

Interviewee: Arthur Pejsa

Interviewer: Thomas Saylor

Date of interview: 3 September 2002

Location: meeting room in the Pejsa's apartment building, Minneapolis, MN

Transcribed by: Linda Gerber, October 2002

Editing by: Thomas Saylor, February 2003

Arthur Pejsa was born 8 March 1923 in Custer, Wisconsin, where he spent his childhood. After graduating from high school in 1940 in nearby Stevens Point, Art attended Central State Teachers College (CSTC, now UW-Stevens Point) for 1940-41, then moved to Milwaukee and Wausau and worked during 1941-42 as a machinist. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps in summer 1942 and in January 1943, after another semester at CSTC, entered active service.

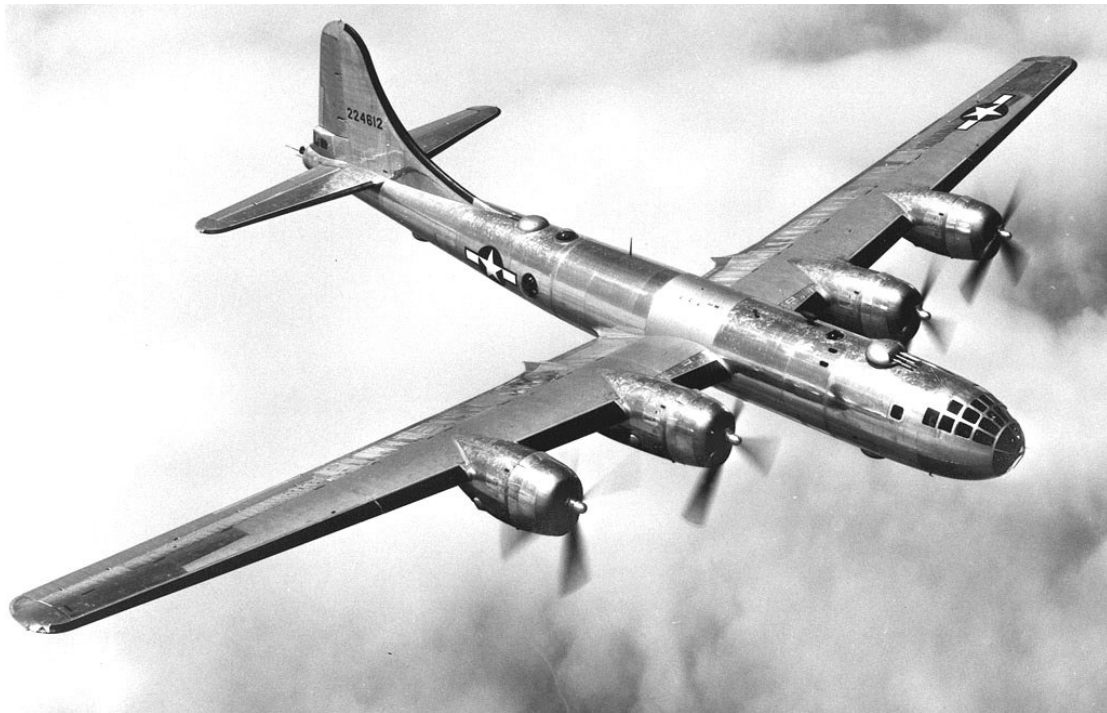
After Basic Training at Sheppard Field, near Wichita Falls, Texas, Art took advanced training over the next twelve months and qualified as a bomber pilot. In June 1944 he was selected for duty in the new B-29 Superfortress bomber, and after several months schooling at Clovis, New Mexico, was posted in November 1944 to the 20th Air Force base at Karaghpur, India. Art remained here for six months, and as lead pilot flew missions to Singapore, Saigon, Bangkok, Japan, and other targets.

In May 1945 Art was transferred with his crew to an air base on Tinian, in the Mariana Islands, and from here flew more than fifteen missions over Japan. For a mission over Himeji, Japan, on 22 June 1945, Art was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. In all, he completed twenty-six combat missions before rotating back to the US in October 1945. Art was discharged in January 1946 with the rank of 1st lieutenant.

After military service, Art quickly completed undergraduate (CSTC, 1947) and graduate (Marquette, 1948) degrees, then joined the faculty of the US Naval Academy, where he taught from 1948-56. He then worked more than twenty-five years as an aerospace mathematical physicist for the AC Division of General Motors and for Honeywell, in Minneapolis, retiring in 1985. He remained active in the field after retirement, and authored several books on ballistics.

Distinguished Flying Cross recipient, 1945.

Art provides a very frank and detailed description of piloting a B-29 bomber on combat missions over Japan, 1944-45, including using incendiary bombs over civilian targets. He also talks openly about various aspects of military life in this excellent interview.



Boeing B-29 Superfortress bomber in flight, 1945.
Source: Official US Army Air Forces photo. Public domain.

Interview Key:

T = Thomas Saylor

A = Arthur Pejsa

[text] = words added by editor, either for clarification or explanation

(*) = words or phrase unclear**

NOTE: interview has been edited for clarity

Tape 1, Side A. Counter begins at 000.

T: Today is September 3rd 2002. First Mr. Pejsa, on the record, thanks very much for taking time this morning to talk with me.

A: My pleasure.

T: We talked a bit before we started to record. I know that you were born in Custer, Wisconsin, in 1923. Did you graduate from high school in Custer?

A: No, no. Stevens Point, which was six miles away. It was the big town, the county seat of Portage County, in central Wisconsin. Custer was just a little crossroads with about a hundred people. Stevens Point was twenty-some thousand. It was the big metropolis of central Wisconsin.

T: So you were bussed to and from school?

A: No, no. We had to find our own rides. The first two years I drove with a friend of mine, in an old Model A Ford. When I was a junior and senior he went away, and my father bought me an old 1929 Chevy for, I think it was, thirty-five dollars, and I drove and I took a couple of friends who rode with me. Two or three, it varied. They paid fifty cents a week for gas. We had to come back to Custer at the end of the day, so I couldn't go out for football or basketball or any of these things, because we had to get home back to Custer. I did that for two years. I also did that my freshman year in college, in the fall of 1940, after I graduated from high school.

T: Did you finish high school in 1940 or 1941?

A: I graduated in 1940.

T: You went to college right away, then, at Stevens Point in Wisconsin?

A: Yes. It was then called Central State Teachers College. Now it's UWSP [University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point].

T: So you had done a year of college, even actually almost three semesters, by the time that the US entered World War II in December of 1941.

A: Yes.

T: Relating to that, to the attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7th--what were you doing when you first heard that news?

A: We were eating lunch or dinner at midday, having a chicken dinner. I was living with my sister and brother-in-law in Milwaukee. We had the radio on and we heard the news that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor, and this was war. Of course we were all just devastated. We sat there stunned, looking at each other because we knew my brother-in-law, Bob Brunner, had registered for the draft and that he was likely to be called up. I, being only an eighteen year old kid, I didn't think much about it. Much more than that. That's about all I remember.

T: Being devastated was more the personal impact, perhaps, on Bob, than in a larger sense for the nation as a whole?

A: Nation as a whole, and for me. Ultimately, I knew we were going to be involved, because we had the feeling this was going to be a long drawn out affair. Knowing that we were already at war with Germany, virtually, at that time. So it was going to be a worldwide conflict. Who knew anything? It was completely uncertain.

(1, A, 64)

T: Did you talk to your folks any time after this news became public?

A: Not really. I don't remember any significant conversation, but I did talk with my sister and brother-in-law because I was living with them at the time.

T: Were you in school at that time, too?

A: No. I had taken off a year to work to make enough money to go back to either the U [of Wisconsin] at Madison, or Marquette, to get my engineering degree, which I was going to do.

T: I see. You finished a year. This fall semester of 1941 you were off anyway.

A: I was off anyway. I was off working, making money. I was going to save a thousand dollars.

T: That's a big sum in those days.

A: That was a big sum. That would have put me with working in the summers, I knew I could get through three more years of the U and get my engineering degree at that time. But then by the time the war began, the whole thing went to hell in a hand basket.

T: What kind of job did you have at this time?

A: I was a machinist. First I worked for Cutler-Hammer Corporation assembling motor controls and switches and things like that in Milwaukee. There were a lot of jobs at that time. This was the beginning of the war effort. Then while I was doing that, I also went to school four nights a week and took a double course in machine shop. Learning how to run the lathe, milling machines, etc. Learning these engine lathes, and milling machines and all that. Turning out stuff. By the middle of the winter, 1941-42 that would have been, I finished the course and I applied as a machinist, a machine operator, at another small corporation and I got a job on a turret lathe. A turret lathe is an engine turning lathe where you turn out spools and different things on lathes. It has six tools on the turret that you spin around and do various operations with. It was quite a complicated machine. A machinist.

T: If you planned for engineering, that was not a bad skill to have.

A: Oh, no, it was good. I wanted to get hands-on experience. As a matter of fact, when I left there, the man offered me the job as night foreman because he really liked my work very much. I was only eighteen and I said, "No, thank you. I'm going back to school."

T: When did it begin to occur to you to join the service? Right away, or was it something you weren't interested in?

A: I wanted to, secretly in my own mind, I wanted to become a pilot. There were these wonderful signs everywhere: "You too can be an aviation cadet." These wonderful pictures of these hotshot pilots with their wings.

T: That caught your eye?

A: Oh, yes! Of course. We all sort of would dream of becoming a pilot. So I had that secret dream. Then as I said, they lowered the requirements to one year of college for the aviation cadet program.

T: And you had a year of college.

A: And I had that one year of college. I said, "My goodness! Could it possibly be?" And so the traveling aviation cadet board—they had a traveling board coming through Wisconsin—I drove to Marshfield, took the exams, and passed them. Then a couple of months later, I think it was about July, I was sworn in.

T: This was July 1942?

A: 1942. As a reservist, as a private in the US Army Air Corps Reserve. It wasn't until the end of the first semester, the end of January or February, that we were all called into the program and into active duty.

T: This was early 1943.

A: Yes. The first month of 1943. Then I went to basic training at Shepherd Field, in Wichita Falls, Texas. Those horrible drill fields. In January and February it was just horrible out there.

(1, A, 138)

T: This is pretty far from your dream of a pilot, what you were doing in Basic Training in Texas.

