas (they were called talking machines) and radios. They had a lot of layoffs. Fortunately, my mother was a dressmaker. She was pretty talented at sewing silk dresses and stuff like that. So she also

worked.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you got by okay then?

Mr. Perrone

Yes. Where we lived there were all sorts of people; Italian, Polish, Irish and Jewish immigrants. The small businesses were Jewish and there were some blacks in the area. Of course they were called Negroes then. We had three or four black families on the street where we lived. There were never any problems. Everybody was friendly.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were your parents born in this country or did they come from Italy?

Mr. Perrone

They came from Italy; my mother when she was 16 I believe she said; and my father when he was 20. They were not married there. They were married here.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Perrone

I went to a school called Southern High School which was in the southern part of Philadelphia. It still exists. In those days the building was separated and one side was for girls and one side was for boys. The boys were not allowed to go on the girl's side.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was this a Catholic school?

Mr. Perrone

No, it was not. It was a public school.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you finish there?

Mr. Perrone

I finished there. It was a good experience because I met a lot of kids from the different areas. For me it was.

Mr. Misenhimer

What year did you graduate?

Mr. Perrone

I believe 1938. Does that sound right? I would have been 17 or 18.

Mr. Misenhimer

That sounds right.

Mr. Perrone

I remember the principal was of German descent. A big man about 6'3". He was an older man but a guy - you did not mess with. Nobody did. He was a disciplinarian.

Mr. Misenhimer

One of those Prussians was he?

Mr. Perrone

I'm sure he was pretty nice but he presented a stern front. I never saw him smile. I don't remember him being abusive but he was a guy that you didn't really challenge.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you finished high school, what did you do then?

Mr. Perrone

I thought I wanted to go to college. My mother and father never really had the money,

but I went to a business school in Center City which was business and advertising; that kind of business. I spent a year there. My mother borrowed the money from a relative. It wasn't a lot of money but I don't remember what it was for a year. I did pretty well except the kids that I went to school with were all from the Main Line in Philadelphia. The Main Line, as you probably know, in Philadelphia is where all the best homes were located. The Main Line was given that name by the Pennsylvania Railroad. It was the main line between New York City, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. I was working at a plant that actually was making clothes and stuff for Great Britain and Europe as I recall At that time the Army was promoting the Flying Cadets to train as Army Air Force Pilots. They had groups of doctors and Air Force people going around the country recruiting young men into the Army. This was 1939 - 1940 and we were not at war then. So I applied to the Philadelphia area group and I passed the written exam. Then I took a physical and I flunked the physical because the doctor said, "You have a deviated right septum and you won't be able to breathe too well at high altitudes." I had broken my nose playing sandlot football when I was about 15 or 16 At the time, I went to a local hospital and my mother and father never even knew that I broke my nose. The hospital straightened my nose and put something on it. I took it off because I had to go home later. That's probably what caused the deviated septum. About six months later a different Cadet team was interviewing in Baltimore, Maryland. So I told my parents that I wanted to go. I got the fare and I took a train or a bus to Baltimore, I took the exam again. Different people and the same procedure and the doctor again said, "You have a deviated right septum and you won't be able to fly." So that was it. In 1941 I was drafted. I wasn't with the first people that were drafted. It was maybe six or seven or eight months later when my number came

up and I was drafted into the service.

Mr. Misenhimer

What date was that?

Mr. Perrone

I remember the date. October 23, 1941. Seven weeks before Pearl Harbor or something like that.

Mr. Misenhimer

What branch did you go into?

Mr. Perrone

I went into the regular service and then while we were there, at that time, the Army said that if you were drafted into the service it was a two year enlistment. But then they had recruiters from the Army Air Force and the Navy I believe. If you wanted to join one of the services then you would have to serve three years. I think maybe the Navy was four years, but I don't remember now. They had an Army Air Force guy there and I said, "I want to join the Army Air Force" because they offered schooling. So I joined the Army Air Force for three years. I picked out the different things they had. I picked out Airplane Instrumentation and Mechanic. I was sent to Chanute Field, Illinois. I don't remember when I got there, about a month later, on November 23rd or so, and maybe I was there a week or so when Pearl Harbor happened. All the guys in my barracks were in shock. Several months later I was attending classes at Chanute Field when the Cadet Board came to Chanute Field looking for Flying Cadets. I volunteered and I took the test again. For the third time, I passed the written test. Then I took the physical and went all through it. The Major turned to me and shook my hand and said, "You are a Flying Cadet." I said,

"Wonderful. I am so happy. But I do have deviated right septum." He said, "Yeah, but that won't bother you." And that was it. (laugh)

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, they had changed their tune a little bit now that we were at war, hadn't they?

Mr. Perrone

They were at war, so we needed more people; that's what it was.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me ask you again about Pearl Harbor Day. When you heard about that, how did you think that would affect you?

Mr. Perrone

It was a tremendous shock. In those days, and in fact I read about it later too, we all thought the Japanese made cheap toys and things that were not of lasting value, so they were not much of a nation. It's always been a sort of prejudice, even now you can hear it from people, that people from Asia and Viet Nam they were called "gooks". We never thought the Japanese would be worthy opponents. In fact, Ernest Hemingway was quoted as calling them "monkeys" and said one cruiser and a couple of destroyers would take care of Tokyo and another one would take care of Yokohama or something like that. But of course it wasn't true.

Mr. Misenhimer

We got a big surprise didn't we?

Mr. Perrone

We are discovering that even now I think. It was a tremendous shock. Some of the people that I was together with a little while said, "My God, the war is just starting and we're

already in the service. We can't possibly live through it." We all said that it would be three or four years before it was over. We thought we would win, but we would probably be dead; that we wouldn't make it. It was a tremendous shock; we were almost speechless. We never dreamed our Pacific Fleet would be almost destroyed. Luckily our carriers had gone out on exercises.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you were there at Chanute Field there at Rantoul, Illinois when you heard that?

Mr. Perrone

Yes I was at Chanute Field, just about 100 miles south of Chicago. It was right by the University of Illinois.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all did you study there?