A: There were over a thousand of us out there at that terrible field, that Shepherd Field. Most, I'm sure, aspiring to be something more than an Army private. Then I went on after that to College Training Detachment, CTD it was called. We again took tests. Depending upon how you rated on the exams you were going to be at CTD for either one, two, three, four, or five months. The ones who did best were only there for one month. I evidently scored quite high, because I was only there for one month. Then I was off to the classification center in Nashville, Tennessee. I had gone George Peabody College in Nashville for my CTD and that was wonderful. Oh, there were co-eds there, and we took courses, ordinary college courses. It was fun. If I had known at that time that they were going to score us, I would have done more poorly on the tests! *(laughs)*

T: And stay longer.

A: Yes *(laughs)*. So I had to get out of there. We went to the classification center and we were there for almost a whole week, taking thousands and thousands of questions of every kind, technical and otherwise, to classify us as whether or not we were going to be pilot, navigator, bombardier, or those that couldn't make any one of the duties of which you could be commissioned an officer. You would either become a gunner, or some other field in the Air Corps.

T: You weren't commissioned yet?

A: No, no. I wasn't even a cadet yet. Then we waited for another month. By this time it was like June, May or June. I went to pre-flight, pre-flight in Montgomery, Alabama. Pre-flight school there. At... *(pauses three seconds)*

T: Maxwell?

A: Maxwell, yes of course. Thank you. I spent two months there in pre-flight. This was horrible discipline. They tried to make it like West Point, with square meals and demerits and all that. They tried to wash you out.

T: Did you get the impression they were trying to wash people out?

A: Oh, yes. They were trying. I made a mistake. I happened to have an argument with, we had a lot of fun arguments with rebels, the rebs against the yanks. That was big in those days. I was talking with this friend of mine who was a reb. I said, "Aw, you guys from Georgia," or something like that. I made some disparaging remark about southerners, and behind me was this little tactical officer. He was a second lieutenant. He said, "What did you say, Yankee boy?" I said "Yes, sir!" and he racked me up into a brace as we called it [note: reference unclear], and he said, "I'll make you wish you were never born, Yankee boy!" He tried to get me [to quit], but I finally had to go into my zombie mode for the next month and a half. Whatever he did, I said, "Yes, Sir! No, Sir! No excuse, Sir!" One time I dropped, fainted in the 105 degrees at Maxwell Field. I dropped. He never did get to me. I finally left there. We were aviation cadets by that time.

T: When you left there?

A: No, no. When we came to Maxwell we were now called aviation cadets, with our nicer uniforms and more pay, seventy-five dollars a month instead of fifty dollars. Then when we left there we went to Florida, to Lakeland, Florida, for primary flight training in little Stearmans, with the open cockpits and biplanes. We first started learning to fly. We were two months in primary and again, oh gosh! They were washing them out. I think about a third washed out in primary. It was bad. Gusty days and so on, and if you so much as touched a wing, something went wrong. I remember crosswind landings. One day, it was a really bad gusty day and we were out in the auxiliary field, and my instructor had me going round and round in crosswind landings, and I couldn't quite get it right. And finally this guy said, "Take me home!" So I went back to the base and the next day here's this Army Air Corps captain saying, "We're going to go up for a check ride today." This was a "washout ride".

(1, A, 202)

T: So do it right or else?

A: Right. Well, that day he took me up there. He had me do everything. I was so on the ball that day. I did everything just right. We came back down and I heard him say to my instructor, "I don't see anything wrong with that boy. He gave me the best ride I had all day." My instructor came by and said, "I'll see you tomorrow and get you squared away on those crosswind landings. See you tomorrow." I was still hanging in there.

T: But you saw guys washing out?

A: Oh, yes. About a third washed out just in that one phase alone. Once you got through primary, though, it wasn't so bad. Maybe another ten percent in Basic. Another ten percent in advanced. Once you got to advanced you were pretty well on your way.

T: You mentioned being in Texas, Alabama, Florida.

A: And then Georgia. I graduated at Moody Field, Valdosta, Georgia. I graduated and got my wings and commission. By the way, at that time, this was February 1944 now, when we were graduated, those of us that graduated, here there was going to be a big graduation. We were all going to be second lieutenants. Wrong! Half were made flight officers, noncommissioned, instead of second lieutenants. Equivalent to a warrant officer who wore blue badges instead of gold bars. Of the four people in my room, one had washed out and two others were blue badged. I was the only of the four that got second lieutenant rating, commissioned.

T: That must have been a rude surprise for those guys.

A: Oh, it was terrible. It was terrible. And people that washed out. You have no idea how much our whole lives were wrapped around this. Several people tried to commit suicide when they washed out. Oh, yes, that was common. I know it absolutely devastated... their whole lives had no more meaning when they washed out. They wanted to be pilots so bad.

T: What did they wash out to? Because they didn't leave the service.

A: They washed out. They were pulling chocks in some airport somewhere. Doing some manual labor for something.

T: That's a big step down.

A: Way down. A private, just a flunky. A lot of them went in to the Army, too. We were in the Army, by the way.

T: Army Air Force.

(1, A, 230)

A: Army Air Corps. Anyway, near the end of that my instructor who was very senior, he was a captain, very good but tough. He was all work and no play. Finally near the end, maybe a couple weeks before the end, he said, "Well, what would you like?" I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "What would you like to fly?" I said, "The B-17 [Flying Fortress, 4-engine bomber] of course." The biggest bomber there was. He said, "If you can show me you can fly on instruments, I'll see that you get first pilot of B-17."

So the next couple weeks I just practiced instruments, instruments, instruments. I could fly on those instruments blind. I saw everybody else doing a lot of fooling around. We were so happy to be near the end. But I worked. Finally I took my instrument flight exam with a special captain who was strictly an expert in instruments. I remember him saying, "Oh, boy! That boy gave me the best ride I had

today. He's a good boy." All right! So I went home on my ten day graduation leave. We didn't know what we were going to get. It came through in the mail. Going to Sebring, Florida, for first pilot B-17 training.

T: You had really achieved something, then.

A: That's right. I was going to be training as first pilot B-17. I went through that program there for the next two and a half or three months. Finally when we were all done, the B-29 [Superfortress heavy bomber] came into existence. We became aware of it. Twenty of my class of 240-odd were selected to go to Clovis, New Mexico, to train in the B-29.

T: Were you the first group of pilots to be training on this plane?

A: No. There was another group that had already gone through. These guys were old pros. They had done tours of duty before, had been instructors. They were all very experienced pilots who were the first ones. We were the first ones that were right out of flight school. This was very rare for B-29s. The rest were all experienced. This was the summer of 1944. Eventually, after two or three months at Clovis, the crews were put together.

T: So the crew that you would fly with.

A: That was the same crew I had overseas. We did mock bombing missions all over the country. The gunners would go off and practice gunnery and the navigator practiced navigation. The bombardier practiced bombing. We pilots were practicing landings and takeoffs and all the instrument stuff. Over and over and over until you could do it in your sleep.

T: Which was the point, I guess.

A: Of course. Because we had to in combat. You had to have your emergency procedures like clockwork. Saved me couple of times, because you just have to know what you're doing. Just like that.

T: Before we get past Basic Training, I want to ask something else. You did kind of a tour of the South here: Texas, Alabama, Florida, Georgia. What was your impression of the South and the people who lived there?

A: *(laughs)* They still hadn't finished fighting the Civil War.

T: Seriously?

A: Oh, absolutely! That's all they talked about. And I must say the southern boys, I got to be good friends with a lot of them, they knew their history. Especially the Civil War and their god, Robert E. Lee. They knew that war much better than we

did. I had learned about the Battle of Gettysburg and this and that and how we finally beat them and all, but they knew all these other battles, Bull Run and Chancellorsville, and on and on where they had whooped the Yankees. They knew everything. They made our knowledge pale. They were so well versed in this.

T: On that issue, because there were towns nearby all these bases, did you get to town at all and really see the civilians?

A: Not much. When I was College Training Detachment in Nashville—and that was one month, one and a half months it turned out—I got to be very friendly with a girl who happened to live in Montgomery. She was graduating from George Peabody College in Nashville. We were going out together. We didn't go anywhere, just on campus right there. When I got to Maxwell Field in Montgomery, I actually got to go to her home and visit her home on a Sunday, twice. Her father even let us use the car. We actually went out somewhere to eat or whatever. We became very good friends. I knew that could never work permanently.

T: Why was that?

(1, A, 289)

A: The culture was completely different from ours. You have no idea how different that culture was.

T: What struck you as most different or noticeable?

A: Their whole attitude. They had their colored maid who did the cooking and so on. They had the colored man doing their yard. At Stevens Point I don't think I saw very many. I think I saw maybe one or two colored people in my whole life, that I got to see. To me they were just people. And down South they were servants.

T: How did that affect you as a northern person?

A: I didn't understand. I didn't think that was right. I thought it was demeaning. I never said anything but I just felt that. That was just my own naïve look at things. She was a lovely girl and they just thought I was a nice fellow, a student. But their daughter had graduated now from Peabody. She was going to go on to be a teacher or something. She was actually a year or two older than me. Lovely girl. And when I went away from Montgomery we corresponded a little bit but slowly it dwindled because I had a girlfriend up north back in college. Up at Stevens Point. She kept writing. She was my girlfriend.

T: You did notice. There were things about the South that struck you as different from your own experience.

A: Oh, completely different. Yes. That's right.

T: Something else that you noticed? Anything else that really...?

A: Well, the fact that they hadn't gotten over the Civil War. They just, to a person, even when I got to Annapolis many years later in 1949 and 1950 teaching at the Academy. I lived right in town. I built my home there. "He ain't so bad for a Yankee boy." I was playing baseball with them. With the Annapolis baseball team. "Come on, Awrt. Hit it out in booshes." I'd hit home runs every now and then. I was the pitcher. "He ain't so bad for a Yankee boy."

T: That's the way they saw you?

A: Oh, yes. That's right. They also, every one of them it seemed, had a great-granddaddy that was a colonel in "The War." There weren't any privates. None of the people that I ever talked to had any relatives who had been privates. They were all colonels.

T: All chiefs and no Indians in that outfit.

A: Anyway that's the way they perceived it, three generations later.

T: You would have had a hard time living down there?

A: Yes. Even in Annapolis [Maryland], but it was different [there]. Annapolis was very cosmopolitan. It was the home of the Navy. From the Navy, there were more retired Navy officers, admirals, and captains in Annapolis than any other place in the country. So it was very cosmopolitan. Our social life centered around our department, math and physics, and our friends were all like Navy types and fellow professors. Even though our neighbors, they were friends, but they were not the center of my social life.

(1, A, 322)

T: You mentioned blacks in this one context here. In the service, how often did you come into contact with minorities?

A: None of them. None of them were in the aviation cadet program. None.

T: It was strictly white, no Hispanics or blacks or Native Americans?

A: Hispanics, yes. A couple of Hispanics in my crew. Gunners.

T: This is the crew that was put together at Clovis?

A: Yes. As a matter of fact, I remember one fellow, Dick Serano, he was from El Paso or something. He was so Hispanic. We kind of kidded him a little bit about that.

T: Did you observe discrimination of Native Americans or Hispanics in the service?

A: None. We looked at everybody as equals. None whatsoever. They could either do the job or they couldn't. We didn't care who they were. One of my best friends was from San Antonio [Texas]. He had been a graduate engineer. His name was John Hardison. He was really good. He was also a hypnotist. He put on a show one time where he hypnotized a whole bunch of fellows and had a mock drinking party on the stage there. These fellows were getting drunker and drunker on the make-believe drinks. He woke them all up and it was just the most hilarious thing I'd ever witnessed. He was a great fellow. His bunk was just across from mine. We lived in Quonset huts.

T: At Clovis?

A: No, no. At Tinian [in the Mariana Islands]. This was overseas I'm talking about. Most of the pilots were captains. I was one of the few first lieutenants. I didn't make first lieutenant until February of '45 because I was so young. I was still just as quick as you could make it. I was one of the only ones coming right out of flight school.

T: And you were over in China by when?

A: November '44. Yes, I was still a second lieutenant at that time. I was the kid.

T: Did we have a large presence in China?

A: No.

T: Let me stick on the subject of dealing with minorities here, because, of course, in China you were in a completely different culture. How was that for our service personnel, and for you in particular, to be in a distinctly different culture?

A: It was fun. The little kids would put their thumbs up and say, "Ding hau" and we would say, "Ding hau. Hau pu hau. Ding hau." I learned how to count up to ten in Chinese. I remember going into town once time and there were these little shops and all these little shops had animals skinned and hanging there. I don't know whether they were half hogs or dogs or some smaller animals. I don't know what they were, but they were hanging there. People buy these skinned animals and things like that. Chickens and veggies all over the place.

The things that I bought were a few souvenirs, like a water pipe and some silk. I sent them home to my sister and my mother. No, not my mother; my mother was dead by that time. My father. I do remember with horror seeing some little old ladies walking around on virtual pegs, having no feet. Little tiny little feet like little doll's feet. They were all crippled. They had them wrapped. Bound feet. I felt so sorry for them, that this culture would maim themselves so. That's one of the memories that I came back with.

T: How were you perceived, do you think, by the Chinese?

A: I was this giant [note: Art Pejsa stands approximately 6' 4" tall].

T: They noticed you immediately.

A: Right. And in India, too, in India it was the same thing. I was this giant American. In India we didn't really like the Indians because they were not to be trusted. We had ghurkas guarding our planes. They were called the ghurkas. They were in the Indian Army. After a little while we found out that they were stealing things from the airplanes and stuff. They couldn't be trusted. So we had to assign one of our crew. Every night we rotated to guard our airplanes at night. Every night.

Some of the devastating memories that I have about India were these. For example, we had top secret meetings, briefings before a mission. Invariably the Japanese knew where we were going. Invariably. I remember the first Singapore mission. I was on that first Singapore one. It was two thousand miles from Calcutta, by far the longest mission ever flown up until that time. They didn't think that any airplane could go that far and come back. We had this top secret meeting, briefing. We were going to go to Singapore and bomb this great port, the Empire Docks, that the British had built in Singapore. It was the biggest port in all Southeast Asia. We took off and we were on our way. Soon we tuned in to Tokyo Rose [Japanese radio propaganda sender], as we did. Nice music and talk. "Well, you boys," she talked friendly to us American boys. "We see that quite a group of the B-29s are heading south for Singapore today. They will be greeted with a nice greeting," she said. We were just devastated because we had this double, triple security ring around our briefing. Yet somehow they found out.

T: What was going on?

A: I don't know how they did it. Anyway, that's just one example.

End of Side A. Side B begins at counter 384.

T: Art, how many missions did you fly from India?

A: It turned out to be eleven.

T: From India and China?

A: India and China, yes. To Saigon, Singapore, Bangkok, Mukden, Manchuria.

T: Long distance missions.

A: Yes, they were all long distance. Singapore was the longest. As a matter of fact, two Singapore missions. The second Singapore was the last mission we flew from

India. It was a mining mission, mining the port of Singapore in the Johore Straits. It was an odd feeling to be at only five thousand feet above the water and seeing that huge city out there to our left. Alone. One airplane at a time. There were twenty or thirty of us that made that mission. We click, click, dropped our mines into the harbor and headed back. It was kind of a lonely feeling being two thousand miles from home, in this airplane. If anything went wrong, you knew you were not going to get back.

T: There was no place to stop?

A: No place. You were two thousand miles from the nearest friendly base. Nothing went wrong. That was the longest mission I ever had. It was eighteen hours round trip.

T: Do you remember your first mission?

A: Yes. Mukden, Manchuria. That was from China, after going up into China [from our base in India]. That's in my book also. It was hell. We lost several, eight or ten B-29 bombers. I think we started out with a hundred and twelve B-29s—that's all that would fly at that time—I think eighty-eight of us got back. We shot down, by actual count that I read in the Twentieth Air Force Official Manual, our gunners shot down sixty Japanese fighters, shot down, and another thirty damaged. It was just the worst hell you could ever imagine. They kept coming and coming and coming, and the flak was so thick you could walk on it.

T: That was your first mission?

A: That was my first. I said to myself, "What am I doing here? The probability of getting through thirty of these [missions] is like zero, I think." We got back. Almost two thirds of the airplanes had damage of some sort. They were patched up and went again. But we lost quite a number on that first one. Then after that, I think my next mission was Bangkok. That was a gravy run, that was easy. We knocked out an important bridge. Real super-exact strategic bombing.

T: From what altitude?

(1, B, 435)

A: Twenty thousand, twenty-one thousand, something like that. Some of the other ones went and knocked out communications plants or whatever in Bangkok. Then we went to Saigon, here and there.

T: You had the same crew members?

A: All the way through.

T: Guys who had come over from New Mexico with you.

A: They were from all over the country. As a matter of fact, the only one that I correspond with is my flight engineer. He lives in Kansas City. I saw him just a couple years ago. My co-pilot and my navigator and bombardier, my bombardier was killed later in another B-29. Eddie Ryan. My navigator I lost track of. And the rest I lost track of.

T: This crew that you assembled at Clovis went overseas with you, then.

A: Yes, we went overseas together.

T: What can you say about your crew and how they worked together?

A: Very good. Otherwise we wouldn't have survived. We were good. I had the best navigator in the whole Air Force. He had been a Merchant Marine navigator for four and a half years. He could do celestial navigation with the sextant or octant actually. When we got in trouble a couple of different times our navigation equipment was all shot, our radar was out and so on, he said, "Okay, haul it up. Haul it up above the clouds and give me five minutes in the astrodome." He'd click, click. Three stars or four and he'd come down and he could pinpoint you within two miles. He was that good. So, when we were completely lost in the weather, he said, "Now take a heading of 140 degrees for forty-two minutes and we'll be over the target." And we dropped our bombs and headed for home.

T: You're the airplane commander here. This is your airplane.

A: Yes.

T: Other than flying the plane, what is your, how did you perceive your role in this ten or eleven person crew?

A: Eleven person [crew]. They looked to me, although some were older than I was, as the captain, the commander. I assigned the gunners more or less to the bombardier. My bombardier, Eddie Ryan, was very competent as a gunner as well as a bombardier. He was in charge of the gunners. They would have practices. He would make sure that they knew. He was in charge of the gunners. Hap Massey, the navigator, was very good. He drank sometimes between missions. He would say, "Art, give me twenty-four hours. Twenty-four hours." Then he'd cut it off. He was there and he was perfect on every mission. We were an excellent crew. We really were.

T: How did you handle the fact that you were younger than some of these people in your crew?

A: It didn't really come up. I don't know what they thought of me. I was the captain. I was the pilot. There was no question about it. We all had our roles to do. We didn't push it at all. It never came up. Everybody did their job. We would line up before we boarded the aircraft and finally make sure everybody had all their stuff. Everything is all set. The guns are all checked. Everything. Okay, let's go. That's about all.

T: So you didn't find age was a real impediment?

A: No. Because they knew I was good. They thought I was good (*laughs*). Well, I was. I got us out of a lot of jams.

T: I guess once you prove that you could do it...

A: That's right. I knew I could do it. I knew I could. I was as good as anybody there, and I knew it.

(1, B, 496)

T: I guess that self-confidence matters to the crew, too.

A: All the way through.

T: You mentioned drinking a moment ago. And this is something that I wanted to ask you. Did you observe drinking being a problem in the service overseas?

A: No, not really. Most of us didn't drink—the stuff was too valuable. A fifth or a quart of liquor was worth fifty bucks on Tinian, so I couldn't afford to drink mine. I traded it in, for good stuff. Various things you could trade because the people in the Navy and the Army at the other end of island, they paid fifty bucks a quart for that. And fifty dollars was a ton of money then. Huge.

I remember near the end, when the war was just about over, a drunken sailor came around and somebody made the mistake of saying that I had a bottle of gin in the bottom of my footlocker. (*grumbling noises*) I was saving it for something else. Anyway, he made such a mess I finally sold it to him for fifty bucks to just get rid of him. He was drinking. Some of the Navy guys, I have to say, were much lower class than us Air Corps guys. We knew we were top guns, cream of the crop.

T: Did you?

A: Oh, yes.

T: Well, on Tinian you came into contact with these Navy guys.