Mr. Perrone

I was going to mechanic and instrument school and that sort of thing. I started School right after Pearl Harbor and we had the coldest weather I had ever experienced. We had to walk at least a half a mile from the barracks to the hangars where these courses were given. You probably know that Illinois is very cold and flat and windy. I finished school and I was supposed to go to an aircraft repair base in Maine. The same week I got orders to report for Cadet Training in Santa Ana, California. Wow! That was great.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you report out there?

Mr. Perrone

I would guess it was March of 1942. I think we finished school in March and this was a

week or two weeks after that we arrived at Santa Ana, California.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you travel out there?

Mr. Perrone

By troop train. Everything was by train back then.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that train trip?

Mr. Perrone

I took a lot of train trips in the service. During World War II we traveled by train all over, except when we were a crew and we had an airplane. It was all train travel. Usually trains were jammed with people; women and children going to see their husbands. You slept wherever you could. Although I think when we were scheduled for a certain trip most of the time I think that we had some sort of a bunk on a troop train if I remember right.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me what all you did there in that training in California.

Mr. Perrone

Initially Santa Ana was a redeployment area. Mostly it was taking tests of all sorts, to determine your skills, experience and etc. In my case I wanted to become a pilot and then after there was schooling and outdoor athletic activities, calisthenics, running and touch football. I went to primary training in Visalia, California, which was in the salad bowl in the San Joaquin Valley in Southern California. That's where I took primary pilot training.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of plane did you fly there?

Mr. Perrone

I think it was a Ryan PT-18. It was a low wing primary airplane. Each instructor had five students. My instructor was a guy maybe three or four years older than I was. He was probably 24 or 25 years old and a very nervous young pilot. He was a licensed pilot. I think he was nervous because I guess he thought he was going to get into the service, I don't know. But anyhow we flew and after I had about five or six hours he said that I was the best, most advanced flyer of our group of five students. He wanted to put me up for a solo check with the Group Commander. I went up to the Group Commander and he gave me instructions for the flight test. I did a series of maneuvers they gave to all of the students. Most of the maneuvers were altitude losing maneuvers. You would climb to 4,000 or 5,000 feet and then you did a series of stalls, power on, power off. You did a couple of spins; spin to the left, spin to the right. Spin the aircraft twice and a half and then come out of it. I should have remembered that sort of thing. These were all maneuvers that lost altitude. I did all the maneuvers. The primary training airplanes had a one-way telephone system. The instructor could talk to the student. The student could not talk to him. So I did all these maneuvers and I was really very proud of them; everything came out great. The Group Commander was a former Army Air Force Pilot in his middle-50's with a trimmed gray mustache. He was a disciplinarian. After I did all the maneuvers he banged my legs with the joy stick and he started cursing me. Four letters. He said, "Beautiful maneuvers." I remember this just like it was yesterday. "Beautiful maneuvers, everything was perfect except you never cleared yourself once. Are you trying to kill me? " Flight safety was the most important lesson in primary flight training. You had to clear yourself after every maneuver. Bank the airplane to the left, 45 degrees,

level, bank it to the right, look below you and then do your maneuver. I did seven or eight maneuvers consecutively and never cleared myself. He said, "You are a dangerous flyer." That was practically the end of it as a pilot. I wanted to be a hot pilot but that didn't happen. Of course, I may have killed myself if I did, I don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were these instructors military or civilian?

Mr. Perrone

He was former military. After he finished with me I went to a military pilot that took me up again. He was a Second Lieutenant, a real young guy. He took me right there. We landed, he called the Lieutenant and spoke to him and told him what was wrong. I got in the airplane and of course I was pretty well shook up by that time. We had landed at an auxiliary field, not at the main airfield. I guess he spoke to him. I didn't hear what he said. Then the military pilot took me up and again told me what he wanted me to do. He wanted me to fly a course and then he would tell me what he wanted. He got me on a course in the valley. I was flying between two ranges of mountains. There is a range of mountains in California nearer to the ocean and then there is the valley and then a range of mountains inland. So I flew the plane and I don't think we did any maneuvers. He just had me flying patterns and stuff like that. Finally he said, 'Take me home." So I turned the plane around and I started flying in the direction that I thought was home. I flew maybe 15 minutes or so. He kept saying, "Are you sure you are on the right track." I guess I said, "Yes" or just shook my head yes. I flew 15 or 20 minutes and finally he said, "Are you sure now that you are going the right direction?" I told myself, "He's trying to tell me something. He's trying to help me." So I did a 180 degree turn and went

back the other way. Again I flew 15 or 20 minutes and he finally said, "You are lost." He took over the plane and we turned around and went back the way I was going the first time. We were going from the auxiliary field to the main field which confused me a little I imagine. We went back to the main field and he said, "Land the airplane." I landed it and it was not a very good landing. I had three bounces. Not that that didn't happen often in primary. It did happen often in primary. We landed and we got out of the airplane and he said, "I don't think you are pilot material. I am going to have to flunk you." I started to respond and he racked me up and said, "I don't want you to respond." And that was that. I went back and they sent me back to Santa Ana, California. I was very disappointed but of course there were others there that had the same thing happen to them. I went back to Santa Ana and they asked me what I would like to go into now, bombardier or navigator. I said that I guessed I would be a bombardier.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you take that training?

Mr. Perrone

I went to Roswell, New Mexico. In those days it was a very small town in New Mexico not too far from Sandia which was the secret base there. I graduated from Roswell Air Force Base and was given my commission February, 1943.

Mr. Misenhimer

As a bombardier?

Mr. Perrone

As a bombardier, that is correct.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about your training as a bombardier.

Mr. Perrone

As bombardier we trained in twin engine airplanes and do you know the funny thing? I don't have much memory of it. We bombed targets in the desert. I remember they had targets set up like bull's-eye targets set up down in the desert. As a matter of fact you had to be careful because sometimes cattle, I don't know if they were wild cattle, would wander over the target. That's what we did; we bombed the targets in the desert.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of plane were you flying there, do you recall?

Mr. Perrone

I don't recall. It was a twin engine plane. They had many twin-engine planes they used for navigational and bombardier training.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did it have a single tail or a twin tail?

Mr. Perrone

My recollection is that it was a twin tail.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's a Beechcraft.

Mr. Perrone

It probably could be. It was a twin tailed plane. It could hold three or four people.

Mr. Misenhimer

Who were your pilots for that?

Mr. Perrone

In training?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes sir.

Mr. Perrone

I really don't remember.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were they men or women?

Mr. Perrone

They were men. That's when we studied the Norden bomb sight which was the bomb sight used at the time.

Mr. Misenhimer

About how long was that school?

Mr. Perrone

It's hard to remember. I went to so many bases, so many times. I would say maybe about four months, I guess.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then what happened?

Mr. Perrone

Then I went on leave and then I went back to another base and then I went into crew training for B-24's. There were still B-17's flying but this was B-24 training. We trained and the first base we went to, it could have been Pueblo, Colorado or it could have been somewhere in Kansas. Wichita, Kansas was one of the bases that we went to. The first

base I think was Wichita, Kansas and then Pueblo, Colorado. Not Wichita, Salina, Kansas was the first base. I did go to Wichita later. We went to Salina, Kansas and that's where I met my first pilot and the engineer. The engineer had joined him first; he was a Tech Sergeant and then I joined the pilot. We didn't have a co-pilot or a navigator then. We flew some missions with other people but it was bombing missions and the engineer got familiar with the plane Then at Salina, maybe a month or two later, maybe not that long later, maybe six or seven weeks later, the co-pilot joined us. He had finished pilot training and wanted to fly P-51's, fighter planes. He hated four engine planes and they made him a co-pilot in four engine aircraft. But that's the way it worked then. I remember talking to another pilot friend of mine, Ray Crawford, who when he was in school said he went through pilot training with another pilot named Crawford. His name and another name just like it were right next to each other in the roster and they picked pilot, co-pilot, pilot, co-pilot. He was named pilot and the other Crawford was named co-pilot. So when our co-pilot Jim Watts joined us we learned that he wanted to be a fighter pilot. He never really took to the B-24. He did his job but he was never anxious to become a first pilot. A lot of B-24 co-pilots became first pilots. They stayed and they wanted to. But he was not interested. He wanted to fly P-51's, which he never did. Then the navigator joined us at maybe the next base. I believe that was in Colorado and the rest of the crew also joined us. Then we trained at two or three bases in Kansas and Colorado until we were a seasoned crew. Our final base after training was Topeka, Kansas. We were then a high altitude trained crew and we had our sheepskin pants, boots, helmets. We were bombing from 18 to 22 thousand feet again out west on high plains targets. We were all ready to go. We were told that we were going to go to Europe somewhere, Italy

or England. At that time at the Topeka Air Force Base they had some sort of a contest to get people excited about a competition. We had hundreds of crews going through Topeka at the time. They introduced a contest saying that the people who finished high altitude training first would get a reward. What sort of a reward it was, we didn't know. We were kind of eager. Our crew was one of the crews that finished up at the top. The scuttlebutt was that if you finished first you were going to go to England earlier and you were going to die earlier and that sort of thing. We finished in the first group of about 25 crews and they pulled us out and said, "You guys are going to Langley Field, Virginia to study low altitude anti-shipping radar bombing." Which was great for me because I hated the high altitude bombing. It was very difficult operating at 20 to 22 thousand feet in the States. In Germany it was even worse of course because of the oxygen mask and the cold air, you were drooling. Generally, the temperature drops two degrees per each 1,000 feet of altitude. You couldn't control the drooling out of your mouth and nose because it was so cold, so it was great to go low altitude. That was it and we went to Langley Field, Virginia which was a base set up for this training. I didn't know much about it except that the Norden bomb sight stabilizer was connected to a radar eye piece which picked up radar images over water. The radar made it possible to differentiate between water, ships and land at night. The equipment was designed to bomb at between 1,000 to 1,500 feet. I found out later when I wrote the history book that low altitude bombing was actually started by Hap Arnold. The book explains it that he was concerned about German submarines on the East Coast. There were German submarines that were attacking our shipping in the Virginia Chesapeake Bay area. He wanted equipment designed to stop the submarines. But what happened was that the design proved to be better for targeting

surface ships. All low altitude bombing crews were trained at Langley Field, Virginia and I guess it took four or five months. From there we picked up our own airplane at Mitchell Field in New York, a brand new airplane. Then we flew it about 10,000 miles to New Guinea, which was a really tough thing. We had a very good navigator. One thing you had to have for the kind of flying we did, because we flew alone, we had to have a really good navigator. His name is George Burhoe. He came out of Massachusetts. A very studious, chess player type guy. We last saw George and his wife at our Tampa, Florida reunion. He just lost his wife recently. We flew our own airplane from Mitchell Field across country to San Francisco, Hamilton Field. What it was then called Fairfield - Suisan. We flew our own plane all the way to New Guinea, with a lot of stops. From Hawaii to Canton about 1,100 miles and southwest. Canton is a tiny dot in the Pacific maps. The island had an airstrip, no trees, no water; it was strictly a fuel stop. We lost a few airplanes on the way out. One of our good friends never made it to Hawaii. The night that we took off from Fairfield - Suisan, which was the last week of February, we hit an icing front about an hour out of San Francisco. We lost 3,000 or 4,000 feet. Our plane just dropped and we weren't even overseas yet. The airplanes going to the Pacific had no icing boots on the wings. They took them off because of weight. We wouldn't need them in the Pacific. We were going to fly low altitude. The plane iced up on the wings and we dropped way down. The pilot didn't panic which was great and we finally got out of there but we lost one of our crews that we took off with; separately, but we were going to the same area.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now that was in February of 1944, is that right?