A: Oh, yes. But not much, not very much. I have another story. We were building... Everyone between missions helped build the club, the big officers club. The enlisted

men had their club they were building. This was on Tinian. So we built this one. Of course the weather was always wonderful. It was like summer all the time and we didn't have to even enclose things. We had this wonderful club and we'd just about finished it, with a bar and the pool room and the ping pong table, everything. Places for everything. But we needed ice making. We had no way to make ice. So we had a committee meeting of pilots. Someone said, "Well, I know a guy. There's an old chief at the naval base that can get anything." "See if you can dig up an ice making machine somehow." So somehow there were three or four of us, and we took a jeep. I was on the committee to get the ice making machine. We went down there and found this chief, and he said, "That's tough one. That's a tough one." So he said, "Come on back in a couple of days." So we went back in a couple days, after a mission I think. He said, "Yeah, I can get it, but it's very, very tough, and it's expensive." "How much?" He said, "Twelve cases."

T: Twelve cases?

A: Booze. So we had about a hundred and fifty officers, and this means a hundred and forty-four [bottles]. Each officer had to contribute one bottle out of his monthly allotment.

T: What was your monthly allotment?

A: One quart.

T: So a month's allotment.

A: That's right. So anyway, he was going to get maybe a hundred dollars or more a bottle. You do the math.

T: He was going to be rich pretty soon.

A: He was rich already. Anyway, about two weeks went by and here comes a knock. "There's somebody here to see you." Here's this big old truck that comes running up in the middle of the night. A big old truck and here's this monstrous machine. It was like these ice making machines, about as big as an over-sized Coca Cola machine, and it had one slot for chips and one for ice cubes. *(laughs)* They had stolen it off a hospital ship somehow. I don't know where else they could have gotten it. So we delivered the twelve cases and we had our ice machine.

T: And you never heard anything about it?

A: That was all. Everything in the middle of the night. That's how we say, mum's the word. That's all. Well, a month or two later we had to leave and were gone, and it was all over. All that beautiful stuff just stayed there [on Tinian] and rotted.

T: Art, you remembered your first mission. By this time you were flying from India and China it was against the Japanese. I wanted to ask about perceptions of the enemy. When you thought of the Japanese, how did you perceive them?

(1, B, 559)

A: They were determined fanatics. Absolutely. They'd come diving right through the formation. Devil take the hindmost. They would be spraying bullets through there. They were absolutely fanatical. We knew that. Then, as I point out later on, in Tinian, I encountered a couple of the terrible *kamikazes*. Twice they came right at us. At the last second I dumped the stick down and he just went over the top.

T: Trying to crash into your ship?

A: Oh, yes. The last second I dumped the stick and he went over the top. We'd see explosions here and one over there where they rammed our B-29s. Two different times I came close to buying it. It's in the book.

T: What about the concept of fear and being scared?

A: As I said, after that, as I wrote in the book, cold sweat poured off me. I was drenched, drained. I said to myself, "How much more of this crap do we have to take? When is it all going to be over? I've had it up to here. How much longer am I going to lay it on the line over and over again?" (*louder; exasperated tone*). I was angry. I hadn't had that reaction before. I was just angry. Enough! We'd paid our dues. That was just enough, get it over with. By this time we had demolished virtually every city in Japan. Completely demolished. Tokyo had been completely wiped off the face of the earth, the largest conflagration in the history of mankind, by far. The fire bombing raids. Tokyo and all the other major cities were completely wiped out. They still didn't give up. We still had to keep going until they finally gave up.

T: And you had flown a number of missions by that time, right?

A: Oh, yes. This was like maybe my twenty-fifth mission. Twenty-fourth, I think. Twenty-fourth. Yes.

T: Were the raids from China and India also against mainland Japan?

A: Yes, they were, two of them. Omuta, southwestern Japan. Yawata and Omuta were two of the cities in southwestern Japan. We could reach them [from India, with stops in China]. We couldn't reach all the way to Tokyo, but we could reach these other steel making plants and stuff like that.

T: To reach Tokyo, you could do it from Tinian, right?

A: From Tinian. That's right. And from Saipan and Guam.

(1, B, 590)

T: And you flew from Tinian.

A: Yes.

T: Was your crew involved in any of the fire bombing missions?

A: Yes.

T: How did you deal with that? Realizing what incendiary bombs did when they were dropped, was that a problem for you?

A: Just give up! Just quit! That's all we said. When are they just going to quit! Of course at that time, [Air Corps] General [Curtis] LeMay was issuing over powerful radios, heard all over Japan, "People of Japan. Give up your warlords that are in this. You can no longer compete against us." We had complete control of the air. All this garbage that you read about in revisionist history that they had three thousand airplanes ready. BS! They had nothing. Everything that could fly had been completely destroyed. All they had were these little *kamikazes* left, with a few of their fourteen year old boys to fly them.

For example, I won my Distinguished Flying Cross by destroying the Kawanishi Aircraft Factory. I led a group of about, I forget how many, seventy or eighty B-29s. All grouped together and it was hell again. "Fighters! Flak! Keep it in tight. Keep it in tight!" And we all dropped our bombs together on Eddie Ryan's signal. All together. Ninety six percent of all the bombs in this entire formation hit this target complex of a million square feet. Huge! Sort of like Willow Run [Ford assembly plant] in Detroit. A mouse couldn't have survived, much less a rat or a human being. It was probably the most accurate bombing ever done in World War II. Massed bombing. I led this group, I was the pilot [called airplane commander in B-29] of the lead airplane, and five other groups were at five other aircraft factories. Demolished them. All of the aircraft factories were completely wiped out. All the communication facilities. At the end, by the time August 1st came along, General LeMay lamented, "There aren't any targets left."

T: Because you had been so successful?

(1, B, 623)

A: So successful. We had demolished virtually everything. So we were going to find smaller factories and smaller this and that and other cities. July 10 I went up to Sendai, two hundred miles north of Tokyo. That was a longer mission, quite a bit longer. Demolished it. That's when I almost bought the farm.

T: What made that mission to Sendai more dangerous for you personally?

A: I don't know. We got caught in the lights [searchlights on the ground]. It was unfortunate.

T: That was just by chance?

A: I said to the guys in the back, "Keep your eyes open for anything coming from the rear." All of a sudden, searchlights—they were waving everywhere. They were just waving back and forth. Those cones of white light. Once they latched onto you, then others would join them. You'd get "coned" in the searchlights, as we would say.

T: How high up were you here?

A: We were only about eight thousand feet. Eight or nine [thousand], low altitude. This was a fire bombing mission. Tokyo was the most memorable of all. That you cannot believe. It was absolutely hell.

T: Talk about that mission.

A: It was greens and purples and pinks. [The Japanese on the ground] sent up phosphorus bombs to light up the sky. Then there was smoke. Pillars of fire and smoke going thousands of feet in the air. Because the whole city was burning. Twenty-four square miles of Tokyo went up that night, on May 24 and 26, 1945. That was a double mission of over one thousand B-29s. Five hundred fifty [B-29s] went the first night. They barely slept at all.

I was on the second night, the twenty-sixth of May. It was absolute hell. You had to have only your mind going over the middle of the run, and there were other airplanes all over the place. Of course it was all tied in carefully so you wouldn't run into each other. I had to avoid the towering infernos, otherwise we'd get caught in that and if that happened, you've "bought it."

T: Could the flames literally reach up to your plane?

A: Oh, yes. Then you're turned to toast. Immediately. Firestorm. That's what a firestorm is. I avoided all that, and finally we're out over the water on our way home. Made it through another one. "Rack up another one, Nancy." That's also in the book.

A little aside—my bombardier, Eddie Ryan, he was such a neat fellow. Younger than me. He had a girlfriend, and her picture was there [in his quarters]. After one mission—we four officers lived together in this Quonset hut—he came home from one mission and Eddie said, "Rack up another one, Nancy!" in front of her picture, and a couple of us heard it. So the next mission all four of us, navigator, bombardier, pilot and copilot, we went up to her picture, "Rack up another one, Nancy!" He didn't mind. It was kind of not nice, but it was okay. After that, when

[on one mission] we got back to [the island of] Iwo [Jima] on two engines and finally on one engine, I said, "Rack up another one, Nancy!" We made it through one more.

T: That wasn't the only time that you had to make an emergency landing?

A: Three times. Those 4500 Marines that gave their lives to capture that little piece of rock [Iwo Jima] seven hundred miles from nowhere, they were responsible. The official statistics are that over 2500 B-29s landed there in all those missions. I landed there personally three different times. Three times I owe my life to Iwo. All in all, over twenty-six thousand Air Force crew members were saved because of that. Nobody can tell me it wasn't worth it.

T: The way you describe these missions, it sounds like there was sometimes a period of a few minutes over the target of absolute fear.

A: Absolute panic. Not panic, but fear. Yes, fear. But you did your job.

T: In addition to those minutes of panic there was a lot of dead time getting there and getting back.

(1, B, 672)

A: That's right. A lot of dead time. When we got within about a hundred miles of the [Japanese] coast then we donned our flak suits and our jackets. Maybe 150 miles from the coast. There would be planes out there to greet us. And then of course the coastal batteries were always sending up lots of anti-aircraft to go through. From that time on, maybe an hour or hour and a half of each mission, was hell. The rest was boredom.

T: What a stark contrast.

A: Yes.

T: Suddenly it's, as you mentioned, getting out over the ocean after a mission, like (*loud exhale*), we're done. Then you could almost exhale.

A: That's right. Exactly. Make it back to Iwo first.

T: With these incendiary raids. Other authors have mentioned that it was difficult in their conscience with that kind of ordnance. Was that a problem for you?

A: No, none whatsoever. We just wanted them to quit so we could go home. That's all—we just wanted to go home. Anything that we could do. If we had to kill every Japanese to go home, we might have to do that, because they were fanatics. We knew that. We might have to kill every Japanese. They were defending their Mikado, their God, to the last man. They advertised over and over again that they

will be meeting us on the beaches with pitchforks and with scythes and you'd have to kill every one of them if we killed their Mikado, their king, their God. That was our perception. They meant it.

By the way, here's something that is very controversial and a lot of people don't even know this. But the war could have been over at least two and a half months earlier if Truman had only relented and said, "Okay, we will let your emperor live and be a spiritual or titular head of the country." But he wouldn't do that. It had to be unconditional surrender. So if it was going to be unconditional, they were going to fight on until the last man. In contrast, probably ninety-nine percent of the rest of the world doesn't know this. Had Truman relented, at the end of May after the terrible Tokyo raid, they were ready to quit. They had tried through neutral countries, tried to give up, through Sweden in particular. The King of Sweden, they desperately tried to give up. "If you will only be reasonable and say that the Emperor can live, we're ready to give up." Truman made it seem like he never heard it, that it never got through. Only years later was it ever admitted that these messages got through to our government. Finally, when the second atom bomb was dropped and negotiations began, guess what? We acceded to their demand that the emperor be spared and be the titular head of their country. And they quit.