Mr. Perrone

That was in February of 1944, that is correct. In fact the same night that we took off, fifteen B-25's took off. Not all at the same time but they were going to Hawaii like we were. It was the fastest way to get these planes overseas. The B-25's had to carry extra tanks and we did too as a matter of fact. That night they lost seven B-25's because of the wing ice. There is nothing between San Francisco and Hawaii as you probably know. It is about 2,100 miles. At Hawaii we spent about five or six days checking out the airplane; making sure that everything was okay. We walked around town and went on the beaches several times. There was a curfew; lights out at something like 7:00. All lights were out because of what had happened at Pearl Harbor two years before.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me stop and ask you a couple of questions here. These planes that were lost on the way over, were any of the crews rescued at all?

Mr. Perrone

Overseas there were some rescues but not on those. We did not hear of any rescues. The B-24 crew we trained with was lost. No other news.

Mr. Misenhimer

In Hawaii was there still quite a bit of damage from the attack that you could see?

Mr. Perrone

Oh yes, we saw the damage. I do remember that. The ships that had been sunk, or partially sunk were still there. Security was very tough but where we were we could see them and the damage to the buildings. We landed at Hickam Field and you could see the damage there too, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

You got liberty there in town, right? In Honolulu?

Mr. Perrone

Yes. We went to Honolulu. We went to a couple of restaurants and that sort of thing. We were there I guess a week. They checked out the plane and changed some stuff. We had a pretty interesting story about the B-24's stay at Hickam. I don't remember if it was Mitchell Field or Hamilton Field, our B-24 was loaded with electronic equipment because we were going to an electronic squadron which needed replacements. So the easiest way to get parts there was to put them on airplanes that were going down there. One thing about the B-24's and one of the reasons that they were used to replace the B-17's was because they could carry a lot of extra weight. We were always overloaded. I'm trying to think, our maximum weight I think was supposed to be 56,000 pounds but we flew at up to 70,000 pounds. We overloaded them. We were overloaded going overseas because we had all of the electronic equipment on the plane. When we landed in Hawaii the B-24 required a 24 hour guard. *(tape side ended)*

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me again. You all were overloaded with all of this electronic equipment and what else did you have?

Mr. Perrone

Underneath the electronic equipment a few of us, the pilot, co-pilot, myself and the navigator had purchased about three or four cases of whiskey, which was only about $2 a bottle back then or $3 a bottle with no tax at the Langley Field officer's club. We put it underneath all of the electronic equipment in the bomb bays because we wanted to take it

with us to our destination base. We were in Hawaii for seven days and because of the electronic material in the bomb bays, our plane had 24-hour armed guards. When we got to our ultimate base which was New Guinea, the material was unloaded; we were helping but the whiskey was gone. It had to be those guards in Hawaii, we figured that out. They knew that every plane that was going overseas had stuff. We had guards 24 hours a day but that meant that they had time to unload the plane.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you left Hawaii where all did you stop on the way to New Guinea?

Mr. Perrone

The next island was, I can't think of the name of it right now.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was it Johnson Island?

Mr. Perrone

No it wasn't Johnson. It was Canton (on some maps spelled with a K). On the map it was a little tiny dot. In fact it is so small that it doesn't show on some maps because it's too small. It was about 900 to 1,000 miles from Hawaii and if you missed that island there was no place to land. Fortunately, we had a great navigator. Canton Island was strictly a gasoline stop. It was just big enough for one strip down the middle. There were no trees on the island. They had a dead palm tree that someone planted in the sand at the end of the strip. It was dead but they propped it up just to show there was a tree on the island. There was one officer on the island, a Captain. They had some bunks. We all slept in the same bunk areas, officers and men. We ate at the same place. I don't know how many people were there, maybe 100. I talked to one of the inhabitants. He was an American

soldier, a Corporal. I said, "How long have you been here?" He said something like three years. He was walking around a lagoon on the island looking for little gems, "cat's eyes" they called them. He said, "There's nothing else to do here." They were stuck with a long, long stay there because they were not in a combat area. We took off from there and our next island was a pretty big island. I have a map that shows our route. I have it all crayoned. I've had it for quite a while. Canton was in the Kerabadi group or Phoenix Islands. Then from there we went to Fiji. It's pretty big. From Fiji we went to New Caledonia. It is a very pretty island. Fiji was also pretty nice. We swam in a river on New Caledonia that was crystal clear, like 7 or 8 feet deep, just crystal clear. Then from New Caledonia we landed at Townsville, Australia which is Northern Australia. We got below the equator right after we left Hawaii, or maybe it was after we left Canton. After we left New Caledonia we went to Townsville and from Townsville we were told where to find our group in New Guinea in Dobadoro, an airbase on the Papua side of New Guinea. The western portion of the large island was Dutch New Guinea. Dobadoro was our first base in New Guinea. At that time we only had two bases in New Guinea; Port Moresby on the south side of the island closer to Australia and Dobadoro. That's where we started flying. I guess we flew one mission out of Dobadoro. We also did a practice bombing on a sunken ship and several weeks later we moved up to Nadzab, New Guinea which was near the coastal port of Lae.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were at Dobadoro where all did you bomb out of there?

Mr. Perrone

We weren't at Dobadoro too long and I don't remember the target but once we got to Lae

and Nadzab, New Guinea, the whole group was together there and we bombed maybe 10 or 12 missions. We bombed several missions prior to the Invasion of Biak with the 13th Air Force. We were part of the 43rd Bomb Group which had three heavy bombardment high altitude squadrons. High altitude in the Pacific was not like Germany but they bombed at maybe 15,000 feet. They were the day bombers there. We were the snooper squadron in the 5th Air Force. There was another snooper squadron in the 13th Air Force and they were stationed in the Admiralty Islands, which were five or six hundred miles from our New Guinea base. Together with their airplanes we bombed some areas in New Guinea prior to Allied landings. It's difficult to determine time spent at Nadzab (maybe four or five months.)From there our squadron was put out with some others on a little island called Owi which, I guess was several hundred miles north of New Guinea. The snooper squadron was moved to Owi in order to get us closer to our targets in Indonesia and the Philippines. From there we began bombing the Philippines, which was a long mission. Maybe close to 2,500 miles round trip. We also bombed Borneo from there. We also had another base that we used while we were bombing Indonesia and Malaysia. The Halmahera Islands, just south of Celebes and Borneo, had a base called Morotai which we had captured. It was a hell-hole but we staged out of there to bomb those areas. The Japanese bombed our airfield every day and every night.

Mr. Misenhimer

You said that you were in the 13th Air Force; which bomb group?

Mr. Perrone

No, I was in the 63rd Bomb Squadron, 43rd Bomb Group in the 5th Air Force. The 868th Squadron did not belong to a bomb group but they were part of the 13th Air Force. In fact,

the 13th Air Force became part of the Far East Air Forces which included the 5th Air Force. Lieutenant General George C. Kenney was Commander of the Far East Air Forces.

Mr. Misenhimer

How do you spell the island Owi?

Mr. Perrone

O W I. It doesn't show on the map. It was just a little island with an airstrip on it. It had a very nice beach. When we were relocated to Owi, Biak had just been captured. The Australians knew the islands very well. The natives in the area lived on many of these islands but this one was uninhabited. I was told this story by our navigator who had a friend from his hometown who was a Seabee. The Navy said, "We're going to build a base here." The natives said that it was "taboo". "Taboo", to the native population, meant that it was not a livable island. We were fighting a war and needed another airstrip. The island was cleared and it became a base. It was a very pretty island and our tents were about 30 yards from the beach. But we lost about one-third of our men. We were not the only people to move there. Seabees moved there. Navy people moved there. They all had bases there. Some of our day bombers also moved there. We lost about one-third of our personnel there to all kinds of jungle diseases. We lost our radio operator to elephantiasis. His legs blew up triple the size. The doctor said, "There is nothing we can do. You have to go home. You will be fine when you get home." Dengue fever, scrub typhus; there were all kinds of fevers. They couldn't do anything for them, so they sent them home.

Mr. Misenhimer

They found a disease called scrub typhus there.

Mr. Perrone

That's right, exactly. One of my very good friends, an Irishman named Burke Tracey, from western Pennsylvania, got scrub typhus. He was a navigator. There is a picture of us on the beach, when you get the book. He was a guy that was maybe in his late 20's. He had a wife and two kids. Had a job as a Pennsylvania Railroad executive. He was deferred but he wanted to fight the war. He came overseas and was in our squadron. He got sick on Owi Island; he had flown about 20 missions and they sent him home. As a matter of fact, I saw him after the war. I had lunch with him and his wife and 3 or 4 of his kids at his house on the Philadelphia Main Line. The Pennsylvania Railroad had just transferred him to the Philadelphia area for a short period. We were on Owi Island for, I forget, maybe about 3 or 4 months. It had a theater shaped by wind and water into a little natural amphitheater. Bob Hope came there with his group. Then we moved to Leyte Island in the Philippines. We were in the first bomb group that went to Leyte. We got bombed every night by the Japanese.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were at Morotai before that though, right?

Mr. Perrone

Yes, that was in Indonesia. It is the northernmost island, I believe. It doesn't show on this map that I have here but it is the northernmost island near Halmahera Island.

Mr. Misenhimer

They are in the Molucca Chain.

Mr. Perrone

That's right. We bombed the Philippines from Morotai. On one mission we bombed Brunei Bay in Borneo which is part of Malaysia. We also bombed Balikpapan twice on day raids which is not a good idea for night bombers. But we flew in at 7,000 to 8,000 feet. Single flights. We dropped large fused barrels of phosphorous or oil or whatever. There was no trajectory, we just dropped them on the fires. On a later mission, Brunei Bay was the only mission that I ever skip bombed. We pulled in there one night and they had ships and floating docks. All lights were on and ships were being loaded. I believe Brunei is still a major oil producer and it is ruled by a Sheik.. They were probably loading Japanese ships. We came into the harbor and it seemed like nobody noticed us. Maybe we were one of the early airplanes that came in there. So we saw all these lights on and activity. It was a clear night and the pilot and navigator decided that because of the mountains or whatever; it was a very mountainous area, it might be possible that at the angle we could take, we could skip bomb the piers or loading docks. So we went down to about 300 feet and we skip bombed. This was exciting because there was no scope. I was just looking out over the nose of the plane and just toggling bombs as I went. We were so low that we could feel them hitting. The fires and explosions were exciting. We just got the hell out of there though. They were really surprised. On our way out of the bay we observed the large fires we started. And the next day our Intelligence people said the fires were still burning.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you the only plane there or were there other planes?

Mr. Perrone

We were the only plane that night. The way the squadron operated, they would send three or four or five planes out at night depending on the briefings. Snooper squadrons were not big and maybe we had fifteen or twenty airplanes and maybe eight or ten were in flying condition. Bomber Command would pick out the targets and send planes out to different sectors.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you doing radar bombing at that point?

Mr. Perrone

We did radar bombing every night, yes. I sank two ships on one of our missions, our best mission. We flew the night of December 6th and 7th, 1944. When I wrote the combat report up I called it "payback." Bomber Command told us about a 13 ship convoy that was threading its way through the South China Sea and the Philippine Sea under the cover of darkness between the many islands of the Philippines. They have about 8 or 9 major islands and several thousand small islands. That 13-ship convoy was going into reinforce their garrison on Leyte Island on the opposite side of our airstrip. We did not occupy all of Leyte originally. We occupied the East Coast of Leyte and the Japanese occupied the West Coast of Leyte but we had ground forces on the West Coast locked in battle with the Japanese forces. When we occupied the East Coast we put an airstrip right beside the bay. That airstrip was always overloaded with planes especially once we moved in there. The Navy was in there. Navy carriers were being lost and damaged and all their planes were landing at Leyte. There were hundreds of planes on that strip. As soon as a plane was banged up in anyway or crippled, they didn't bother fixing them,

they just bulldozed them into the bay. There were hundreds of planes bulldozed into the bay. That's the way it worked.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about this "payback" night. How did that go?