And so, it is my contention, and to everybody who really knows the truth, this could have happened at least two and a half to three months earlier and spared probably a couple thousand lives of my buddies, including my own. Not only did the atom bomb not end the war, but waiting for it to be completed so that we could drop the atom bombs cost a lot of unnecessary lives. That is at odds with ninety-nine percent of all the perceived notions throughout the entire world. I know that this is the truth because I was there.

T: Japanese fanaticism. Did it ever cross your mind what happened to you if you were shot down over Japan?

A: I was on panels in two places now in my life with survivors who were shot down over Japan. I would say probably less than one out of a hundred survived. They were all slaughtered when they hit the ground. The two people that I know that survived being shot down happened to end up near [Japanese] Army people, Army officers and Army personnel who protected them, took them to prison camps. The population, normal people, hated us. We were such devil figures, I guess is the word. We had been demonized so bad in the public mind that, say, less than one percent of the people that went down ever emerged after the war. Less than two hundred [total].

T: So this terror over Japan was more than just a bomb run. If you were shot down, then...

A: Oh, yes. If we were shot down... As a matter of fact, over Sendai I knew that we just had to get out over the water. Get out over the water and get far enough away so we can ditch. At least we had hope that we could get picked up maybe by a [US]

submarine. We were radioing our position, and each time there were submarines out there who did pick up a few crews. So that was our only hope. Never over land. I was never going to go down over land. I was heading for water because we knew it was the end [to go down over Japan]. It was the end.

(1, B, 728)

T: You carried parachutes with you?

A: But ditching wouldn't have required parachutes. You land the airplane in the water.

T: So just avoid taking the plane down over Japan.

A: Yes.

T: So the fear really was compounded by the time you were over Japan.

A: Yes. Of course.

T: A new subject to talk about: Let me ask you about women in uniform. That came up before we were taping as well.

A: We got to see a couple of nurses. A few nurses down at the Navy base and the Army base the other end of the island. But I never came in contact with them on Tinian. And over in India there were a couple of Red Cross ladies, gals, who gave out coffee and donuts after missions now and then. And a couple of the hotshot guys were a little older and more experienced. It was said that they actually took them out. Actually went out with them. I never was that forward or lucky.

T: That was the older guys though, you say?

A: That's right.

T: What was your general impression of women in uniform? Good thing, bad thing?

A: It was good, fine. I had no impressions at all. They could do things that would relieve a guy for hazardous duty, fine. We knew of course of the Air Force pilots, there were these ladies who were ferrying airplanes back and forth.

T: The WASP [Women Air Force Service Pilots].

A: They would go from wherever the manufacturing plant was, back and forth. Never had any problem. Fine, I guess, they could fly. They flew seven, eight different kinds of airplanes. Now it's gotten to be a bit much. All this heroism about our wonderful lady pilots who saved the world (*sarcastically*).

T: Can you continue on that?

A: Not really. I think that it should be seen as what it was.

T: Which was?

A: A minor role to relieve male pilots for real duty. From this duty to real duty, namely combat. Instructors and so on. They played a role but it was very, very minor. It served its purpose. Everybody contributed during World War II. After the fact to blow it into something beyond what it really was is a little bit unfair. This great emphasis on that famous squadron of black pilots in Europe, [for example].

T: The Red Tails.

A: The Red Tails. Oh, my God, we have one Red-tail over here in our South St. Paul Airport now. These guys, every one of them, is a god-hero. Well, just because they were black and they were just doing their job, like we were? I went through much more hell than any one of them did. I'm just a guy nobody knows, one of the thousands and thousands of pilots and other air crews that were over there. *(pauses three seconds)* By the way, over on Tinian and Saipan, of all the thousands of crewmen, I didn't see one black.

T: It was exclusively white?

A: I don't think they were discriminated [against]. I don't think, they just didn't try out for that. The people that tried out for it got to be pilots. I don't know what the demographics was of getting into training and various, I don't know what that was. I really am ignorant of all that. Why there weren't any blacks? There just weren't.

T: At Tinian, Art, were there minorities there among the ground personnel? People must have been doing everything on the island.

End of Tape 1. Tape 2, Side A begins at counter 000.

T: Even on Tinian you didn't notice many blacks, you said.

A: Not many. I think there were probably a few black mechanics. Mechanic crews, the crewmen that kept our planes flying. Each airplane had four, a crew of four. My crew chief was good.

T: And he worked just with your plane?

A: Just with my plane. Our four, a crew chief and all. We talked about this and that. I would go out on the line quite a bit and talk with him about this problem and that.

They took those planes seriously. We were in their hands. They knew it, and they said they would never let us go unless everything was perfect.

But as far as minorities, you seem to lump together Hispanics with blacks, and that's... Hispanics were just like us; we didn't make any distinction at all. It's just that some of them were from down in south Texas, that's all. They could have been just like any other Texan. But I just happened to know that a couple of men of my crew happened to be Hispanic.

T: And they seemed to fit in fine?

A: Of course. No problem. We didn't have any blacks.

T: Did your B-29 have a name?

A: Yes. The *Pacific Princess*.

T: How did it get that name?

A: This was our third airplane. My first airplane was called *Bat Out of Hell*, because we were over in India and it was the first one of my own that I finally inherited. The airplane that I flew overseas, a brand new B-29 from [the Boeing factory in] Wichita [Kansas], the squadron commander took that right away.

T: So the plane you took over there, you lost. You went down the list, so to speak.

A: You get to the bottom of the heap there, you're the new recruit. Then eventually, after two or three missions, I finally got a beat up old airplane of my own and we called it *Bat Out of Hell*. And two or three missions later, not very long later, some guy took it. We shared airplanes. We had more crews than airplanes. They were hard to come by. We only had 110-125 [B-29s] in all of India there.

T: And more crews than planes?

(2, A, 41)

A: Because they were coming over, and some didn't come back. Then I got the *Monsoon Goon*. I had that for a couple of missions and then it didn't come back from Singapore one time.

T: With someone else flying it, obviously.

A: Someone else flying it. They didn't come back. Then I got to Tinian, and we got a brand new one called the *Pacific Princess*. I flew that until the end of the war. I got that in June [1945], late May or June.

T: Did you name the plane yourself?

A: No. We took a vote.

T: The crew did?

A: Oh, yes. We'd sit around and chat. Somebody came up with *Pacific Princess*. They robbed that name now. You've seen [the 1970s American television program] *Loveboat*?

T: Yes.

A: They called that [ship] the *Pacific Princess*. They robbed our name. We even had... that little patch that I have [that came off my flight jacket], that was done by Disney. We had a whole crew of those. Eleven of those came in [from them].

T: You sent in [to Disney] your little sketch of what you wanted on your flight jacket and they would do it for you?

A: They did it. Disney's crew.

T: No kidding?

A: Yes. Hollywood.

T: So you sent it over there, and they sent the patches [back to you]?

A: I still have my little *Bat Out of Hell* thing. I still have it in my memorabilia there.

T: And you had the name painted on the plane then, too?

A: Oh, yes. And then of course this beautiful gal, bare top and all. Of course the *Pacific Princess*. What else? (*thinking*)

T: Who did the nose art [on your airplane]? Was it someone local?

A: Every squadron had a couple of nose art guys who were just expert. They were kept pretty busy.

T: Would they do it for free, or did you pay them?

A: No, it was free. Part of their job. I think we tipped this one, we tipped our guy. I don't know if we had to, but we did. We put together a little, a buck or five bucks a piece, or something like that.

T: A little something for him. Was this plane qualitatively any different than the first plane [you had]?

A: Oh, yes. They were much superior. They had better equipment. They had a formation stick, for example. We could fly formation with the autopilot. The radar was upgraded a little bit. The engines kept being upgraded. When we first got overseas those engines were horrible. They just blew up. They'd swallow valves, and they would do this and they were just... [It was] because they were run at 120 percent of capacity to get them off the ground [note: many planes were overloaded with fuel and bombs, to over their maximum weight for takeoff]. In some of the memoirs they said by the time we were over in India for three months, it was proven that you could get a B-29 off the ground twice in one day without the aid of jacks!

T: So it was that bad.

A: And then the heat. They finally put in a rule that you couldn't take off with more than 135,000 pounds, or [if] the temperature was over a hundred degrees, because you just couldn't get it off the ground.

T: And it was that hot in India?

A: It was that hot, yes. It was touch and go all the way.

T: So there was an equipment question.

A: Oh, definitely. Bad. Bad. By the time the war ended, though, it was the R3350 [engine], they called it. Thirty-three 150 cubic inch displacement of the engine. Two rows, nine and eight, seventeen cylinders. It was the finest piston engine in the world, and it was the finest piston aircraft ever built, the B-29; they converted the B-29 into Boeing Stratocruisers. After the war they flooded the market in commercial aviation, until the jets came in.

T: So it was a good plane to fly?

A: Oh, beautiful plane. It flew like a Piper Cub. It was a wonderful airplane, yes.

T: In just one year you noticed a real difference in flying essentially the same plane.

A: Yes. I just heard recently that during the war in England, if they couldn't make a mission, couldn't complete a mission, over Germany or France, they would dispose of their bombs over the [English] Channel because they couldn't land with bombs in their bomb-bay, because it was too dangerous. I said, "What?" I just heard this the other night. I learned that. When we went over from India over to China, fully loaded with fuel and fully loaded with bombs because there was nothing over in China except what we flew over the Hump [the Himalayas], we came in and whatever fuel we used up on our way, we landed with virtually a load full load of

bombs and fuel minus what we'd used up going over the Hump. And we landed. There was no problem. Well, what's the problem?

T: Was it structurally, or the way the plane was built? Was it that the Boeing B-17 bombers used in Europe couldn't take the weight?

A: No, it isn't that at all. It's just a different perception, that's all. We just had to do it, that's all. We never thought about it.

T: So you did it.

A: Just like going over the Hump, the world's worst weather. Absolutely the worst weather. Before they let me fly over the Hump, I flew twenty hours in the Link trainer, under the hood [covered windshield so that the pilot was required to rely on instruments]. Over that route with those little old beams, dot-dits and dit-dots. That's all we had over the Hump; twenty-five thousand foot mountains to go over, and wending your way through there. A lot of people bought the farm.

There was icing every time, icing on the wings. When you went down from thirteen thousand down to nine thousand, you went through this five thousand feet of icing. Finally we developed this technique of, okay, when you get down to about fourteen thousand feet, you just pull the power, you dump everything, dive down through, and you only picked up maybe a third of an inch of ice instead of a full inch, in which case you'd go in.

T: So the longer you were at this altitude...

(2, A, 137)

A: Oh, yes, so you got through that in a hurry and then when you got down to lower levels when you're going into the valley, the Chengdu Valley, over the terrible Hump, then you could do that and only pick up half an inch or a third of an inch of ice, and then it would start flaking off. Can you imagine the airlines today going through icing? Through thunderstorms. We had no radar. We couldn't see ahead of us. We might be in the center of a thunderstorm, we didn't know. Today they have radar and they go around them. We went right through them. We didn't know. We couldn't. We'd get all shook up. We don't know today what severe turbulence is. You don't know what severe turbulence is. But a wing has never come off a Boeing airplane, no matter how bad you shake it, and I mean through the center of thunderstorms. It won't come apart.

T: It sure feels like it's going to sometimes, though, I bet.

A: That's right. I know it feels that way but it won't. We learned that back in World War II, in those B-29s. Sometimes those wings would be flapping out there like a bird. And then (*makes engine noise*) way down a thousand feet. And just trying to keep it straight and level. I don't even want to think about it.

T: On the flight deck up front, there were five of you, right?

A: Pilot, co-pilot, bombardier, flight engineer, radioman, navigator.

T: So six of you.

A: Six. And five in the back [of the airplane: right gunner, central fire control, left gunner, radar operator, and tail gunner].

T: That long tunnel or tube gave access to the rear of the airplane, right?

A: I crawled through that twice, I think. I could barely fit because I was so tall. I had such long legs that I crawled on my hands and knees. It was a little small.

T: It sounds like it was very tight. Was there much coming and going between the front and the rear of the airplane?

A: No, not at all. When you were pressurized you didn't dare, because if you became depressurized suddenly it could blow you out of there like a projectile.

T: Oh, that's right.

A: So you were told no, not when you're pressurized. Don't anybody be in the tunnel.

T: I never thought of that.

A: Now and then somebody would come forward or go back. Once in a great while, very rarely.

T: My [nine year old] daughter asked me today, she said, "What did they do when they had to go to the bathroom?" What did you do? Was there a head [toilet]?

A: No, no. We had little bottles.

T: [When we got inside of a B-29 recently] she looked around and she didn't see a toilet.

A: Little bottles.

T: You had a lot of hours in the air, though.

A: Oh gosh yes. I never really had to go, defecate, but I don't know what I would have done. You just held it. But peeing we did. We had the bottles there.

T: What about eating on these long missions?

A: [For food we had] K rations. On the long missions, depending on the length of the mission, we usually had two or three K rations. They're little boxes about as big as a Cracker Jack box, probably an inch and a half or so. Like a brick, a thin brick. Inside was this little can of something or other, cheese, maybe ground meat, a chocolate bar, and this big cracker. Then we'd get a can of juice of some kind. We'd open up a can of juice. What else was in there? *(thinks for a few seconds)* Enough for a meal.

T: Did you get coffee and that kind of stuff?

A: No, just juice. A can of juice. Some of the fellows would take their own little thermos of coffee or whatever, but we'd just open up a can of juice. We also had canteens. Each guy had his own canteen of water to sip from.

(2, A, 189)

T: You were up in the air for a number of hours. As you describe it, you had to bring stuff with you to eat and drink.

A: Yes. We had K rations and juice and a canteen of water. All we carried for our protection, I don't know what protection it would have been, was a sidearm, a .45 [caliber pistol]. My .45 pistol.

T: A .45 caliber pistol, what was that going to do?

A: We kidded about that, too. What are you going to do with that? Nothing. That was the modus operandi.

T: Everyone took one with them? Did you all have one?

A: Just the officers. The enlisted men didn't. I did.

T: Hoping you'd never have to use it?

A: Yes, I guess so. At least if you were going to get it you were going to take some with you. That was the idea. If I'm surrounded by Japanese and they're going to get me, I'll kill a few of them before they get me. Sort of like the people [in that airplane] over Pennsylvania [on 11 September 2001]. We're buying the farm but, by God, we're going to do what we have to do.

T: That's the story that doesn't get the attention there.

A: Those guys were real heroes. We weren't. You did what you had to do. That's all. Nobody considered themselves heroes at all. Finish another mission. Everybody else is doing it. Hundreds of thousands of others are going through the same thing,

so you're not special. You're just one of the guys doing your job. After the fact you say to yourself, geez, nobody really understands what we really went through. I don't think that people to this day really know how bad it was.

T: It's slipping now as generations are removed from that experience.

Another new theme: Let me ask you about staying in contact with people. How did you stay in touch with family and loved ones back home?

A: Just by letters.

T: Were you a regular letter writer?

A: About once a week. I got a letter from my older sister. Adeline was a very faithful writer; she wrote about every week and I wrote back. She was living in Milwaukee, and my parents were living in Custer [Wisconsin] and my younger sister, who was in high school at that time. I would have two letters a week that I would write home. I had a few friends, a couple guys in college, even a couple of professors wrote. And friends, and a girlfriend.

T: So you got mail, would you say regularly?

A: Regularly, yes. It took a week or more or two sometimes. They didn't know where you were. Our mail was edited—sometimes they would get my letters and they would have parts cut out.

T: So the mail on the way out was censored?

A: Yes.

T: What about photographs? Was it possible and permitted to take pictures when you were over there?

A: Yes, we took pictures but you couldn't send them back because they would be censored. I have a few pictures that I got when I was overseas.

T: Did you just develop them there and hang onto them? How did you do that?

A: To be truthful, I still have a roll of pictures in an old Kodak camera that I have that I never did get developed. Old black and whites. It's probably no good any more, but I always keep thinking some day I'll find somebody that can restore old celluloid. Maybe develop some pictures that I took from the air. I don't really have any pictures that I took from the air.

T: So most of your pictures as I look through your book here are... (*looking at photograph album*)

A: Are on the ground. Of my Quonset hut and pictures of my thatched roof house in India.

T: And of yourself, I noticed. There's some pictures of you in there.

A: Yes.

(2, A, 235)

T: Did a lot of guys have cameras, or was it just a few?

A: I bought one from a friend of mine for five bucks when I was over on Tinian. He wanted to sell it. I bought a real nice bellows-type Kodak. I think I paid five bucks for it. I didn't travel and I didn't go overseas with one.

T: Did you take that camera, or a camera, sometimes with you in the plane?

A: I did once, once or twice. Usually not. I just made it a point and went down to take some pictures. Never amounted to anything. I never did get them developed.

T: You never did get them developed. You still have the roll, though. Is that right?

A: I do.

T: That's an interesting story. Art, let me move on here. By April of 1945 are you in China still, or have you moved to Tinian?

A: That's when we left India. We were in India except for brief periods over to China and then back to India. We spent almost all of our time in India except when we were on missions the four times. We left April [1945], well, near the end of April.

T: So when President Roosevelt died you were still in India?

A: Yes, we were still in India. It doesn't really register for me. I don't remember much what I thought. I remember hearing it and saying, "Oh." We knew he was very sick. So he passed on—well, President Truman will take over. That's about all. I don't remember much about it.

T: Sounds like it didn't make a major impact on you.

A: No. Not at all. *(pauses three seconds)* I voted for him by the way. Absentee ballot, in 1944. I had just turned twenty-one.

T: Was India just far away from everything, just kind of removed?

A: Removed from everything. It really was.

T: Where was your base, near Calcutta?

A: Near Calcutta. On the eastern coast there. Northeast coast.

T: What was your impression of India?

A: It was various. It was such a different culture. We went for a three day pass to Calcutta one time, just my crew and me. It was really horrible, horrible, the life that these poor devils had at the bottom end of the culture. They were dragging themselves through the gutters and all that.

T: Literally?

A: Oh, literally. Between buildings and all. Withered arms and legs. Police beating, "Get out of here!" as if they were animals. There was just squalor, the worst squalor. And the stench. In the middle of all this would be a great building like the Jainen Temple. Gold and diamonds. You go in there, it's a different universe.

T: What a contrast.

A: Beautiful women, with the jewels in their foreheads, gorgeous saris and all, walking around. And some men. Just outside of it two blocks away the worst squalor in the history of the world.

T: Night and day.

A: Yes. All the English hotels were on Chouringe Street, the Great Eastern Hotel. We stayed there. I remember that neighborhood. We spent a couple nights in the Great Eastern Hotel. I think it was three days and two nights. I still have a menu from one of our duck dinners that we had there. It was just a three day nice bash.

(2, A, 275)

T: Did you say your whole crew went?

A: Yes, but we separated. We went our separate ways. Generally, the four officers stuck together. The enlisted men [stuck together]. There was this division, cultural division in the crews. They had their own barracks, and we had our own barracks. They had their own club, and we had our own club. But when we got together as a crew, we were old buddies. The distinctions were still subtly there, although nothing was ever said.

T: It's curious that you went to Calcutta as a group, but then there was this almost natural...

A: Dichotomy.

T: But you functioned well.

A: As a matter of fact, if there was any antagonism, it was between two [enlisted] guys, the [left and right] gunners. This one did something wrong to so and so. Whatever. And then I'd say to Eddie, "What's the problem here with these two guys?" That happened only once or twice.

T: Did you have any problems, relationships or problems among your crew?

A: None at all. We just loved each other. We knew we were good. We were the best. We just worked at it, being the best.

T: It would have been even worse, I suppose, if you had problems with personalities.

A: No, no problems whatsoever. Radioman—we had the best radioman in the whole group. We knew that. He was out there doing his job and he'd come with messages from so and so. And the navigator—I knew he was the best. The bombardier—I knew he was absolutely the best. He had a CPE [Circular Probable Error] from twenty thousand.

We spent a week doing lead crew training. They pulled us out for a week for lead crew training. We were very experienced, and we were one of the old crews, so they pulled us out and we spent four, five or six days practice bombing, maybe twenty a day. Going over and over again. Then we had little bombs that you had flour in, so you could see them hit. There would be a big white splash down there. Eddie, from twenty thousand feet, he had a CPE of like seventy-three feet after twenty-some bombs. It was absolutely phenomenal. He knew that bombsite like the back of his hand. So we went and led this formation of a hundred or so planes to the Kawanishi Aircraft Factory.