Mr. Perrone

We were told about this thirteen ship convoy going through and we were told that our most important mission was not to bomb them but to report their positions all night. This would allow our fighter bombers to be ready when they got closer to Leyte. We only had one island in the Philippines and one airstrip. They had many airstrips on all the major islands. At that time our Intelligence people had broken the Japanese code and we knew they were going to Leyte. We tracked them all night. We made at least eight or ten bomb runs on them. We didn't drop bombs all that time; we were just harassing them. At first they did shoot at us but after a while they started antiaircraft. We carried six bombs. Four 500's usually and two 1,000 pound bombs. The middle bomb in each string was the 1,000 pounder. It was 500, 1,000, 500. On our first bomb we hit a troop ship. We usually bombed between 1,000 and 1,500 feet. At my "bombs away"on the intercom the engineer or a gunner in the back, would release a large flare which would light up the entire area. The illumination lasted for only a couple of minutes but Japanese would usually shoot at the flare; probably a reflex action. Crew members in the back of the plane said the bombs exploded alongside a troop/supply ship and with the flare they could see men scrambling down off the side of the ship. Then maybe an hour or two hours later, we had been flying over them all night reporting their position, then we dropped the second string. The middle bomb I think hit the bow of a destroyer. It sank it immediately. They said it sank

in two minutes. The flare showed we hit it and it sank. We followed them almost into Leyte. In fact during the early morning light of December 7th we could see them. There were eleven ships left in battle formation. We knew that we sank two. The pilot said, "Maybe I should get a little closer just to see what's what." He turned the nose towards the convoy. They were streaming out in battle formation and as soon as he turned the nose of the ship they could see us. The whole convoy opened fire on us. All of them. I thought every damn bullet was going to hit us. The tracers would just come right at us and then just curve away at the last minute. The pilot turned that aircraft just like it was a fighter, right down to the water and we got out of there. When we landed, a Major General met us, and congratulated all of us. Our P-47 squadrons dive bombed them and sank every ship. We just missed it. The Japanese picked up100 planes from Cebu Island where they had a major airstrip. The P-38's shot down 50 planes. It was payback for December 7, 1941.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many missions did you fly out of New Guinea, roughly?

Mr. Perrone

I would say, including Owi, maybe 20 to 22 or something like that. That would be my guess.

Mr. Misenhimer

On how many of those missions was your plane damaged?

Mr. Perrone

We were only hit once. We were hit by a Japanese shell equivalent to our 20mm cannon on the leading edge of our wing. The crew chief, we knew him very well, found the shell.

We met the crew chief a lot of times at our reunions, a good guy from North Carolina. Luckily, the shell was sheared when it hit the leading edge of the wing and the armor-piercing and the powder somehow separated and it didn't explode. He found it after we landed.

Mr. Misenhimer

So that was the only time your plane was hit out of New Guinea?

Mr. Perrone

Yes, many other planes were hit. Many guys were hit. I knew of crews that limped back with two engines and dead crewmen. Sometimes the planes were used in daylight, early daylight or if you were looking for a convoy like we did and you didn't find it and you kept searching; if you had gas you kept searching until daylight broke, it was much more dangerous.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever lose an engine on any of your missions?

Mr. Perrone

We lost an engine on takeoff for a mission out of the Admiralty Islands. We dumped the bomb load into the ocean and landed. Friends of mine did. Some of the stories are in my book. With two engines they flew 500 to 600 miles back to base.

Mr. Misenhimer

What color was your plane painted?

Mr. Perrone

When we first went out, the plane we took overseas was silver I believe. Some of them were that camouflage green they used on the old planes. Then they started painting the

snooper planes black. Although at the end, I'm trying to think, most of them were black. I think one time they said that black wasn't really better than anything else. I don't know. Our night fighters were painted black. Maybe that was why they painted us black; because we flew at night.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is there anything else that you recall happening on your missions out of New Guinea or Owi?

Mr. Perrone

One of the questions I was asked was, "What was your scariest mission? What was the mission that shook you up most?" It was a mission that was scrubbed that scared me the most. I'll tell it to you. I wrote it up and I've got notes on it. One of the first questions was, "Did you ever run into bad weather in the Philippines?" In the Pacific, weather was always a problem. They have typhoons like we have hurricanes. I flew 37 night combat missions and my last mission was a 15 hour search for a Japanese aircraft carrier converted from an Italian cruise ship located in Shanghai Bay. But for me the most dangerous tension packed mission was an aborted one. An aborted mission that several crew members recall vividly while others do not. After 55 years when I started to write the book, I realized that the guys that were the busiest on that mission, remembered it best. The aborted mission was out of Tacloban airstrip on Leyte Island. It was typhoon season in the Philippines. It happened about an hour into flight, just after I had fused the four 500 pound bombs and the two 1,000 pound bombs. Usually what we would do after take off, once we got out of the flight pattern, a half hour or so out of our area I would go up into the bomb bays and fuse the bombs. The way that would work was the assistant

engineer would carry the fuses and I would remove the bolts from the nose and tail of each bomb and put in a nose fuse and a tail fuse in each bomb handed to me by the assistant engineer. So about an hour into the flight after I had fused the bombs, high winds, tropical rain and a low pressure trough area of some sort suddenly dropped our airplane 2,000 or 3,000 feet and in doing so, probably caused the top rack 500 pound bombs to float and one of the bombs struck the underside of the wing. Most of our fuel was carried in the wings. Wings on all big airplanes are full of fuel. It damaged the underside of the wing tanks and because it twisted the bomb shackle, the bomb remained jammed against the wing. Gasoline fumes spread throughout the airplane. We all smoked in those days. The pilot came on the intercom and declared, "Mission scrubbed. Bomb bay doors open." The flight engineer was already in the bomb bay transferring fuel out of the damaged tank. The assistant engineer joined me in the bomb bays. Now the bomb bays were open and the wind was blowing in to the open bays. There was a catwalk in the middle between the bomb bays that was 8 or 9 inches wide and that was it. With the bomb bays open, if you fell, you were gone. We were both holding on to the supports that connected the catwalk to the bottom of the aircraft. We had to hold on because the pilot and co-pilot were having trouble keeping the plane stable in the storm and we certainly did not want to tumble out. My responsibility was to defuse each bomb, gingerly hand the fuses the to the assistant engineer. I had to release each bomb manually, bottom racks first into the stormy ocean. I guess we were 7,000 or 8,000 feet high. The assistant engineer was also shining the flashlight on each bomb to help me locate the fuses. I was straddled over the open bomb bays for the bombs in the lower racks with one arm wrapped around whatever was there. Swirling winds and rain blowing in complicated and

slowed the process. I finally got the bomb jammed against the wing which released when I tripped the bomb shackle with a screwdriver after I had removed the fuses and that was it. We were over a stormy sea. You wouldn't dare go back to Tacloban airstrip, our only strip in the middle of the night because of the gunners. The Japanese bombed us every night there. We flew a couple of hours to burn off fuel until I don't remember exactly but we probably flew until daylight started to break and then we went back in.