T: Was that the Sendai mission?

A: No, no. This was over Himeji, Japan. This is the Kawanishi Aircraft Factory which I got the DFC for. I knew this. In spite of the fact that we had horrible opposition, we got in there. Dropped the bombs, all in there. But what else? It's going to be right there in the middle, because Eddie's dropping them. And sure enough.

T: Did it make your job easier?

A: Well, sure. I had to keep the course right on. Keep the airspeed exactly correct. I had a PDI, pilot direction indicator, that I had to follow while he was working the bombsite. It was really telling me where to steer. I just had to follow this exactly. Then at the right time (*countdown*) five, four, three, two, one. Click, click, click, click, click, click (*sound of bombs releasing*). Every half second until they're all gone. All the other ninety or one hundred airplanes, same thing.

T: On your lead.

A: Yes. All of the others on Eddie's signal.

T: You had such a good crew, it sounds like. Did you ever lose anybody out of your crew?

A: Yes, my radar man. He bought it.

T: What happened to him?

A: He got a 20mm [shell] through the chest.

T: On one of your missions?

A: Yes. That was devastating. *(pauses three seconds)* I don't like to think about it.

T: He was injured, and you had to go all the way back to Iwo Jima, or what?

A: Back to Tinian.

T: Your plane was still responsive?

A: It flew fine. There were a lot of holes here and there. I had holes on a dozen of my thirty missions. Some battle damage. At least a dozen of my missions I had battle damage to my airplanes. Nothing serious enough to bring it down.

T: You lost an engine or two occasionally, too, you said earlier

A: Yes. I lost two engines over Sendai.

(2, A, 320)

T: Did having the airplane pierced by a shell wreck the pressurizing?

A: Yes, you couldn't get it pressurized. But that's all right; that was okay. We came down; we didn't fly so high anyway coming back. Just gently went down a little lower.

T: To where it wouldn't apply?

A: Yes. It wasn't a problem.

T: What's it like to have to integrate a new crew member? How was that?

A: That was no problem. He was a good guy, a guy who was really good in his class. He was a radar operator. He was okay. He did his job.

T: He wasn't the old guy, though.

A: No, it wasn't the old guy. Not the original crew. That's right.

T: Was that a time really that the war hit close to home for you, when you lose somebody that you really know personally?

A: No, it was happening pretty often. We just thanked God that we never had anything serious enough to bring us down. We always managed to come back. I was the lucky kid.

T: Let me seize on that term--luck. How do you explain, was it luck, or was it fortune or something else?

A: Both. And competence, too. When we almost bought the farm over Sendai, the emergency procedures that I was going through, click, click, do this, do that. Then we had to fly. Everything is going to hell in a hand basket. You still have to do your job and do your emergency procedures precisely correctly. Everybody. It got us out of there. There was competence as well as luck. But I was one of the only ones that ever got coned in the [search]lights and survived. I did what I had to do, namely, dive straight down. Even though the sky was filled with anti-aircraft shells trying to bring us down while we were diving.

T: How many thousand feet did you dive?

A: From about, I think were up at about nine thousand [feet], down to one thousand or 1500. Right straight down, and by the time I leveled out we were doing over the redline at 350 or 400 [miles per hour]. Leveled off and still flying. That was probably my worst mission.

T: So you would say luck played a role, but wasn't the primary thing.

A: No. Luck was the primary thing. Competence could help you out, but you still had to be lucky. If you were unlucky it didn't make any difference how good you are.

T: You were on Tinian when the war against Germany ended on May 8, 1945. What do you remember about that news?

A: Good. Now they know they're beaten.

T: So you thought it would impact the Japanese?

A: Yes. The will to resist. That's all we thought about. Maybe we can go home earlier now.

T: It didn't seem like it was going to work out that way—the Japanese didn't surrender.

A: No, they didn't, that's right. We had to destroy virtually every city and every industry, and they still were going.

T: You flew nineteen missions over Japan from Tinian, you said. And most of them in that time, May, June, July and August 1945.

A: Yes. The end of May, the first one that I flew was Tokyo, on May 25. End of May, then all of June and all of July and the first few days of August.

T: When did you get wind of the atomic bomb or some miraculous weapon?

A: That was it. The atomic bomb. That was it. Right after it happened.

T: That mission was flown from Tinian, wasn't it?

A: Got flown from Tinian, yes. We saw that small group of guys out there in the corner [of the island].

T: They were kept separate, weren't they?

A: They were separate. They had a couple of airplanes there. We didn't know anything about it. They kept us away. Didn't pay any attention. Then [after the bomb was dropped on 6 August] we said, "Ah, now we know."

T: After the fact, you mean.

A: After. One thing, that's in my book, that I reveal, that no one else knows, but is a fact, because I was there, [is that] I opened secret packets. During July [1945], even June, and July, every time we went on a mission, the briefing would say, "Our mission is going to be to so and so, to whatever city it was. Maybe our secondary target would be so and so. It's all detailed in your secret mission packets. You will open those up only when you are at least one hour away from Tinian." After an hour, okay, open it up and here was our primary [target], and here's the route set of the least amount of resistance.

T: That's pretty typical, right?

A: But, and here's your primary, and here's your secondary, and here's your tertiary target maybe if need be, if these are all clouded up. And by the way, here are four cities that are sacrosanct, not to be touched under any circumstances: One was

Kyoto, one was Hiroshima, one was Nagasaki, one was Niijima. Being saved for show and tell.

T: And later on you put two and two together, and figured out why?

A: Hiroshima. Now I know. We could have demolished Hiroshima; it was of the smaller cities. We could have wiped it off the face of the earth just like we did all the bigger ones. Then Nagasaki. We said, "Now we know. Truman was saving it for show and tell."

T: Show and tell. You flew missions though up until the fourteenth of August, is that right?

A: The last mission.

T: By the time that last mission was flown, did you sense that something was in the works?

A: Yes, oh definitely; it was any day. We were going to have to go one more time. There were rumors about that the Japanese were trying to give up. We knew that. As a matter of fact, for the whole month of July we heard more rumors from Washington, D.C. Maybe they were newspapers or Kiplinger Letter [note: reference unclear] or somewhere along the line someone had said they had heard rumors, but the administration would not admit that there were even any offers of surrender. But there were. After the fact, all this stuff came to light. That there had been offers all the way from early May and June, all through there. They were waiting for the atomic bomb. That's another side of the story.

End of Tape 2, Side A. Side B begins at counter 384.

T: Let me ask about V-J Day, the fifteenth of August, 1945. How did you and those in your unit react to that news?

A: Now we can go home. We made it. We survived. That's all we wanted, was to go home. We didn't give a damn about the Japanese or anything. We had to stay there [on Tinian] until September 2. Everything that could fly, over a thousand B-29s in battle formation, at fifteen thousand feet over Tokyo during the signing [of the surrender document] on [board] the [battleship USS] *Missouri*. We were all there. Can you imagine a thousand B-29s all in formation?

T: You flew on September 1 as well?

A: No, September 2. No, no, just on that one day. In formation, while they were signing the peace treaty. It was a heady day. Then after that we just waited. When are we going home? I didn't leave for home until about [September] twenty-seventh, I think. I landed on October 1.

T: You had a number of weeks to kill on Tinian, didn't you?

A: Yes. A couple weeks. Waiting to go home. I remember I did, *(laughs)* I gypped the Air Force out of forty-five days, which I figure I earned.

T: After you got back here?

A: No, no. While I was there.

T: How did that work?

A: One of the last days that I was there we were preparing to go home. My squadron commander said, "Well, say Art, your DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross] came through. By the way, I've got it here and I haven't entered it into the record yet. Would you like to take it now, or we can send it to your home when you get there." I had done some figuring. I took a chance. But it turned out that if you didn't have enough points in the service, you got points for this and that. I was one point shy of an automatic discharge. So because I did not have enough points, I went back to the States for forty-five days R and R, recreation and rehabilitation, back to the service to be in the after-war service. Those that had enough points were discharged. So I'm one point shy and I said to myself, "I could use forty-five days." Then I knew that after the forty-five days were up, I was going to be able to get out. I was just certain. So I said, "No, just save my DFC. Send it to me when I get home." So I got back to the States, at Mather Field, California. I didn't have enough points. I got sent home on forty-five days R and R. And as I had told you earlier, near the end of November [1945], I think it was, I had to go back to Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, back to the service. I was still in the service. And I said, "Oh, by the way, I want to get out. I've got enough points." My DFC had come through [in the meantime], giving me five more points.

T: Now you were four points over the limit, right?

A: Over the limit now. "So I'd like to get on home." "Okay, lieutenant, sure." It took me a day and a half to get clear of the base at Camp McCoy and then it was home and back to school again. I missed a couple days of school. So I got an extra forty-five days time. [After this] then I began fifty-six days of terminal leave [that I had accumulated during 1944-45]. That I'd built up over all the years.

(2, B, 446)

T: So your discharge wasn't final until when?

A: January 25, 1946.

T: You were out of the service long before then, though, weren't you?

A: Right. I was out of the service actually on the first of October [1945] when I landed. Then January 25, 1946 was when my last day was.

T: They move slowly in the service.

A: Yes. I had all this terminal leave coming. I had more money than I ever had in my life. And then they gave us one hundred dollars each month for three months. After you were discharged you got a hundred each for three months. I was collecting pay and I had more money. I had saved five thousand dollars through the years. I had saved a thousand before the war, because I was going to go to school, remember? That was still in the bank. My dad took care of my account and I sent home two or three hundred dollars every now and then that I would save up. Win in a poker game.

T: You were thinking of postwar, weren't you?

A: Oh, all the time! By the time the war ended I had five thousand bucks.

T: That's a fortune in 1946.

A: I was loaded.

T: That was a lot of money. Art, what was your initial reaction to being out of the military?

A: Back home. Too bad I've lost three years, but now I'm back to doing the same thing, and it was just almost like an interim was lost. Like a lost weekend, that's all. Back in college with a lot of these young kids now. The fall of 1945. I was the class of 1940 in high school. These kids in the class are now eighteen year olds. They're becoming my best friends. I was this grizzled old veteran of twenty-two now.