Mr. Misenhimer

I've got a question. If you were going to jettison those bombs, why did you take the fuses out?

Mr. Perrone

We didn't want them when they were coming out to bang together. Those nose fuses had a wire that came off and released that little propeller on the nose fuse. The tail fuses were impact fuses. We didn't want fused live bombs banging the sides of the bomb bays as they dropped out of the aircraft.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you move up to Tacloban?

Mr. Perrone

I guess the longest period of time that I spent overseas was mostly in the Philippines in Tacloban, Mindoro and Clark Field. When we had flown about 30 to 32 or 33 missions. I think the crew were looking at coming home. We had been to Australia once on leave for a week. In the Pacific Theater, originally they said you had to fly 30 missions or 350 hours or something like that, because our missions were long. Then they changed it and the reason given was that there were no replacements. Most of the replacements had gone

to Europe. We are talking about 1944. Europe was gearing up to invade I guess and they were sending thousands of planes over Germany. So they changed it. I'm trying to think of the month when I was hospitalized. I got amoebic dysentery in Leyte and I was sent to the base hospital which was on the west side of the island where they were fighting the Japanese ground forces. I guess the base hospital was somewhere in the middle of the island. I was there for about three weeks. I was sick. I had never been so sick. I don't know if they used antibiotics in those days. I don't remember. I think the pilot came to see me one day. That's my recollection. Meanwhile the crew flew a mission or two. I don't remember now but in talking to them when we met after the war, that's my recollection. I felt a little ashamed being in the hospital because most of the guys in the hospital were Infantry guys who had been hit with bullets on the Western side of Leyte. I was finally released. I was taken back to my base on the other side of the island. When I got to my tent which I shared with the pilot, co-pilot and navigator, the tent was empty. The only thing in the tent was my bed and whatever else I had there and that was it. I went to the CO, Major Brownfield, I knew him well. "Brownie" we called him. I said, "Brownie, what the hell happened?" He said, "Your crew finished their missions and they were sent home. You are released from combat duty now and you can go home if you want but your promotion is somewhere in the system; it didn't come through. It is somewhere in Biak or up in Townsville, Australia at General Headquarters. My advice to you is that if you want to leave now I will cut your orders and you can go home or else, if you want to hang around and recuperate (because I had lost a lot of weight) and play a little softball and wait until your First Lieutenancy comes through, then I will cut your orders and you can go home." I said, "I'll do that. I will walk around and gain a little

weight. I'll do that." I was only there for about two weeks and by that time we captured Mindoro Island and the squadron was shipped up to Mindoro which is the island just below Luzon. When I got to Mindoro I was informed that I would have to start flying again because they needed replacements. They were short people and I had to fly again. Instead of 400 hours, they changed it to 450 or whatever it was. I had flown over 400 at that time so I was really disappointed. I had to fly with people I didn't know. I believe I flew four more missions. We were on Mindoro barely a month and we were moved to Clark Field on Luzon Island. The field was about 50 or 60 miles from Manila as I recall. I flew several missions with a pilot named Lieutenant Butts who became the last CO before the war ended. He was a southern guy; a good guy. I flew my last mission with him which was a mission I think I mentioned earlier. Bomber command sent us to Shanghai harbor to find and bomb an Italian cruise ship that had been converted into a small Japanese carrier. It was the longest mission that I ever flew and it was my last mission. It was 15 ½ hours long. We went into Shanghai looking for the ship on a dark night and once we got in there we knew there was bad intelligence or whatever because Shanghai Harbor was full of Chinese fishing boats; thousands of them. Many Chinese lived on the junks, as they were called. They are born and die on those boats. That's their life. When we got into that harbor at night we picked up thousands of radar blips, some bigger, some smaller. How could we tell one from another? It was difficult. We cruised around there for about a half hour or an hour, I don't remember. Then finally the pilot said, "We've got to get out of here." I said, "Let's pick out a concentration of ships, of blips and bomb them." Which is what we did. I remember getting on the intercom after I did that. We were flying home and I said, "Butts (I can't think of his first name), we

probably got a couple of Chinese families fishing for tomorrow's meal." That was my last mission. When I got back to base I knew it was my last mission. I had 497 hours and 10 minutes, I think. It was, I would say, near the end of March 1945. I didn't get back to the States until late May of 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you from March until May?

Mr. Perrone

I got my orders. My promotion came through and then I had to find a way back. It was tricky finding a way back. Some people would make deals. Like I knew someone that had a couple bottles of whiskey that he gave to a pilot on one of those large supply planes and the pilot put him on the ship and got him back to Hawaii and then to the States. I got on a boat. The boat was called the *Billy Mitchell*. It was not at Clark Field. I had to then get a flight back and nothing was done quick. I got a flight back to Leyte which is where I was originally. The ship for some reason came out of Leyte. Maybe there were more hospitalized soldiers. It was in the harbor there and I had to take a motorboat of sorts. The ship took 18 days to get to the San Francisco Harbor, zig-zagging all the way. The war was still on with Japan but the war in Europe was over while we were on the ship.

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Mr. Misenhimer

On April 12, 1945 President Roosevelt died. Do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. Perrone

I was still in the Philippines. I remember when President Roosevelt died because we all were very sad. He was the Commander-in-Chief and President Truman was an unknown

to us. While I was still overseas and was about to come home, we heard about a super bomb that the United States was preparing. We talked about it in the flight operations office. Some super bomb and we wondered what could it be. A 2,000 pound bomb? Who could carry it? It's a funny thing but there was a strong rumor overseas that we had a super bomb. It turned out to be the atomic bomb.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you think of the officers that you had over you? Not the pilot, but the other officers?

Mr. Perrone

We had a very good crew. We had four officers in the crew. The navigator, George, was married before he left. He got married in the States. A couple of our crew guys got married like a month or two before they were going overseas. George was one of them. Our engineer who was a rancher in Montana and we visited his family a few times in the 1980's and he was great fun. He was married before we went overseas. Our armored gunner was married. He was from Kentucky. Unfortunately he was killed overseas in a plane accident. I was single and the pilot who was the oldest guy, was single and the co-pilot was single. So we went out together. The pilot and I were usually buddying around together. He was a fun guy and a terrific dancer and he loved to dance. He was a very good dancer. In fact, my wife danced with him at the reunions.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about the higher up officers in the squadron or in the group?

Mr. Perrone

I knew the squadron commander, Major Brownfield, I knew him pretty well. He had

been in the service before the war. Our doctors were called flight surgeons, I knew our guy pretty well. I had something like jungle rot under my arms and wherever I perspired. I went to the doctor and he gave me some stuff. He was from Connecticut, Dr. Frederick Mott. He was in his early 40's. From time to time he would give me a little bottle, like a half a pint of medical alcohol. I would take it back to the tent and we would mix it with about two or three parts of water and some grapefruit juice and four guys or maybe more could get drunk on that. We had good relationships. In the Air Force there were no barriers between officers and enlisted men; none of that stuff. The enlisted men were housed in different tents but when you fly in the same crew for three or four hundred hours it's difficult to be formal. We visited the engineer who had a small ranch before the war with his father in eastern-central Montana. When the engineer returned from the service, he and his wife bought more acreage. They have now I think 16,000 acres which is not a lot of acreage in Montana because it is so dry. He ranched it and his son ranched it and now the grandson is ranching it. We had a good time up there. A really terrific time. He would always kill a steer when we got up there. It was really a fun time. We all had good relations.

Mr. Misenhimer

What ribbons and medals did you get?

Mr. Perrone

We all got air medals. I had four air medals, Asiatic Pacific Campaign, with five battle stars and a World War II medal. We were put in for a Distinguished Flying Cross and that's a funny thing. We should have had it because of that convoy that we tracked and because of us the General met us on the strip. But my pilot had an argument with the

group commander because of scheduling. My pilot said, "My guys are really wiped out because of all of the staging out of various islands. We should be given the night off." The Group Commander said, "You don't fly, I'll fly." The pilot said, "No, I'll fly." When we came back from that mission we were put in for a Distinguished Flying Cross. But the Colonel admitted to my pilot after the war that he shelved it. Later, he gave it to somebody to put through but it was turned down. We found this out 40 years later. The records said that it was turned down by a warrant officer because of a technicality of some sort. We should have gotten it for that mission.

Mr. Misenhimer

How about Battle Stars? How many battle Stars did you get?

Mr. Perrone

As part of the response to the earlier question, the Asiatic Pacific Campaign with five Battle Stars.

Mr. Misenhimer

Five, right?

Mr. Perrone

Right.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else that you can think of from your time in the service?

Mr. Perrone

Most of the missions at night were challenges that night flying presented as compared to day flights. Navigational problems. Weather. Long distances from home base. In some areas if we returned to home base at night on aborted missions it would be impossible to

land. We flew over 2,000 miles on each mission. When you compare that to Europe where they flew 500 to 600 miles we flew over vast stretches of ocean. There were no air bases. If you had a problem, if something happened to you there was no place to land. We had one airfield. Tacloban airstrip in Leyte in the Philippine Islands. The Japanese had maybe 20, I don't know. Radar helped our navigation but daylight makes it easier to find a location and to land safely in the aircraft. Another part of that question was, "Did you lose any "Snooper" planes and if so, were there any survivors?" Yes we lost many Snoopers in the Pacific theater. Most were never found. Some crippled planes with dead or wounded made it back to base. In fact I watched a couple come in that were landing later in the early morning hours. One or two engines out. Controls out. Terrific performance in landing an airplane like that. Some of this I described in the book. A good friend of mine, his name was Tom Savage, was a co-pilot. Tom Savage was the son of the owner of Savage Arms - Sporting Rifles, etc. I don't know if they are still in business. He was a hell of a nice guy. He was a big blonde guy. Once he graduated pilot training he was placed with the ATC so he ferried planes overseas but he wanted to go into combat. He had flown planes into our area so he decided that he wanted to fly with our group. He became a co-pilot on a B-24. He flew maybe 25 missions as a co-pilot but he wanted to become a first pilot. He was promoted to first pilot in November, 1944. I had said to him, "When you become a first pilot, I'll fly your first mission with you as an observer." It just so happened that the same night he was flying his first mission as a pilot, our regular crew was flying a mission, staging out of the Palau Islands. He took off from Tacloban Strip on a mission to Manila Bay. He was never heard from again. The plane, as I recall, was found on a mountain on Mindoro Island months later. That's just something that you

think of every now and then.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever fly in a B-17?

Mr. Perrone

No. I was in a B-17 but I never flew in one. The B-17's were excellent bombers but they were replaced by the B-24's because the B-24's had more range and could carry more bombs.

Mr. Misenhimer

What would current generations know about World War II and what would you like readers to take from your book?

Mr. Perrone

From my experience, many of the younger people that I have spoken to think World War II is ancient history. Some are interested but they have not for the most part been exposed to the history or geography of that era. We need to be knowledgeable about what happened then because we want to avoid another world war.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is there anything else that you have thought of?

Mr. Perrone

You will get the book and let me know what you think of the book.

Mr. Misenhimer

I will and I will be back in touch with you. Thanks again and we'll talk to you later.

End of Interview

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