T: You had a lifetime of experience almost in comparison to them.

A: Yes, certainly. They really looked up to me a lot. Although there were a couple thousand students in school, I was class president, chairman of student council and all this stuff. I made the basketball and baseball teams. There was no competition.

T: Do you feel that the interim, this three year interim being in the service, did that add a sense of energy or motivation to you?

A: Oh, definitely. Of course. Yes. I was a young man in a hurry. That's why I went to Marquette and got a master's degree in one year, in the summer. About one year. Less than one calendar year. Then went on and got my nice job at [the US Naval Academy in] Annapolis.

T: What was perhaps the hardest thing for you readjusting to being a civilian?

A: We had family problems that made it very difficult. I don't really care to go into that. My mother had died when I was on the way overseas. She died. She had cancer. In the meantime, during the next year, a few months before, [my father] married again, after about a year after my mother died. Not even a year. I had a stepmother who was the evil stepmother syndrome. God! Sort of kicked me out of the house. She didn't want me coming back and living at home. So I didn't want to, either. Rather than living in Custer, at home, I just rented a room in town, in [Stevens] Point, right near the college, and I walked to school. I was sort of divorced from my home, but my dad and I were still good friends. I'd go home and we'd meet in the back yard. *(pauses three seconds)* I never went into my home again.

T: That must have been hard.

(2, B, 503)

A: It was. That's just an aside. Family problems. Other than that things were fine.

T: Was there any kind of victory parade or celebration that you participated in?

A: One thing I do remember was on the morning of October 1, this was in all the San Francisco newspapers, big headlines. We came from Hawaii the night before. Eight o'clock in the morning we assembled a few miles off the coast and flew in battle formation over San Francisco at about ten thousand feet. The fifteen of us in my squadron, which was the first squadron, the first group of the first wing of the whole Twentieth Air Force to come home, because we were the senior squadron of the whole thing.

T: That's right.

A: And we each landed. Fifteen of us. Anyway, big headlines. "Superfortresses come home victorious." All that stuff. I have a few clippings. I found out that the next night we were invited to go to a big hotel in San Francisco for a dinner, or a welcome home dinner of some kind. Some group, I forget who it was. There were glasses of champagne and so on. So we were feted that night and then went back to Mather Field. That's about all I remember.

T: Was that the last time you flew a Superfortress?

A: When I landed right there, that was it. Until three years ago, when I was co-pilot on *Fifi*, the only flying B-29.

T: So it was more than fifty years until you climbed back in the cockpit again?

A: Yes.

T: What was that like, to climb back in the cockpit?

A: Oh! Showing people through it. Earlier than that, a couple years before that, I had been down to Texas, to the Confederate Air Force, in Midland Odessa. That's where the headquarters is. I joined the Confederate Air Force. Just to be part of it. I knew they had the only flying B-29. So then I went down there to their annual meetings a couple of times. Then I got this quirk. I wanted to re-up. So I went to Crystal Field up here [northeast of Minneapolis], flying Cessna 172s, and I paid my dues flying, flying, flying.

T: To get your license again?

A: To get my license again. I got my commercial license again. I remember the last day I think I flew twenty-two cross-wind landings, so I was dripping wet.

T: How old were you by this time?

A: This was six years ago [in 1996]. I was seventy-three. Finally he says okay. Cross-wind landings are tough. Terrible cross-wind. Kick it out at the right time. He said, "Those private guys can kill themselves if they want to, but you commercial guys have to be able to handle anything, under any circumstances." He was just a young kid. Younger than my son, but he had about nine thousand hours. I only had about two thousand. The kid was very good. He let me loose and signed off on my commercial license.

T: Did you need a commercial license to fly *Fifi*?

A: No, no. All you needed was a license. But I had a commercial after the war. I just got one. I took it. Why not? Sure. Then I had to go to Midland Odessa to go to ground school and flight training again. I spent a whole week there.

T: To relearn how to fly that plane again?

A: Yes. It came back so fast.

T: Did it really come back that fast?

A: Well, sure, because I had flown in the Reserves, you know, at Andrews Air Force Base while I was at Annapolis, and in Milwaukee. I flew in the Reserves. I was an instructor pilot in the Reserves, flying C-46s and C-47s, C-119s. Then I did this Reserve stuff for about ten or twelve years. I got out in 1962.

T: From the Reserves?

A: Yes. Because I had my twenty years in. I went in in 1942, so 1962 was my twentieth.

T: So you hadn't been away from planes, just that particular one.

A: 1962, that's thirty some years there. Well, not thirty. From 1962 until 1995. Well, over thirty years, yes.

T: So flying a Superfortress was something you hadn't done in over fifty years.

A: Almost fifty years.

T: It came back quickly, though?

A: Yes. It came back pretty fast.

T: What about that flight? Do you remember co-piloting the plane again?

A: It was fun. I didn't fly it. The guy was a commercial airline pilot who was also a Reservist, who was also a member of the Confederate Air Force. He was an old pro. I was there and I was doing most of the radio contacts. Doing this and that, and I flew it. It turned out to be soup all the way. We flew on instruments all the way. We never did see the ground once. So we got to Des Moines and it was socked in solid. So we had to go south then, on the southwest leg, and do the procedure turns, come back all on instruments. Come back over here all on instruments, come and do the procedure turn to get on the final approach on the ILS, the instrument landing system, and I'm reading off the things to him and he's doing it all in the soup. Solid. Solid soup. All on instruments. Of course I knew instruments, too. I wish I had been flying, but I wasn't. I was there and I was with him and reading off things for him off the dials.

Finally, for even the most experienced pilots, you've got to have two hundred feet. That's low to break out. Well, finally we're getting down to two hundred and we were going to have to go to an alternate airport somewhere in Mason City or somewhere, away from everything, and we don't want to do that. We broke out at two hundred feet and brought it in. Greased it in like that. "Good show," I said. He said, "Piece of cake." *(laughs)*

(2, B, 584)

T: Art, last question. Really a philosophical one about the meaning of the war. What did it mean for you personally, at the time?

A: *(pauses three seconds)* It would finally put the world back in order. I don't know, I guess I just, we had this terrible evil among us and I did my part in ridding the world of this evil. And now we can go back to normal living. That's about all.

T: How have your feelings or thoughts changed on that in the last fifty-some years?

A: Not that much. I was sorry that the Cold War had to begin because of some terribly disloyal people in America. I was very closely involved in the Cold War with the guidance systems for intercontinental ballistic missiles and so on. I was very close. I had a top secret clearance. Was one of the top experts in guidance systems for missiles. As a matter of fact, our Thor system, built in Milwaukee, was the first one to fly accurately, within one mile in 1500 miles. They didn't get a real accurate guidance system for another three decades, even though they had atom bombs and they had the nuclear genie out of the bottle. They still couldn't match us in accuracy. And if you recall the Cuban missile crisis, when we finally traded our missiles over in Turkey and in Italy if they would remove all those. Those were Thors with my guidance system in them that we were trading off, saving the world from World War III. That was all part of it. So I feel as though we played a part in that one also.

T: Interesting. What's one way that you think the war changed your life?

A: *(pauses three seconds)* Changed my life. *(pauses three seconds)* I guess I matured a lot during those three years, and came back and just did what I wanted to do all my life. I was very, very lucky in doing what I did in my career. It was better than I could ever have hoped to have at the time, before the war and all. I had a very lucky, successful life, and I'm very pleased looking back on it. The war matured me, and I would say that it didn't have any permanent effect psychologically on me that I can detect.

T: That means like nightmares after the war and things like this?

A: Oh, yes. Sendai mission and so on. I've had those. And the Tokyo mission. Those came back in the early years a few times.

T: Wake up in the middle of the night?

A: Yes, but I would shove those off. I refused to deal with that.

T: Did it fade with time?

A: It did. It did fade with time. The last thirty years I haven't thought much about it. When I was writing my book *Searchlights Over Sendai*, then it all came back. The more you focus on it, the more it came back. It's amazing how things came back. Then I would talk to someone else. "Oh, that's right." It would remind me of old friends that were there. "Gosh! That's right." Even other things came back when I talked to my flight engineer when I saw him afterward. He said, "Oh, yes. I remember so and so, when we flew old *Better 'n' Nuttin* on his last mission. Oh, gosh yes! I had forgotten all about." He remembered a lot of things that I had forgotten, and I remembered things he had forgotten. It was kind of neat reliving the old experiences.

T: Are you one of these guys who attended unit reunions after the war? Get together with colleagues on a regular basis?

A: No. I never reconnected with anybody until I reconnected a few years ago with my flight engineer. I lost track.

T: Did you want to keep in touch, and just didn't?

A: Just didn't. I didn't know where they went, to be truthful.

T: So the crew got back to San Francisco in October and just kind of scattered.

A: That's it. We all went our ways, our separate ways.

T: After a really close relationship.

A: Yes, that's right. It was over with. If you can imagine, however, we had developed this psychology that you never really got too close to anybody, because they might not be there tomorrow.

T: And you lost somebody in your crew.

A: I lost so many buddies that were in my Quonset hut. They'd be out there taking his personal belongings away. "He bought it." Oh, geez. "J.P. Swig, D.P. Wood, he bought it yesterday. He bought it." Ooh, God! Ach! They're gone, so you don't get too close to people, because they might not be there tomorrow.

T: Emotional self-defense?

A: Yes. Exactly. So you just sort of, I don't know, you built a sort of a wall, a psychological wall. Not letting yourself get too emotionally involved with anybody because they might not be there tomorrow.

T: Yes. Just like that they'd be gone.

A: I think maybe it's my assumption, maybe that carried over after the war. Some of that. I don't know why I didn't. *(pauses three seconds)* I never thought about it.

T: There seemed to be some guys who immediately kept track.

A: A lot of them did, yes. We just didn't, my crew.

T: Anything else you want to add, Art?

A: About the war?

T: Or about after? Things related to that? How you adjusted, or how you felt, how you reflected on things later?

A: I know I reread some of my letters that I had written, and that brought back some memories that I had had that I had forgotten about. It's pretty much all written in my little memoirs here that you can read.

T: Thank you. I enjoy reading things like that.

A: That says I remembered it about ten years ago now.

T: I think it had 1991 on there.

A: A decade ago, it's in the book.

T: Mr. Pejsa, thank you very much for this interview today.

END OF INTERVIEW